

Title:

Blended Joint Attention and the Ground of Communication

Abstract:

The Red Hen Lab is a distributed laboratory for research in multimodal communication, presented at <https://sites.google.com/site/distributedlittleredhen/>.

Its core dataset consists of digital recordings of about 200,000 hours of audiovisual news broadcasts, including more than a billion words of closed-captions (provided in Europe via teletext), often placed in time-stamped registration with transcripts (for CNN, CBS, NBC, and ABC).

Red Hen ingests another hundred hours of broadcasts daily. The text can be searched and the results browsed or exported to a csv file for treatment in a statistical software package, such as R.

The text is tagged with a link to the segment in the archive in which the communication was performed, so that the researcher can see the actual speech event in its setting, including such elements as on-screen text (captured through optical character recognition and also stored in the archive).

In the digital age, broadcast news has been untethered completely from actual televisions.

It has become ubiquitous and immersive. Accordingly, the Red Hen dataset provides us with a massive ecologically valid corpus for studying multimodal communication. We will explore some of the opportunities by focusing on an illustrative question:

what becomes of "the ground" in such a communicative scene? Ronald Langacker describes "the ground" as "the speech event, its setting, and its participants" (Langacker 1985:113). He presents it as including the speaker, the hearer, the time of the speech event, and the location or site of the speech event.

Inevitably, the ground becomes fabulously complex in viewing broadcast news, but viewers, responding to everyday multimodal constructions including deictics and indexicals ("you," "here," "now," . . .) and some multimodal constructions more specialized for broadcast news, effortlessly build and utilize a dynamic, fluid, tractable blended idea of a ground that suits this communication.

We will investigate how that happens.