

## **The pragmatics of attitude ascription**

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### **Susanne Grassmann**

Department of Psychology, University of Groningen

[s.grassmann@rug.nl](mailto:s.grassmann@rug.nl)

### **Bart Geurts**

Department of Philosophy, University of Nijmegen

[brtgrts@gmail.com](mailto:brtgrts@gmail.com)

### **Paula Rubio-Fernández**

Department of Psychology, Princeton University

Department of Literature, Area Studies and European Languages, Oslo University

[prubio@princeton.edu](mailto:prubio@princeton.edu)

**\*Applicant**

## **Project description, aims and results of the meeting**

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 plan of my two-day meeting with Bart Geurts at the University of Nijmegen was to draft the first paper from our project. Our meeting proved to be very fruitful and we took the opportunity not only to draft the first paper but also to discuss the preliminary results of another study that Susanne Grassmann has been running with one of her MA students at the University of Groningen. Previous to my meeting with Bart Geurts, Susanne Grassmann had put together an outline of our latest study including the materials and preliminary results, which allowed us to discuss in some detail our future work. We are planning to have our next meeting at the end of August, when we should have finished the first paper.