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

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

Read your reference book p. 130

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.'

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.

Metonymy

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.
Some different kinds of referents:

- Concrete vs. abstract
- Unique vs. Non-unique
- Countable vs. 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;
2 I wanted to buy a newspaper.
3 Here a newspaper may refer to a specific newspaper or some newspaper.
4 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:
3 Jack told Ralph that a visitor was waiting for him.
3 the pronoun you is used generically or specifically:
4 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:
5 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.