

Investigation of Language Change in Korean Double Object Construction

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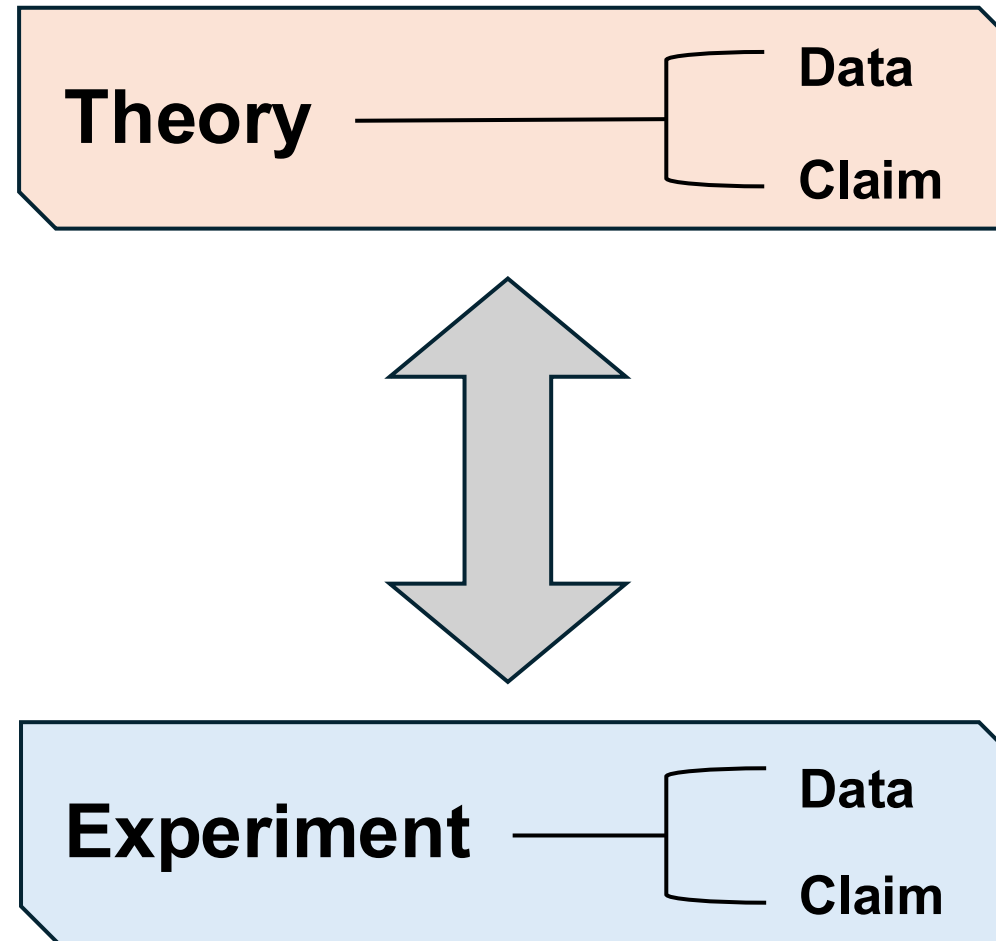
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Ditransitive Verb: Theme and Goal (Harley and Miyagawa 2017)

(1) Prepositional dative construction (PDC)

a. Hana_A gave a book_T **to Jin_G**

⇒ *Hana CAUSED the book to be LOCATED on Jin.*

(2) Double object construction (DOC)

a. Hana_A gave **Jin_G** a book_T

⇒ *Hana CAUSED Jin to HAVE the book.*

Parallelism between English and Korean (Jung and Miyagawa 2004, L. Kim 2015, H. Lee 2022)

- (1) Postpositional Dative Construction (PDC)
- (2) Double Object Construction (DOC)

Case-alternation on the Goal argument

- (1) Dative case: *-eykey/-ey*
- (2) Accusative case: *-ul/-lul*

Postpositional Dative Construction (PDC)

DAT-ACC frame (L. Kim 2015, J.-E. Lee 2017, Oh and Zubizarreta 2010, among others)

- (1) a. Hana-ka **Jin-eykey** chayk-ul cwu-ess-ta.
Hana-NOM **Jin-DAT** book-ACC give-PST-DECL
'Hana gave a book to Jin.' [Goal-Theme]
- b. Hana-ka chayk-ul **Jin-eykey** cwu-ess-ta.
Hana-NOM book-ACC **Jin-DAT** give-PST-DECL
'Hana gave a book to Jin.'³ [Theme-Goal]

Double Object Construction (DOC)

ACC-ACC frame (Jung and Miyagawa 2004, L. Kim 2015, J.-E. Lee 2017, H. Lee 2022)

- (2) a. Hana-ka **Jin-ul** chayk-ul cwu-ess-ta.
Hana-NOM **Jin-ACC** book-ACC give-PST-DECL
'Hana gave Jin a book.' [Goal-Theme]
- b. Hana-ka chayk-ul **Jin-ul** cwu-ess-ta.
Hana-NOM book-ACC **Jin-ACC** give-PST-DECL
'Hana gave Jin a book.' [Theme-Goal]

Table 1. Ditransitive verb classes in Korean with examples

Permit both DOC and PDC		Only permit PDC
Lexical Causative	Caused Possession	Caused Motion
<i>mek-i-</i> ‘feed’	<i>cwu-</i> ‘give’	<i>ponay-</i> ‘send’
<i>ip-hi-</i> ‘dress’	<i>kaluchi-</i> ‘teach’	<i>centalha-</i> ‘forward’
<i>sin-ki-</i> ‘put shoes on someone’	<i>ceykongha-</i> ‘offer’	<i>tenci-</i> ‘throw’
<i>mwul-li-</i> ‘suckle’	<i>cikupha-</i> ‘pay’	<i>cha-</i> ‘kick’

(Jung and Miyagawa 2004, L. Kim 2008; 2015, H. Lee 2022)

Lexical Causative Verbs

- **CAUSE suffix**, such as *-i*, *-hi*, *-ki*, or *-li*, is overtly realized
- The DOC as in (3a) and the PDC as in (3b) (Jung and Miyagawa 2004, L. Kim 2008; 2015)

(3) a. Mary-ka ai-lul os-ul ip-hi-ess-ta.
Mary-NOM child-ACC clothes-ACC put.on-CAUS-PST-DECL
'Mary made a child put on the clothes.'
⇒ *Mary CAUSED the child to HAVE the clothes on.*

DOC

b. Mary-ka ai-eykey os-ul ip-hi-ess-ta.
Mary-NOM child-DAT clothes-ACC put.on-CAUS-PST-DECL
'Mary put the clothes on the child.'
⇒ *Mary CAUSED the clothes to be LOCATED on the child.*

PDC

Caused Motion and Caused Possession Verbs

- **Semantic hierarchy based on degrees of possession** (H. Lee 2018; 2020; 2022)
- Scale of increasing compatibility with the DOC

Only PDC

Both PDC & DOC

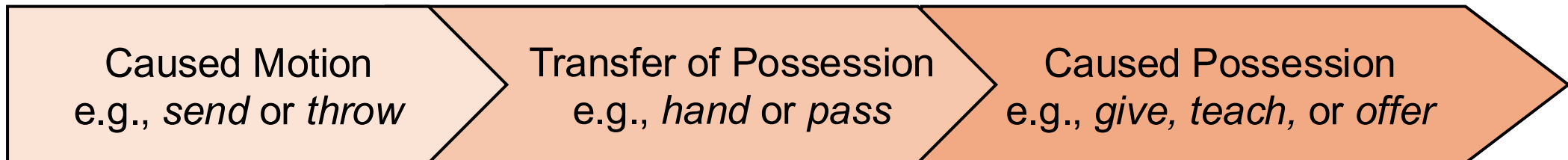


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(Jung and Miyagawa 2004, L. Kim 2008; 2015, H. Lee 2022)

Theoretical Studies: Korean possesses both the PDC and the DOC.

They are grammatical alternatives. (Jung and Miyagawa 2004, L. Kim 2015, H. Lee 2022)

Experimental Studies: DOCs are judged highly unacceptable, produced infrequently, and rarely attested in corpora. (Park and Yi 2021, Yi and Park 2022, Shim and Han 2025)

Issue: Does Korean genuinely exhibit two ditransitive constructions?

- DOC may not be a true grammatical alternative to PDC in Korean

Previous Experimental Studies

1. Background

Shim & Han (2025)

DOCs unacceptable with lexical causative &
caused possession verbs
No main effect of verb type

**Lexical Causative
in DOC**

M = 1.54

7-point Likert scale

**Caused Possession
in DOC**

M = 1.72

7-point Likert scale

Park & Yi (2021)

DOCs unacceptable with caused possession verbs
No main effect of verb type

**Caused Possession
in DOC**

M = 2.15

7-point Likert scale

**Caused Motion
in DOC**

M = 1.62

7-point Likert scale

RQ: Could the unacceptability of DOCs reflect a case of language change?

- Previous experimental studies: university students in their 20s between 2018-2024 (e.g., H. Lee 2018, Park and Yi 2021, Yi and Park 2022, Shim and Han 2025)
- In contrast, theoretical examples originate from the 1990s (e.g., Kim 1990, Hong 1991, Cho 1996)

General Prediction: If language change has occurred, the older generation will rate DOCs as more acceptable than the younger generation.

- 2 X 2 X 2 factorial design
 - Structure (PDC, DOC)
 - Verb Type (Caused Possession (CP), Lexical Causative (LC))
 - Age (Young: under 30, Old: over 50)
- Acceptability judgment on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = very unacceptable, 7 = very acceptable)

- Participants
 - 42 native Korean speakers under 30 ($M_{age} = 24.00$, $SD = 2.66$)
 - 56 native Korean speakers over 50 ($M_{age} = 57.48$, $SD = 5.00$)
- Materials
 - Eight ditransitive verbs: four CP verbs and four LC verbs
 - CP: *cwu-* ‘give’, *kaluchi-* ‘teach’, *cikupha-* ‘pay’, *ceykongha-* ‘offer’
 - LC: *mek-i* ‘feed’, *ip-hi* ‘dress’, *mwul-li* ‘suckle’, *sin-ki* ‘put shoes on someone’
- 32 test items and 24 fillers

Lexical Causative Verb

(4) a. Yumo-ka ai-eykey wuyu-lul mek-i-ess-ta.
nanny-NOM child-DAT milk-ACC feed-CAUS-PST-DECL
'The nanny fed milk to a child.'

PDC

b. Yumo-ka ai-lul wuyu-lul mek-i-ess-ta.
nanny-NOM child-ACC milk-ACC feed-CAUS-PST-DECL
'The nanny fed child a milk.'

DOC

Caused Possession Verb

- (5) a. Cincwu-ka Chinkwu-**eykey** sopho-**lul** **cwu-ess-ta.**
Jinju-NOM friend-**DAT** package-**ACC** **give-PST-DECL**
'Jinju gave a package to a friend.' **PDC**
- b. Cincwu-ka Chinkwu-**lul** sopho-**lul** **cwu-ess-ta.**
Jinju-NOM friend-**ACC** package-**ACC** **give-PST-DECL**
'Jinju gave friend a package.' **DOC**

(6) a. Cinswu-nun Cwuhwi-ka thayngko-lul mesisskey chwuess-tako
Jinsu-TOP Juhui-NOM tango-ACC wonderfully dance-COMP
al-ass-ta.

know-PST-DECL

‘Jinsu knew that Juhui danced the tango wonderfully.’

Grammatical

b. Notwupwuk-ul Cinswu-nun Hyeswu-ka olay ssess-tako tul-ess-ta
Laptop-ACC Jinsu-TOP Hyesu-NOM long use-PST-COMP hear-PST-DECL

‘Jinsu heard that Hyesu used the laptop for a long time.’

Marginal

- (6) c. Cinswu-nun Swuci-ka masisskey kwu-ess-tako manul-ppang-ul
Jinsu-TOP Sujii-NOM deliciously bake-PST-COMP garlic-bread-ACC
tul-ess-ta.
hear-PST-DECL
'Jinsu heard that Suji baked the garlic bread deliciously.'

Ungrammatical

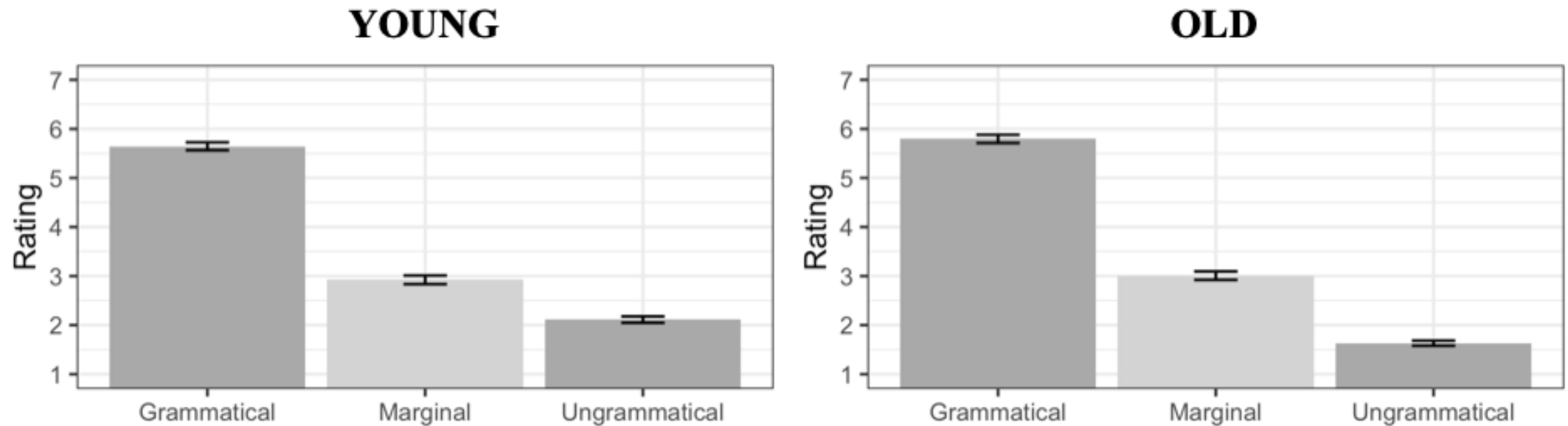


Figure 1. Acceptability ratings of fillers by the age groups: the YOUNG (left) and the OLD (right). Error bars indicate standard error of the mean.

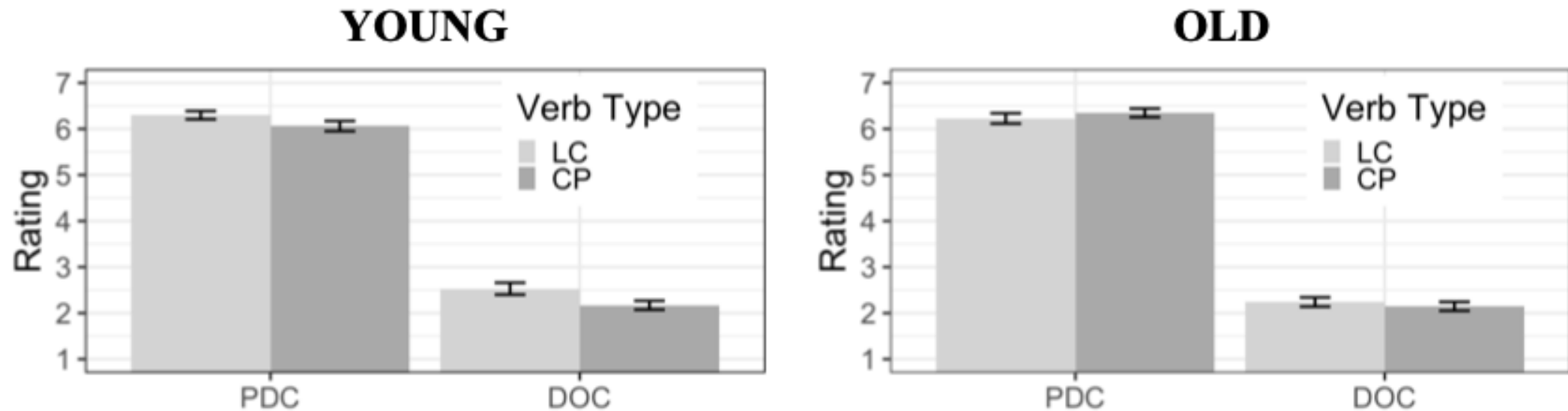


Figure 2. Acceptability ratings by the age groups: the YOUNG (left) and the OLD (right). Error bars indicate standard error of the mean.

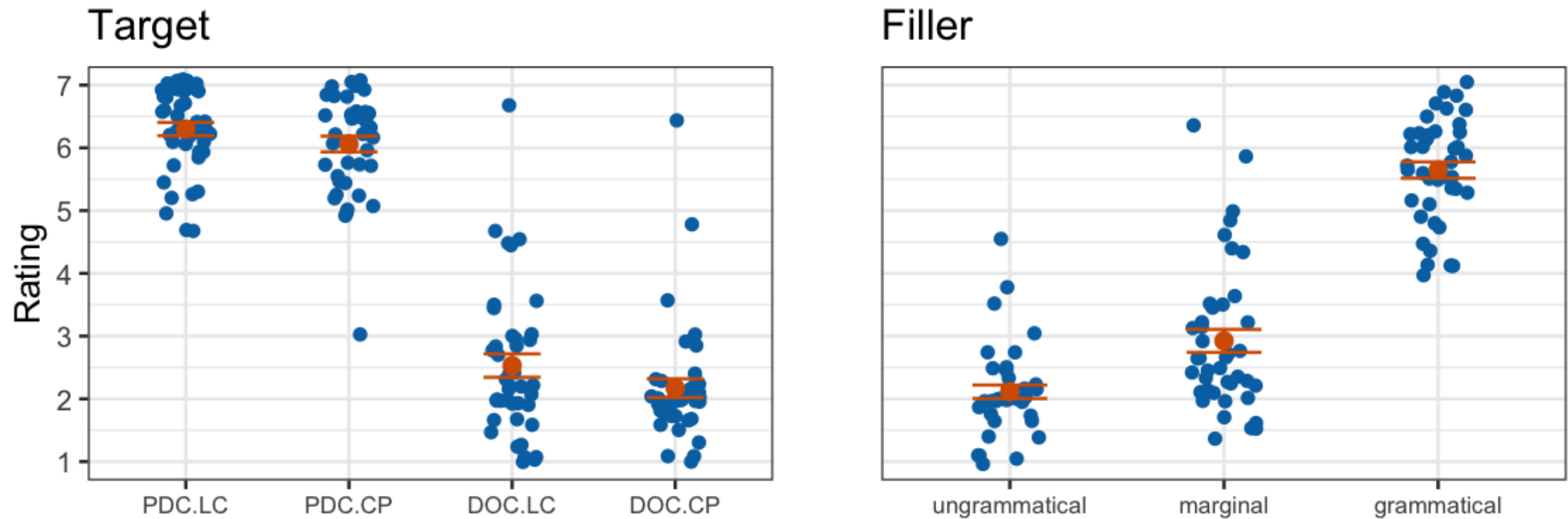


Figure 3. Side-by-side distribution of mean ratings for the YOUNG. Error bars indicate standard error of the mean.

Results – Distribution (Old)

4. Results

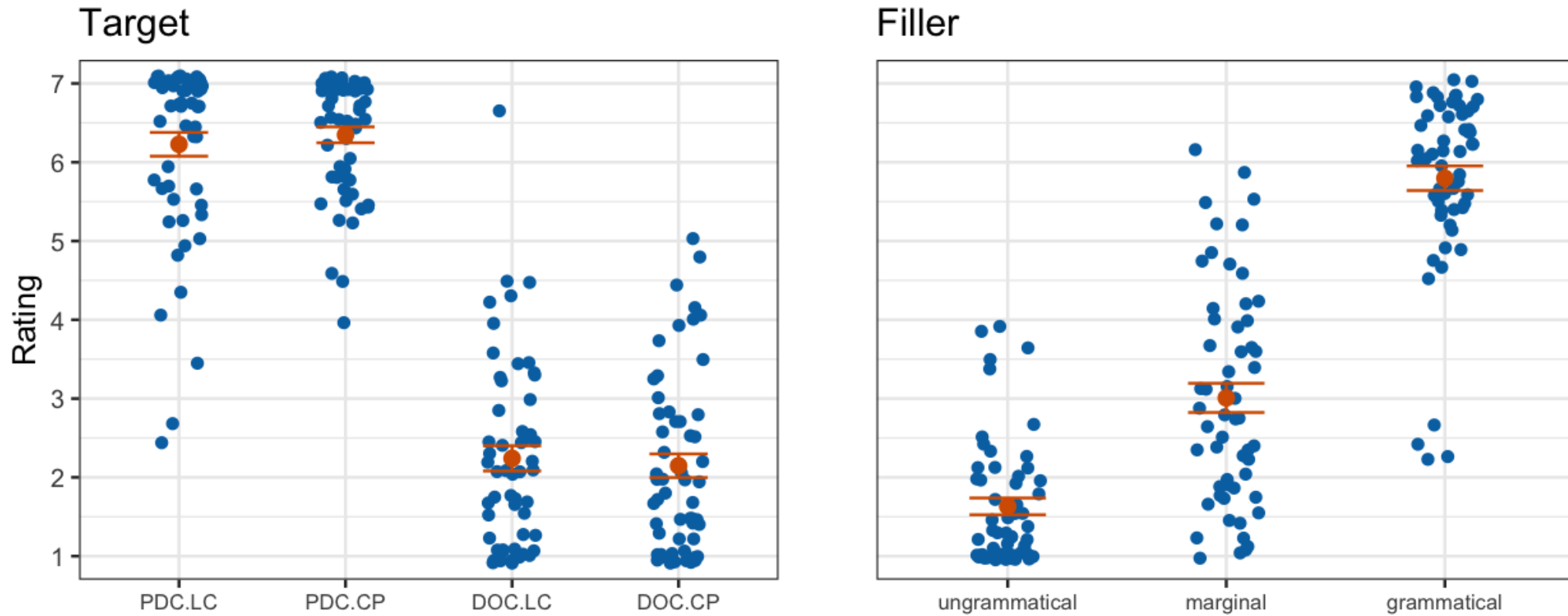


Figure 4. Side-by-side distribution of mean ratings for the OLD. Error bars indicate standard error of the mean.

Table 2. Coefficients and p-values from the cumulative link mixed model

Predictor	Estimate	SE	<i>z</i>	<i>p</i>
AgeGroup1	0.12	0.17	0.71	0.48
Structure1	-3.20	0.22	-14.35	< .001***
VerbType1	0.18	0.17	1.07	0.28
AgeGroup1 × Structure1	-0.47	0.16	-2.96	< .01**
AgeGroup1 × VerbType1	-0.08	0.10	-0.81	0.42
Structure1 × VerbType1	-0.06	0.16	-0.39	0.70
AgeGroup1 × Structure1 × VerbType	0.02	0.10	0.18	0.86

Significance levels: *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$, + $p < .1$

1. There was a strong main effect of Structure (DOC, PDC).
2. Verb Type did not modulate either the structure or the age groups.
3. Although the Age group X Structure was significant, this effect was primarily driven by the age group differences in the PDC condition.

The findings do not provide evidence of language change in Korean DOCs, supporting the view that DOCs may not be a true alternative to PDCs.

- DOC judgments may be highly sensitive to participant-level or contextual factors.
- **Possibility 1:** DOC's well-formedness may be strongly dependent on the discourse context.
- **Possibility 2:** A limited group of participants rated the DOC as marginally acceptable. DOC may be grammatical to only a small and limited subset of speakers.

- Together, the findings call for **a re-evaluation of the two representative ditransitive structures** in Korean and their oft-assumed parallelism with English: DOCs in Korean are unacceptable regardless of verb type or age group.

Thank You

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The research reported here was partially supported by
SSHRC Insight Grant 435-2022-0475 to Dr. Chung-hye Han.

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Appendix: Case-stacking Scenario

- (7) a. Cincwu-ka Chinkwu-**eykey-lul** sopho-lul **cwu-ess-ta.**
Jinju-NOM friend-**DAT-ACC** package-**ACC** **give-PST-DECL**
'Jinju gave a package to a friend.' **PDC**
- b. Cincwu-ka Chinkwu-**lul** sopho-lul **cwu-ess-ta.**
Jinju-NOM friend-**ACC** package-**ACC** **give-PST-DECL**
'Jinju gave a package to a friend / Jinju gave friend a package.'
“apparent” DOC