Brainstorming exercise

1. What is the difference between the underlined nominals in sentences (a) -(d), in terms of referentiality and definiteness:
   - John would like to marry a talented woman, but he couldn’t find one.
     ________________________________
   - and he finally found one.
     ________________________________
   - if she is also tall.
     ________________________________
   - but she is dating someone else.
     ________________________________
Reference and Definiteness

Givon Chapter 5
The function of Determiners

- Articles and demonstratives
- Marking referential coherence of NP’s
1. Existence vs. Reference

Consider the following:

- The Queen of England is bald.
  The King of France is bald.
- I rode a horse yesterday.
  I rode a unicorn yesterday.
- There was an old elf who lived in the forest.
  He lived all by himself and [] was very lonely.
  One day the old elf met a frog near a pond.
Grammar is sensitive to what is established and can be identified in the universe of discourse.

Initial introduction
- Indefinite determiners (a/an, some, any…)

Subsequent mentioning
- Definite articles
- Pronouns
- Zero anaphor
- Names
- Demonstratives
2. Referential Intent: Specific or non-specific?

Definite and referring:
- Richard wants to marry *the rich woman* he dated.

Indefinite: referring or non-referring?
- Richard wants to marry *a rich woman*,
  i) though he doesn’t know *her* well.
  ii) though he doesn’t know *any*.

Interpretation:
- Referring: He has a *particular* woman in mind.
- Non-referring: He has *no* particular woman in mind; wishes to marry someone of that type.

Conclusion:
- Definite NP ‘*the woman*’ must be referring.
- Indefinite NP ‘*a woman*’ can be either referring or non-referring.
3. Reference and Modality

(Realis)
- Richard *married a rich woman*,
  ...though he didn’t know *her* well.
  ...??though he didn’t know *any*.

(presupposition)
- *Because Richard married a rich woman*,
  *he bought a fancy car*.

Indefinite NP and modality

Fact (Presupposition and R-assertion): referring

Non-face (IRR- and NEG-assertion): *either referring or*
  non-referring
4. Grammatical environments for non-referring ‘a’:

i) Irrealis modality

A. condition: If he meets a rich woman,
B. yes/no question: Did he meet a rich woman?
C. Command: Go meet a rich woman!
D. Modals: He may meet a rich woman.
E. Epistemic Adverb: Maybe he met a rich woman.
F. Modality and Manipulative V:
    He *wants* to meet a rich woman.
    They *urged* him to meet a rich woman.
G. Non-factive PCU V: He *dreamed* that he met a rich woman.
Reference

ii) Habitual tense:
- *He dated a rich woman every Tuesday.* (different ones or the same one?)

iii) Nominal predicate
- (Non-referring) *John is a teacher, not a student.*
- (Referring) *John is a teacher I admired.*
  (Which John?)

Verbs with irrealis semantic modality
- *He was looking for a tender-hearted girl.*
- (cf. *He was dating a tender-hearted girl.*)
Reference

5. Indefinite DET ‘any’ ‘no’ ‘some’

A. ‘any’ and ‘no’: non-referring
   - He will date any woman.
   - *He dated any woman. (realis)
   - He will date/dated no woman.

B. ‘some’:
   - Referring with factive Mode.
   - Non-referring with non-factive mode

Fact:
   - I know that he joined some club.
   - He joined some club yesterday.

Non-fact: I will join some student club,
   - …and I know it welcomes me (referring).
   - …but I don’t know which one yet (non-referring).
Reference

C. As pronouns (alone or with –one, -body)
- I was looking for books on syntax, ...and I found some.
  ...but I couldn’t find any/*some.
- If anybody/somebody shows up, tell them...
  If anything/something happens, let me know.
- Someone did/may do it.
  Something happened/may happen.

**But, ‘any’ is incompatible with realis mode:**
- Anybody *did it/may do it.
- Anything *happened/may happen.
Reference

6. Referring under the scope of negation

- Non-referring:
  - I didn’t see an eagle.
  - I didn’t see any eagle.
  - I saw no eagle.

- *Referring indefinite:
  - *I didn’t see an eagle.
  - (cf. I saw an eagle.)

- Referring definite:
  - I didn’t see the eagle (you saw).

Why??

- Negation is presuppositional. The speaker presupposes the hearer’s belief in the event and the participants. The hearer can identify the participants.
- ‘Definite’ means: identifiable to the hearer.
7. Gradation of indefinite referential intent

- **Weakest**
  - Did you see *anything* there?
  - Did you see *anybody* there?
  - Did you see *any man* there?
  - Did you see *some man* there?
  - Did you see *a man* there?
  - Did you see *a tall man* there?
  - Did you see *a tall man* wearing a blue shirt there?
  - Did you see *a tall man* there wearing a blue shirt and sitting on a red rock with a hat in his left hand?

- **Strongest referring -> Definite**
  - Did you see *the man/John* there?
Reference

8. Referential intent along two dimensions:

- Speaker’s perspective:
  - How strongly does the speaker intend to suggest that they are referring to a particular individual?

- Hearer’s perspective:
  - How probable is the NP referring to a specific individual?

**Coding devices:**

- Indefinite article: a > some > any
- Modification: more modification > less modification
- NP type: specific N > person > thing
Reference

9. Reference and plurality
- He’s planning to sell a house.
- He’s planning to sell houses.
- He always meets a girl for lunch.
- He always meets girls for lunch.
- *(realis)* What did he do last year?
  - He sold houses. (as a real estate broker)
  - He sold a house.

Observations:
- Plural NP: downgrades the referential intent.
- Non-referring even under fact modality.
Reference

10. Pronouns and reference

- Indefinite pronouns ‘one’
- Definite pronouns ‘he’ ‘she’ ‘them’…

- I am looking for a white horse.
  …but couldn’t find one. (non-referring)
  …and finally found one. (referring)
- Richard wanted to marry a rich girl.
  …but she also had to be pretty.
  …though she wasn’t pretty.
- If you see anybody, tell him/them I am here.
Reference

Four-way contrast in the use of pronouns:

*Richard was planning to marry a rich girl,*

- A. definite, referring:
  
  ...but *she* rejected him.

- B. definite, non-referring:
  
  ...*provided she* was also smart.

- C. indefinite, referring:
  
  ...and *he* finally found *one*.

- D. indefinite, non-referring:
  
  ...and he is still looking for *one.*
Reference

11. Pragmatic effect on Reference:

- On the way home, he bought a newspaper.
  - More likely to be non-referring
- On the way home, he bought a book.

12. Pragmatic importance:

- Indefinite-referring ‘this’:
- Dear Abby:
  There’s this guy I’ve been going with for near three years. Well, he hits me…He accused me of coming on to a friend of his …I feel like an old married lady who lets her husband push her around.
Definiteness

A: You know what?!
B: I bought a TV yesterday.
- referring, specific but non-identifiable
vs. I bought the TV yesterday.
- referring, specific and identifiable

1. Definite ‘the’:
   ✨ The speaker assumes that the hearer can identify the specific referent of the NP.
   ✨ The referent is identifiable to the hearer.
Definiteness

2. Sources for identifiability:
   1) The shared background knowledge.
   2) The shared current situation.
   3) The shared current discourse.

3. Situation-based (“deictic”) Definites
   1) Speaker & hearer: I, you, we
   2) Demonstrative: this whiteboard, that blackboard
   3) Adverbs of time: now, later, tomorrow
   4) Adverbs of place: here, there
Definiteness

4. Culture/Knowledge-based Definites

1) Shared universe:
   *the sun, the Mars*

2) Shared experience/society/culture/environment:
   *the President, the Major, the Chair, ‘the bank’, the activity center*

3) Shared frames invoked by a preceding NP:
   *He bought a house, but the living room was too small. He was sent to the emergency room, and the doctor*
   *He told us that his father was ill.*
Difiniteness

- Extreme examples:

  *The article* in Newsweek magazine called it ‘the ultimate reunion’. Was it to be a gathering of war veterans? Perhaps a banquet in honor of our country’s living ex-president. No, it was nothing of the kind – just a rumor that surviving members of the popular music group the Beatles and Yoko Ono, widow of deceased Beatle John Lennon, were thinking of doing something together again.
Definiteness

5. Text-based (‘anaphoric’) Definites

1) Zero, pronouns, and definite NPs
   - After the queen said that, the king got mad. He retired into the chamber, 0 lay on the floor, and 0 refused to talk. Finally, the queen came to him and said…

2) Stressed vs. unstressed pronoun
   - Mary told Suzy, then she told Sally.
   - Mary told Suzy, then SHE told Sally.
   - Unstressed: for unproblematic subject continuity
   - Stressed: switch-of-subject
Definiteness

3) Demonstratives as text-based Definites:

- ‘It’: preceding context
  
  ...And so she went and did all of it (the work) in one day, and it sure took some doing. But she got it done, all of it.

- ‘That’: a large chunk of text backward

  ...And that’s what really happened, if you want to know.

- ‘This’: a chunk of text forward

  ...Now, this is what she did afterwards: She...
Definiteness

Compare:
- And **that** was the news, Wednesday, Jan 19th. **This** is Walter Cronkite, bidding you goodnight.
- **This** example shows that...

In general:
- **This/these** = near = more accessible
- **That/those** = far = less accessible
Generic Subjects

He’s thinking about the lion that killed his cows.
He’s thinking about a lion he once had.
He’s thinking about buying a lion.
He’s thinking about the lion (or lions).
Generic Subjects

- Type-referring in subject position:
  - Definite: *The lion is a dangerous animal.*
  - Plural: *Lions are dangerous.*
  - Quantified Plural:
    - *All lions are dangerous.*
    - *Some lions are dangerous.*
    - *Most lions are dangerous.*
  - Indefinite: *A lion is a dangerous animal.*

- But in object position:
  - *He thought about the lion/lions.* (generic)
  - *He thought about all lions/a lion.* (referring)