

It is a well-known phenomenon that young children (up to around 6) have difficulties with pronominal reference, in that in English at least they accept coreferential interpretations in a sentence such as ‘Mummy<sub>1</sub> is washing her<sub>1</sub>’ at roughly half the time. This has been termed the ‘Delay of Principle B Effect’ (DPBE), or more recently as the ‘Pronoun Interpretation Problem’ (PIP) given the decline of the Binding theory. Most interestingly perhaps, is that these children do not have issues with reflexive pronoun interpretation from the age of three onwards, that is they are clear about a reflexive pronoun’s locality. The overall issue has been mainly addressed from a syntactic perspective, alongside theories of processing limitations in children to methodological issues. Only recently has a pragmatic perspective been introduced to understanding the problem, in combination with Optimality theory.

Understanding this problem through neo-Gricean lenses has been extremely limited (although we have a very well developed revised neo-Gricean pragmatic theory of anaphora), but the PIP was noticed very early on by Levinson in support of his A-first analysis. Thus, the first aim of this paper is to offer a neo-Gricean solution to the PIP through understanding reflexive and pronoun interpretation in children. The second aim is then to step back and discuss reducing the (revised) disjoint reference presumption ((R)DRP) to Gricean mechanics in comparing basic structures used for ‘other’ versus ‘–self’ directed actions, and comparing this thesis against proposals where the (R)DRP has its roots in I-implicature or world knowledge. Put together, a clear developmental path for reference development in children can be argued for using neo-Gricean pragmatics.