

المحاضرة الثالثة

المادة: اللغويات العامة

الفرقة الثالثة – لغة انجليزية – عام

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**REFERENCE – REFERENT –
SENSE**

Definition

❖ Reference is the relationship between language and the world.

In other words, that is the relationship between words and the things, actions, events, and qualities they stand for.

Ex: My son → refers to a person;

a dog → refers to an animal.

(the speaker establishes a relation between an expression and an object).

❖ **Referent is the thing the speaker is talking about, the object referred to.**

Ex: This page → (the page I am reading itself, page 2)

❖ **Sense is the relationship between words in the language to express the meaning.**

Ex: The word ‘bachelor’ and ‘unmarried man’ have the same *sense*

Now look at the following sentence:

1) Jack put his pen next to Bettye's pen.

What is the meaning of the word pen in this sentence?

- On the one hand we could agree that it has the same meaning each time it is used**
- but on the other hand we would also agree that it is used to mean two different things, Jack's pen and Betty's pen.**

Thus we are using the word meaning in two different ways.

- **When we agreed that both examples of pen have the same meaning we meant that they have the same sense.**
- **But when we think of pen as meaning specifically Jack's pen we have a different kind of meaning in mind – something like “the particular pen the speaker has in mind when saying that word.”**

- **There is a technical term which we could easily use for "having something particular in mind when saying a word", which is the verb refer.**
- **This allows us to say that the speaker of (1) was referring to Jack's pen when saying his pen, but to Betty's when saying Betty's pen.**
- **The thing referred to is called the word's referent, so the two pens in (1) have the same sense but different referents.**

- In short, we can recognize two parts to the meaning of a word like pen: **its sense** which lives permanently in the dictionary, and **its referent**, which varies from occasion to occasion.
- we can also combine words together to express the meaning in the form of a definition. We are establishing the relationship between words in the language to express the sense.

REFERENCE

The study of reference is divided into two areas:

speaker-reference and linguistic-reference.

- **Speaker-reference is what the speaker is referring to by using some linguistic expression.**

For example,

- **if someone utters the sentence "Here comes Queen Elizabeth facetiously", to refer to a snobbish acquaintance, then the speaker-reference of the expression "Queen Elizabeth" is the acquaintance. Speaker-reference, because it varies according to**

the speaker and context, is outside the domain of semantics; instead it is part of pragmatics.

- Linguistic-reference, on the other hand, is the systematic denotation of some linguistic expression as part of a language. For example, the linguistic expression "Queen Elizabeth" in the sentence "Here comes Queen Elizabeth" refers in fact to "the public figure Queen Elizabeth".**
- Linguistic-reference, in contrast to speaker-reference, is within the domain of semantics, since it deals with reference that is a**

systematic function of the language itself, rather than of the speaker and context.

Let's now consider some concepts that seem useful in thinking and talking about reference.

Referent. The entity identified by the use of a referring expression such as a noun or noun phrase is the referent of that expression. If, for example, you point to a particular robin and say "That bird looks sick", then the referent for the referring expression "That bird" is the particular robin you are pointing at.

Extension. Extension refers to the set of all potential referents for a referring expression. For example, the extension of bird is the set of all entities (past, present, and future) that could systematically be

referred to by the expression bird. In other words, the extension of bird is the set of all birds.

Prototype. A typical member of the extension of a referring expression is a prototype of that expression. For example, a robin or a bluebird might be a prototype of bird; a pelican or an ostrich, since each is somewhat atypical, would not be.

Stereotype. A list of characteristics describing a prototype is said to be a stereotype. For example, the stereotype of bird might be something like the following: has two legs and two wings, has

feathers, is about six to eight inches from head to tail, makes a chirping noise, lays eggs, builds nests, and so on.

Coreference. Two linguistic expressions that refer to the same real-world entity are said to be coreferential. Consider, for example, the sentence "Jay Leno is the host of the Tonight Show". The expression "Jay Leno" and "The host of the Tonight Show" are coreferential because they both refer to the same entity, namely the person Jay Leno. Note, however, the coreferential expressions do not "mean" the same thing; that is, they are not synonymous. For example, "before Jay Leno hosted the Tonight show, Johnny Carson held that

position"; thus, there was a period of time when "Johnny Carson" was coreferential with "host of the tonight show". However, we cannot describe Johnny Carson and Jay Leno as "meaning" the same thing. The fact that they are not synonymous is illustrated by the unacceptability of the sentence *Jay Leno used to be Johnny Carson.

Anaphora. A linguistic expression that refers to another linguistic expression is said to be anaphoric or an anaphor. Consider the sentence "Mary wants to play whoever thinks himself capable of beating her". In this sentence the linguistic expression himself necessarily refers to whoever; thus himself is being used

anaphorically in this case. Note, moreover, that it would be inaccurate to claim that whoever and himself are coreferential (i.e., that they have the same extralinguistic referent). This is because there may in fact not be anyone who thinks himself capable of beating Mary; that is, there may not be any extralinguistic referent for Whoever and himself.

It is common, however, for coreference and anaphora to coincide. Consider, for example, the sentence "The media reported that Congress voted themselves a raise". The expressions "Congress" and "themselves" are coreferential since they refer to the same real-

world entity, namely "the legislative branch of the federal government". At the same time, "themselves" is an anaphor since it necessarily refers to the expression "congress". Note that there is no reading of this sentence such that themselves can be construed as referring to the expression the media. In sum, coreference deals with the relation of a linguistic expression to some entity in the real world, past, present, or future; anaphora deals with the relation between two linguistic expressions.

Deixis. A deictic expression has one meaning but can refer to different entities depending on the speaker and his or her spatial and

temporal orientation. Obvious examples are expressions such as "you" and "I", here and there, and right and left. Assume, for instance, that Jack and Jill are speaking to each other face to face. When Jack is speaking, "I" refers to Jack, and "you" refers to Jill. When Jill is speaking, the referents for these expressions reverse. Likewise, when Jack is speaking, "here" refers to a position near Jack, and "there" refers to a position near Jill. When Jill speaks, the referents for these expressions reverse. Similarly, right and left can refer to the same location, depending upon whether Jack or Jill is speaking; his left is her right, and vice versa. Likewise, expressions

such as Jack or Jill is speaking; his left is her right, and vice versa. Likewise, expressions such as yesterday, today, and tomorrow are deitic. Jack may say to Jill, Yesterday I told you I would pay you tomorrow, which is today.

Note, moreover, that deixis can intersect with anaphora. Consider, for example, the sentence Members of Congress believe they deserve a raise. The expression they can refer either to the expression members of Congress or to some other plural entity in the context of the utterance. When, as in the first case, a pronoun refers to another linguistic expression, it is used anaphorically; when, as in

**the second case, it refers to some entity in the extralinguistic context,
it is used deictically.**

Types of reference.

1) Variable Reference (could be deixis and anaphora): same expression may refer to different objects. For example:

“My mother” (referring to the mother of the speaker) may refer to many different ladies depending on different speakers.

“Here” in the sentence “I am here” (referring to the place where the speaker is standing) also can refer to different places depending on different speakers.

Some clues of Variable Reference

Possessive adjectives: my sister, your brother, the government's decision... Exception: John's hat (not a referring expression because it refers to the hat of John only regardless the speaker).

Demonstrative adjectives and pronouns: this, that, these, those, ... (this page, that book that car is mine...)

Personal pronouns: I, You, He, Me, Him...

Adverbs of place/ time: here, there, then, today, yesterday, now, at the station,

Articles: the boy in the corner; I want to buy a car.

2) Same Reference (Coreference): different expressions refer to the same object.

Examples:

**Uncle Ho – Ho Chi Minh – Nguyen Ai Quoc - Nguyen Sinh Cung –
Nguyen Tat Thanh: all refer to the same person.**

HCM City and Saigon: both refer to the same city.

My father is a teacher: both underlined groups of words refer to the same person.

We chose John leader. John and leader refer to the same person.

The Morning Star and The Evening Star. Both refer to the same star.

3) Constant Reference: one expression always refers to the same object, (regardless who is the speaker).

**Proper names, especially geographical names: John, Smith,
David, Vietnam, Laos ...**

**Unique things: the sun, the moon, the earth, the east, the west,
Halley's Comet,**

4) No reference: an expression which is meaningful but does not refer to anything.

Function words: and, but, if, almost, ...

Imaginary characters: Batman, Dragon, Superman, Snow White, Taám Caùm, ...

The objects that do not exist now.

Ex: The king of France is bald (France does not have any king nowadays)

The Queen of Vietnam nowadays is a Cambodian. (no VN queen now)

REFERRING EXPRESSIONS

Definition: A referring expression *'is any expression used in an utterance to refer to someone or something particular.* (on the part of the speaker)

Ex: + When a speaker says, 'My father' he has a particular person in mind => *my father* is a referring expression.

+ The name *Fred* in the utterance "Fred hit me", where the speaker has a particular person in mind, is a referring expression.

+ *Fred* in “There is no Fred at this address” is not a referring expression because in this case the speaker would not have a particular person in mind.

2. Some clues of referring expression

Possessive: my friend, Paul’s hat, ...

Demonstrative: this book, that machine, ...

Proper name: Smith, David, Vietnam ...

Personal Pronouns (only when being uttered): I, You, He, She...

Constant Reference (unique thing): the sun, the moon, the earth, the east, the west, Halley's Comet, ...

Past tense: helps to recognize Referring Expression

Ex: I saw a boy yesterday

I want to go fishing on the lake

My sister is a singer

Yesterday, I met a singer

I'm looking for a car to buy

I bought a car in a showroom on Nguyen Hue Street.

3. Not a referring expression

Something general: family, society, people, ...

Representative of social classes or species: the poor, the rich, the elephant, dogs, cats, ...

Profession/ Job: singer, teacher, lawyer, ...

Ex: *The singer* in “The singer I admire most is SilkBlack” is a RE because it refers to a particular person.

***A singer* in “My sister is a singer” is not a RE because it is a job in general.**

Note: *Whether an expression is a referring expression or not is heavily dependent linguistic context and on circumstances of utterance.*