

The pragmatics of attitude ascription

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***Applicant**

Our long-term goal is to develop an attention-based theory of attitude ascription, and apply it to a wide range of data from experiments with children as well as adults. We plan a series of experiments along the lines of Friedman and Leslie (2004a,b). To start with, we intend to run a number of studies to clarify and, possibly, correct the findings obtained by Leslie and his associates. As part of the current project, we would like to test both children and adults on an eye-tracking version of the avoidance false-belief task with three containers. According to the results reported by Friedman and Leslie (2004b), while children who are able to pass this task show a preference for the box that contains the frog, adults show a bias for the empty box (i.e., the second correct answer). We believe that this difference might be explained by the fact that, whereas children in these experiments were able to respond to the prediction question in their own time, adults were specifically asked to give the first response that came to mind. Adults may have therefore gone for the “fastest and safest” solution, given that Sally was trying to avoid the frog. Moreover, by using a computer version of the task with an eye-tracking technique, we will obtain not only participants’ responses and response times to the prediction question, but also a continuous measure of processing in their eye movements.

The aim of our **second meeting** was twofold:

First, we plan to discuss the results of a pilot eye-tracking study using an avoidance FB task, which was carried out by one of Susanne Grassmann’s MA students under her supervision.

Second, in view of the results of this pilot study, we plan to agree on the final details of the avoidance FB task that we want to run with adults this summer. We will try to set up the task, or at least agree on the design and construct the visual and audio materials.

The two aims of our second meeting were fulfilled:

We discussed the results of the eye-tracking study that Susanne Grassmann’s MA student had completed in the previous weeks. The results were clear and interesting, and we are

pleased to report that our predictions were born out: children's eye-movements do not support Leslie's hypotheses for FB-avoidance reasoning.

We have also come up with a plan for the testing that Susanne Grassmann's students will be doing for us in the summer months. We have decided that we should complete one more study with children before testing adults.

It is our intention to discuss and update our plans when we next meet at the XPrag Conference in Barcelona in June.

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EDUCATION AND RESEARCH

Post-Doctoral Research Project
University College London / Princeton University (2005 – 2010)
Inferential processes in language interpretation.

Ph.D.
University of Cambridge (2001– 2005)
Pragmatic processes and cognitive mechanisms in lexical interpretation.
Ph.D. Thesis approved *without corrections*

M.Phil. in English and Applied Linguistics
University of Cambridge (2000 – 2001)
Distinction with Honours

Research Stay
University College London (2000)

M.A. in Theoretical Linguistics
University of Reading (1998 – 1999)
Distinction with Merit

Certificate in English Studies
Coventry University (1996 – 1997)
Erasmus Programme

First Degree in Spanish Language and Literature
Universidad de Oviedo, Spain (1994 – 1999)

RECENT AWARDS

Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) International Training and Networking Opportunities for Early-Career Researchers (2010-2012)

Marie Curie Outgoing International Fellowship (2006-2010)

British Academy Post-Doctoral Fellowship (2005-2008)

INVITED TALKS AND CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS SINCE 2004

June 2009. 'A third theory of pretense', invited talk given at the workshop on *Metarepresentation and Non-Literal Language Use*, CSMN, Oslo.

July 2008. 'Eye-tracking the classic Sally-Ann task: An investigation of on-line adult Theory of Mind', poster presented at the *XXIX International Congress of Psychology*, Berlin.

May 2008. 'What can Sally and Ann tell us about adult theory of mind?' poster presented at the *20th Annual Convention of the Association for Psychological Science*, Chicago (USA).

May 2008. 'Does communication depend on our ability to take the speaker's perspective?' paper presented at a meeting of the RoLaP group (*Research on Language at Princeton*).

April 2008. 'What can Sally and Ann tell us about adult theory of mind?' poster presented at the *Workshop on Pragmatics and Social Cognition*, UCL (London).

April 2008. 'How egocentric are we? Or rather, how good are we at taking other people's perspectives?' paper presented at the *2008 British Academy Post-Doctoral Symposium*, London.

Aug 2007. 'Do ducks lay eggs? How people interpret generic assertions', paper presented in collaboration with Sangeet Khemlani, Sarah-Jane Leslie and Sam Glucksberg at the *2007 Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society (CogSci07)*, Nashville (USA).

April 2007. 'Associative and inferential processes in lexical interpretation', paper presented at the *Cognitive Research Seminar* of the Psychology Department, Princeton University (USA).

RECENT PUBLICATIONS

Under review (with Sam Glucksberg). Reasoning about other people's beliefs: Bilinguals have an advantage. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Learning, Memory and Cognition*.

Under review. 'On the Intentional theory of early pretense: Object substitution and sound effects'. *Language and Cognition*.

Under review. 'Associative and inferential processes in lexical interpretation: One or two pragmatic systems?' *Language and Cognitive Processes*.

2008. 'On the automaticity of egocentricity: A review of the Egocentric Anchoring and Adjustment model of perspective taking'. *UCL Working Papers in Linguistics* 20, 247-274.

2008. 'Concept narrowing: The role of context-independent information in concepts'. *Journal of Semantics* 25(4):381-409.

2007 (with Sangeet Khemlani, Sarah-Jane Leslie and Sam Glucksberg). 'Do ducks lay eggs? How people interpret generic assertions'. *Proceedings of the 2007 Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society (CogSci07)*.

2007. 'Suppression in metaphor interpretation: Differences between meaning selection and meaning construction'. *Journal of Semantics*, 24 (4), 345-371.

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