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Joint Attention

Writing essays has never been easy for me, and at first, writing an essay on joint attention was proving to be just as hard. Honestly, I could not think of a good example of joint attention and as I sat at the desk under my bunked bed I began to get frustrated. I know I must have seen it everywhere, but I could not think of a perfectly applicable situation. I had been sitting at my computer for quite some time before I finally came up with an example, and the way I came up with it was the most intriguing thing of all.

My friend, Noel, from down the hall walked into my dorm room, saw me sitting dejectedly at my desk, and asked what I was doing.

“Writing some stupid essay,” I replied, taking my frustration out on the essay rather than on my inability to come up with an essay topic.

“Wait, what is it on?” In response to this question I *pointed out* the prompt written on the Blackboard website. We both read the paragraph and then I realized that I had just demonstrated what I had been trying to think of for the entire hour prior to that instance.

Joint attention had just revealed itself to me. I drew Noel’s attention to my computer (and more specifically to the prompt on the screen) by pointing and gazing at it. This is joint attention because we implicitly understood what the other wanted in focusing on the prompt. I understood that she had been interested in what I was doing and she understood that my gesture implied that she was to look at my computer screen for her question to be answered. We both saw the prompt differently, and yet we were both trying to respond to the inquiry it posed. In doing that, we displayed joint attention which inadvertently answered the question.