ING218

Week 10

Reference

Siti Mahripah, M.App.Ling

Today we are going to discuss about
- ❑ Referents and referring expressions
- ❑ Extension and intension
- ❑ Some different kinds of referents
- ❑ Different ways of referring
- ❑ Deixis
- ❑ Anaphora
- ❑ Shifts in ways of referring
- ❑ Referential ambiguity

A **referring expression** is a piece of language, a noun phrase, that is used in an utterance and is linked to something outside language, some living or dead or imaginary entity or concept or group of entities or concepts. That 'something' is the **referent,** not necessarily physical nor necessarily 'real.'

We need to distinguish three terms: referring expression, referent, and way of referring.

Read your reference book p. 130

Referent and referring expression

Consider these sentences:

1. Howard is your cousin, isn't he?
2. Howard is your cousin's name, isn't it?

Referent and referring expression

1. A referring expression is not a referent.
2. There is no natural connection between referring expression and referent.
3. The existence of a referring expression does not guarantee the existence of a referent in the physical-social world that we inhabit.

Referent and referring expression

4. Two or more referring expressions may have the same referent, but they do not necessarily have the same meaning.
5. A referring expression is used to identify, but the identification may be valid only temporarily (*The girl in the purple sweater)* and it need not be true.

Metonymy

is a figure of speech used in rhetoric in which a thing or concept is not called by its own name, but by the name of something intimately associated with that thing or concept. Metonyms can be either real or fictional concepts representing other concepts real or fictional, but they must serve as an effective and widely understood second name for what they represent.

For instance, "Hollywood" is used as a **metonym** (an instance of metonymy) for US cinema, because of the fame and cultural identity of Hollywood, a district of the city of Los Angeles, California as the historical center of movie studios and movie stars.

Extension Vs Intension

The **extension** of a lexeme is the set of entities which it denotes. The extension of *dog* includes all collies, dalmatians, dachshunds, mongrels, etc., etc. that have ever lived or will ever live and every fictitious creature that is accepted as being a dog. All the things that can be denoted by the noun *lake* are the extension of that lexeme.

Extension Vs Intension

The **intension** of any lexeme is the set of properties shared by all members of the extension. Thus everything that is denoted by *lake* must be a body of water of a certain size surrounded by land, and everything denoted by *island* is a body of land surrounded by water—but see below for discussion of some difficulties in applying these definitions.

Extension has to do with reference, but reference, as we know, is not all of meaning: the lexemes *violin* and *fiddle* have the same extension. Extension can change while intension remains the same. The extension of the referring expression *the capital of Australia* is a single item, the city of Canberra. The intension of the same term is 'city in which the national government of Australia is located.' If the capital should be moved at some future time to another city, the extension changes but the intension remains the same. *The Mayor of Chicago* or *the Prime Minister of Great Britain* always has the same intension but the extension of each of these changes from time to time.

A **prototype** is an object or referent that is considered typical of the whole set. Thus, if you encounter the lexeme *door* in isolation and immediately think of a door swinging on hinges rather than one that slides or rotates, that kind of door is, for you, the prototype of all doors. But not everybody is likely to have the same prototype for a particular set. People in Belize probably do not have the same prototype for *tree* as people in Scotland.

Some different kinds of referents:

❖ Concrete >
❖ Unique >< Non-unique
❖ Countable >< Non-countable

Read your reference group p.135-138

Different Ways of referring

1. Generic and non-generic reference
2. Specific and non-specific reference
3. Definite and indefinite reference

Deixis

The most primitive way of referring to something is to point to it.

English examples of deictic words include (1) pronouns *I, you* and *we,* which 'point' to the participants in any speech act; *he, she, it* and *they,* when they are used to refer to others in the environment; (2) locative expressions *here* and *there,* which designate space close to the speaker or farther away; *this/these* and *that/those,* which respectively indicate entities close to or removed from the speaker; and (3) temporal expressions: *now, then, yesterday, today, tomorrow, last week, next month* and so on. These last are all relative to the time when they are used.

Anaphora

Some deictic words can also be used as anaphoric items. **Anaphora** is a kind of secondary reference in which a previous reference is recalled by use of special function words or equivalent lexemes. For example, in page 145-147.

Shifts in ways of referring

A speaker may shift from specific reference to generic reference.

Referential ambiguity

This occurs when

1 an indefinite referring expression may be specific or not;

32   I wanted to buy a newspaper.

Here *a newspaper* may refer to a specific newspaper or some newspaper, any newspaper. The ambiguity disappears if we add, on the one hand, *but I couldn't find it* or, on the other hand, *but I couldn't find one*.

Referential ambiguity

2 anaphora is unclear because a personal pronoun, *he, she, it* or *they*, can be linked to either of two referring expressions:

33   Jack told Ralph that a visitor was waiting for him.

3 the pronoun *you* is used generically or specifically:

34   If you want to get ahead, you have to work hard.

Referential ambiguity

(Is *you* the addressee or is this sentence a general platitude?)

4 a noun phrase with *every* can have distributed reference or collected reference:

35   I'm buying a drink for everybody here.
      (One drink for all or one drink for each?)

Referential ambiguity occurs when the context does not make clear whether a referring expression is being used specifically or not; when the interpretation of a referring expression can be collective or distributed; and when it is not clear to which of two or more referring expressions an anaphoric item is linked.