

Children' sensitivity to some – but not all – Gricean Maxims

FRANCESCA PANZERI & FRANCESCA FOPPOLO

UNIVERSITY OF MILAN - BICOCCA

FRANCESCA.PANZERI@UNIMIB.IT

FRANCESCA.FOPPOLO@UNIMIB.IT

Research question

Grice (1968): Cooperative speakers tend to adhere to Conversational Maxims;

Children up to 5 years do not compute implicatures that arise from a motivated (apparent or manifest) violation of the Conversational Maxims;

Are children's sensitive to *unmotivated* violations of Gricean Maxims?

Here is what Bruno ate for breakfast this morning.



I ate an apple.

What did you eat this morning?



➤ Has Bruno given a good answer?



GOOD



SO-AND-SO



BAD






Experimental design

[Modification of Surian's Conversational Violation Task]

Material

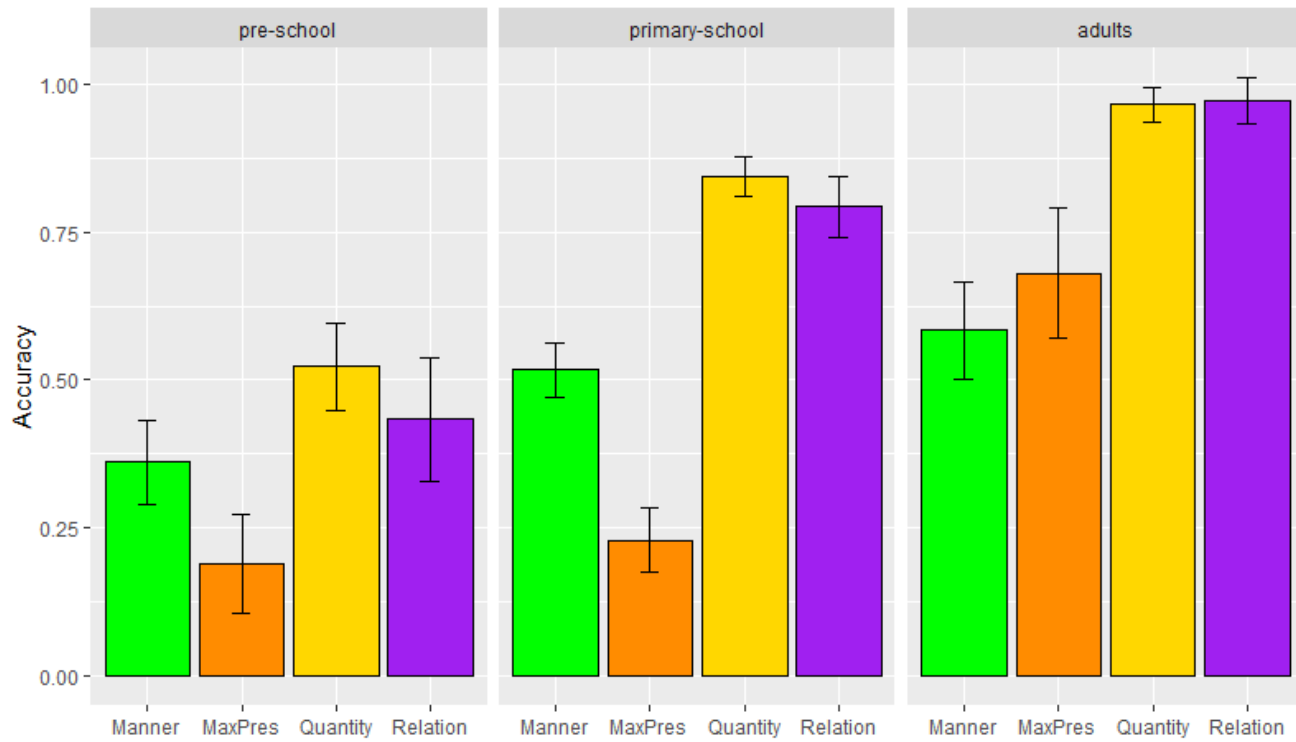
12 control sentences (8 TRUE and 4 FALSE).

12 critical items

N	Type	Example	
2	Quantity_Conjuncts	I ate an apple	 
2	Quantity_Superset	I received a present	
2	Relation	My favorite shirt has a hole for the head and two sleeves	
2	Manner_Order	I went to bed and I brushed my teeth	
2	Manner_Brief	I ate a fruit with a yellow peel and that monkeys love	
2	Maximize Presupposition	A sun is shining (Schlenker, 2012)	

Participants

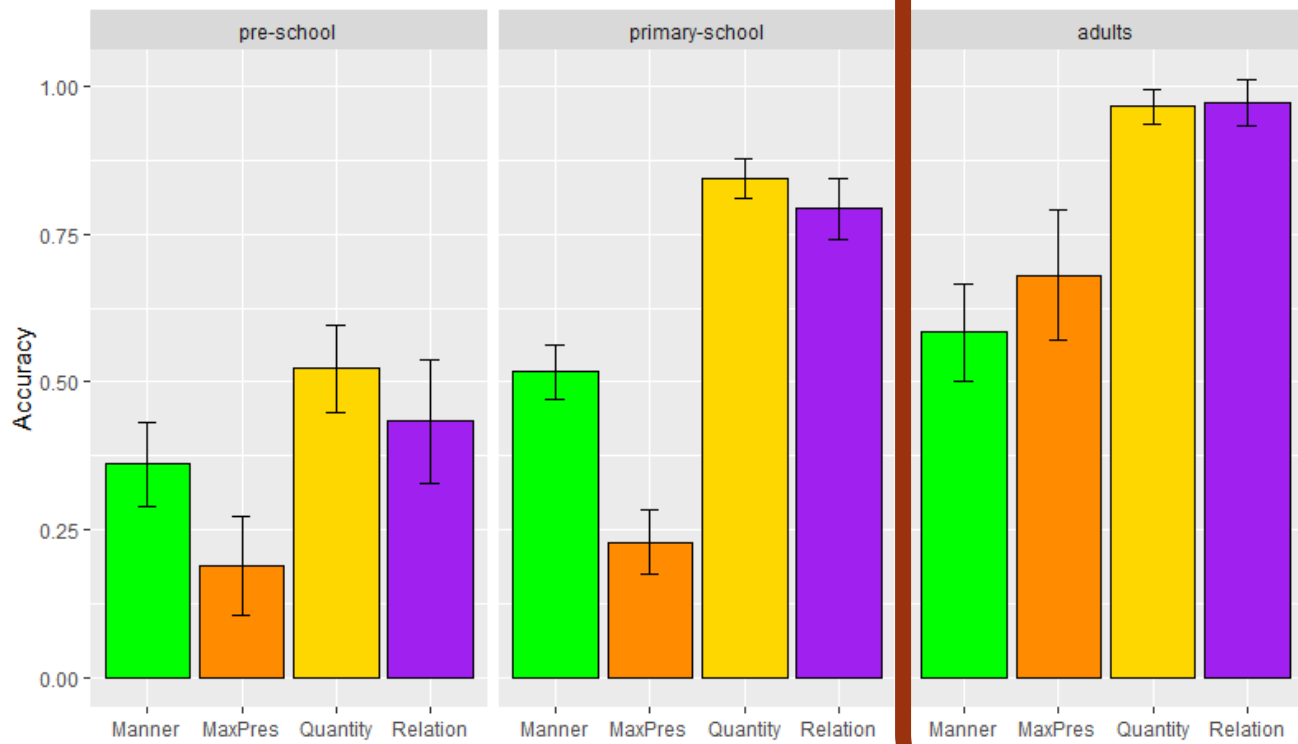
- 163 monolingual Italian speaking children:
 - 45 preschoolers (22 F), MA: 5;2;
 - 118 school aged children (68 F), MA 7;6
 - 40 1st graders;
 - 30 2nd graders;
 - 48 3rd graders.
- 36 adults.



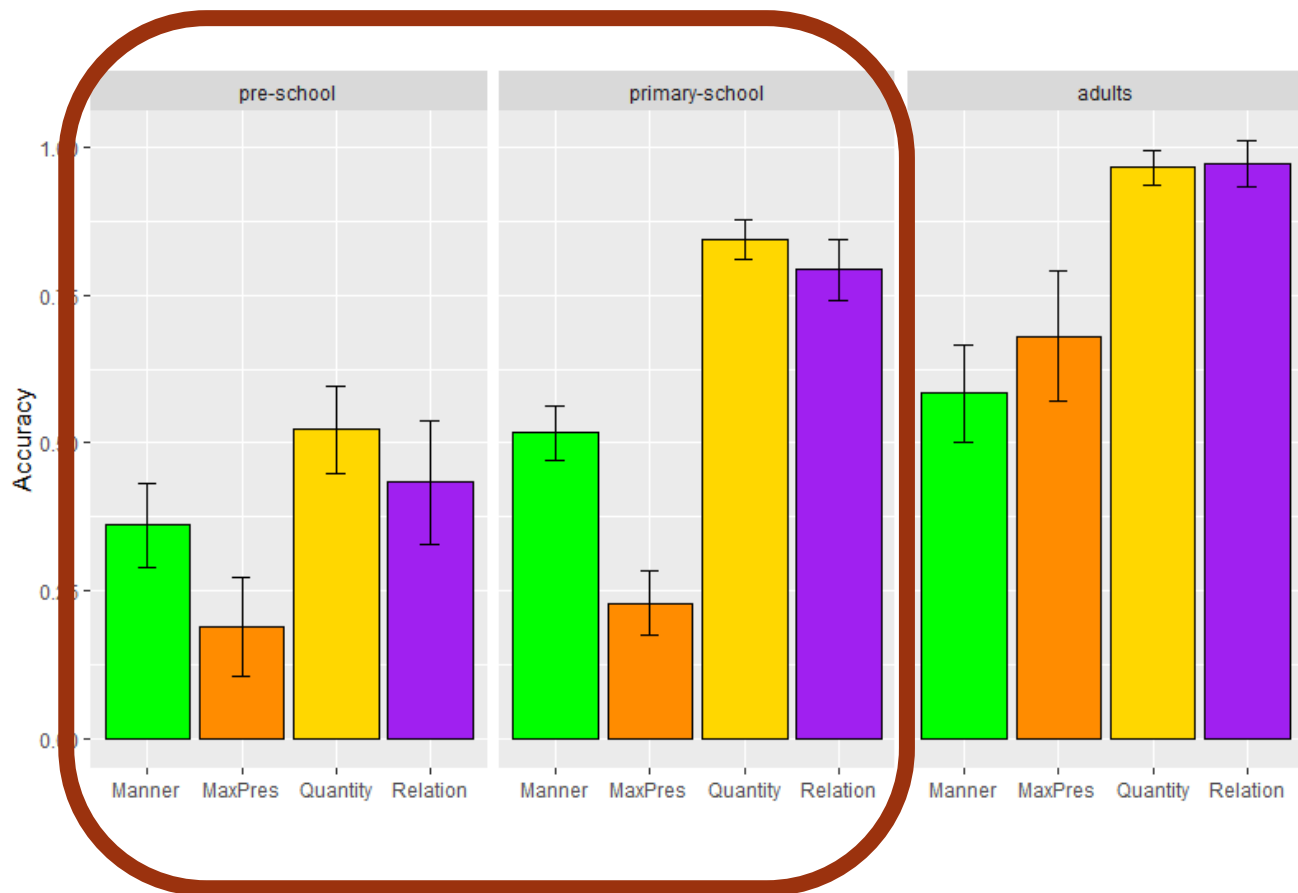
Results

silver + bronze medal = rejection

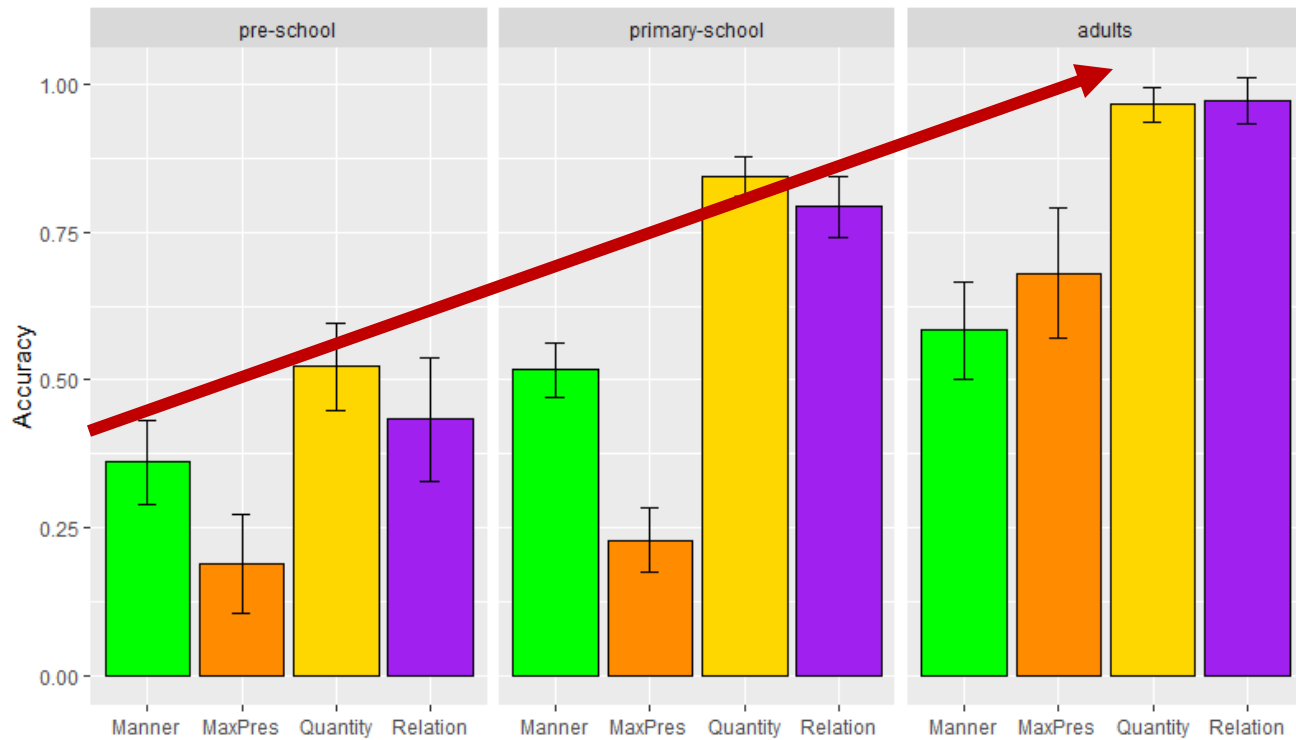
[no difference among groups in control items (all >92%)]



➤ **ADULTS** always reject unmotivated violations of the **QUANTITY** and of the **RELATION** maxim; they are more tolerant with respect to violations of the **MANNER** maxim and of **MAXimize PRESupposition** principle.



➤ CHILDREN are in general more tolerant, but exhibit the same pattern as adults: violations of the **QUANTITY** and of the **RELATION** maxim are equally sanctioned, more than of the **MANNER** maxim and of the **MAXimize PRESupposition** principle.



➤ A clear evolutionary trend emerges significant difference between adults and primary-school children (Est=1.23354, SE=.29264, $z=4.215$, $p<.0001$) and between primary-school children and pre-school children (Est=-1.42221, SE=0.26076, $z=-5.454$, $p<.0001$).

Discussion

Gricean Maxims are not the same:

[Violations of QUALITY are always recognized, even by younger children => FALSE controls]

Violations of QUANTITY and RELEVANCE are always penalized by adults, and to a high degree by children;

Violations of MANNER and of MAXimize PRESuppositions are less sanctioned.

CHAT ON
DAY 2, 9/17,
1-2.30 EST

Thanks!