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*Boris Gasparov*

# **SPEECH, MEMORY, AND MEANING**

INTERTEXTUALITY IN EVERYDAY LANGUAGE

TRENDS IN LINGUISTICS

## Speech, Memory, and Meaning

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*Editors*

Walter Bisang

Hans Henrich Hock

(main editor for this volume)

Werner Winter

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# Speech, Memory, and Meaning

Intertextuality in Everyday Language

*by*

Boris Gasparov

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“Behold in the plains, and caves, and caverns of my memory, innumerable and innumerably full of innumerable kinds of things . . . — over all these do I run, I fly; I dive on this side and that, as far as I can, and there is no end” (X, 17) “When I enter there, I require instantly what I will to be brought forth, and something instantly comes; others might be longer sought after, which are fetched as it were out of some inner receptacle; others rush out in troops, and while one thing is desired and required, they start forth, as who should say, ‘Is it perchance I?’ These I drive away with the hand of my heart from the face of my remembrance, until what I wish for be unveiled, and appear in sight, out of its secret place. Other things come up readily, in unbroken order, as they are called for; and as they make way, they are hidden from sight, ready to come when I will.”

Augustine, *Confessions*



## Acknowledgements

This book follows another one written and published in Russian a decade ago (*Iazyk, pamiat', obraz: Lingvistika iazykovogo sushchestvovaniia*, Moscow: NLO, 1996). While my basic approach remains the same, the two books differ in the goals they pursue and the intellectual environment to which they refer. The earlier book was aimed at building bridges between linguistics, semiotics, and theories of literary discourse – intellectual domains that all address language yet often find themselves at odds about the most fundamental premises concerning its nature. The present book is primarily concentrated on the tasks of observing and interpreting the linguistic experience of speakers, although the vision of integrated linguistic, semiotic, and literary modes of thought about language remains an important underlying principle.

After my first book was published, I received many responses, in the form of reviews, private letters and conversations, and discussions in class and lecture halls. To a large extent, the way my project evolved toward its present states the result of this feedback. Among many stimuli I have received, some of the most important were those that arose from numerous opportunities to present my thoughts in various public professional forums. The most memorable among them included a symposium on my 1996 book organized by Seminars on Dialogue (Dialogseminaret) in Stockholm; a paper delivered at the Berkeley Linguistic Society; and lecture series at the faculty of translation at Tomsk Polytechnic University. I wish to express my enormous gratitude to all those who were involved in the discussions that ensued for their encouragement, criticism, suggestions, and – last but not least – help in working with the material drawn from different languages. I wish also to thank the three great Universities at which I have had the privilege of teaching in the course of the last four decades – Tartu University, the University of California at Berkeley, and Columbia University – for their intellectual and material support of my work.





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## Chapter 1

### Introduction. Intertextuality, dialogism, and memory: The fabric of linguistic creativity

Nullum est iam dictum, quod non sit dictum prius.

Terence, *Eunuch*

#### 1.1. The usage-oriented model from an intertextual perspective

The goal of this book is twofold. On the one hand, it explores the general strategy of approaching speakers' linguistic competence in a way that highlights its heterogeneous and volatile nature – the result of its inextricable linkage to manifold contexts and communicative goals within which speakers develop their language skills, and for the sake of which they practice them. On the other hand, it is an attempt to work out a coherent conceptual apparatus, grounded in linguistic form, that could describe, or at least outline, the way speakers handle their ever-changing, creatively challenging communicative tasks by the established means of language.

Critique of the rationalist model of language as a hermetic system of algorithmic combinatorial rules, presumably underlying all the versatility of overt linguistic behavior, has a long and rich history. As far as the general philosophical argument goes, the alternative “dynamic” vision of language as an open-ended creative process was offered, with remarkable intellectual force, by such philosophers, semioticians, and literary theorists of the past century as Ludwig Wittgenstein, Walter Benjamin, Mikhail Bakhtin, and Jacques Derrida.<sup>1</sup> Their work in turn emerged from a deep historical background; it was grounded, first and foremost, in the Romantic and neo-Romantic critique of Cartesian and – in a more complicated way – Kantian rationalism,<sup>2</sup> most notably by Johann Gottfried Herder, Friedrich von Hardenberg (Novalis), Friedrich Schlegel,<sup>3</sup> Wilhelm von Humboldt, and Karl Vossler.<sup>4</sup>

Until recently, however, this philosophical vision of language had little impact on linguistics proper. Without the painstaking construction, component by component and layer by layer, of an alternative conceptual edifice that could accommodate speakers' dynamic experience of language, any

critique of the rigid artificiality of abstract patterns and algorithmic rules leaves them essentially intact. For all its limitations, the treatment of language as a system of immanent rules – from Quintillian’s Latin grammar and the all grammar surveys and textbooks that stemmed from it (Love 1995: 383-384), to various theoretical models, notably Jakobson’s structural universalism and generative grammar – resulted in a fully developed apparatus for describing speakers’ linguistic competence, no matter how remote from actual speakers’ practice. Critics of this approach, on the other hand, rarely ventured onto the descriptive terrain beyond isolated examples, however brilliantly analyzed.

The situation changed in the last two decades of the twentieth century. It was a time marked by concentrated efforts to build conceptual categories and descriptive techniques that would be as manifest and systematic as, yet fundamentally different from, those offered by formal linguistic models. I mean, of course, a constellation of loosely related ideas identified by the umbrella name of “cognitive linguistics”: the usage-oriented model of language (Langacker 1987); frame semantics (Fillmore 1982a; 1997a) and construction grammar (Fillmore, Kay and O’Connor 1988; Kay 1997b); the theory of conceptual metaphor (Lakoff and Johnson 1980); the idea of mental spaces (Fauconnier [1985] 1994); and finally, studies of various aspects of language in the light of the prototype theory (Berlin and Kay [1969] 1999; Taylor 1989; Taylor 2002). One should also acknowledge the important contribution of studies of oral speech (Halliday [1978] 1994; Chafe 1994) to the emerging new understanding of language.<sup>5</sup>

The approach taken in this book has many points of intersection with diverse facets of this novel trend. It is, first of all, usage-oriented; I cannot agree more with the thesis, expressed with particular force by Langacker, that the command of a language involves a massive knowledge of linguistic conventions, “regardless of whether these conventions can be subsumed under more general statements” (Langacker 1987: 494) – knowledge that from a rationalist point of view looks “massively redundant” (Langacker 1999: 91). Reliance on the enormous amount of conventionalized expressions erodes the boundary between the lexicon and grammar (Fillmore, Kay and O’Connor 1988; Langacker 2002: 1). Since each such expression bears an imprint of tangible situations in which it is typically used, the “encyclopedic” knowledge of a broad situational background becomes an integral part of its meaning, making all but redundant the distinction between “competence” and “performance” (Fillmore 1979: 89), or between “syntax,” “semantics,” and “pragmatics” (Fillmore 1996: 57; Schegloff, Ochs

and Thompson 1996; Kay 1997a: 52; Langacker 2002: 16). The general strategy of describing language that stemmed from this approach can be characterized, in Langacker's aphoristic formulation, as "non-reductive, maximalist, bottom-up," in contradistinction to the "reductive, minimalist, top-down" strategy of generative grammar (Langacker 1999: 90).<sup>6</sup>

I believe that this book occupies a distinctive place within this general intellectual domain due to its particularly strong allegiance to the facts of speech, in all the richness of the texture which they possess as tangible artifacts emerging from speakers' efforts to express themselves and to communicate. According to Gibbs (2006: 11), "linguistic structures are related to and motivated by human conceptual knowledge, bodily experience, and the communicative functions of discourse"; one can accept this thesis, yet the question remains: what is the place of *speech itself* in this scheme of things?

I consider speakers' ability to use language to be anchored, first and foremost, in their raw, unprocessed memories of fragments of their past speech experience, remembered as concrete pieces of language matter, with their meaning pinned to concrete communicative situations. The prevalent mode of speakers' linguistic activity can be called "intertextual," in the sense that speakers always build something new by infusing it with their recollection of textual fragments drawn from previous instances of speech. The mental work involved in this process – shifting frames, blending conceptual domains, making analogical extensions – is not purely conceptual: it is grounded in and intermingled with tangible pieces of textual matter that are in speakers' possession.

"Language" (i.e., conventional forms of expression) does not determine "thought," in a Whorfian sense; but it is more than just a "prompt" for thought (Fauconnier and Turner 2002: Ch. 17). It offers firm ground from which volatile cognitive endeavors can be launched, and on which they eventually land as products of speech. Creating and interpreting meanings is not a purely mental issue; it always bears the imprint of the language matter used in the process. The speaker's creative will makes these pieces of language matter pliant; it alters, mixes, and reinterprets them, accommodating them to the speaker's intention. But that intention itself becomes pliant in the process, accommodating itself to the material that has served for its realization. However transformed by the speaker's current mindset, this material never completely loses its intertextual appeal, i.e., its allusional connections to previous instances of its usage, which never coincide completely with the speaker's needs and intentions of the moment. What-



ever one chooses to make out of a quantum of language matter, one cannot abstract it from its original association with a certain experiential landscape out of which it has been drawn by memory.

All cognitive operations with language are intertextual in their nature. The Kantian “genius” of speakers – their unlimited and unconstrained faculty of schematization, creative imagination, and analogical thinking – does not emerge unmediated from the spiritual depths of an individual’s mind. It becomes a fact of expression only when mediated by specific speech items made available by interpersonal linguistic experience. To paraphrase Novalis’s famous dictum, whenever a speaker strives to reach the *Unbedingte* (unconditional, absolute) of his inner intention, he ends up with *Dinge* (things, objects) of remembered speech fragments.<sup>7</sup>

A conventional unit of language is a “thing” first and foremost – a tangible piece of experience kept by memory. It can be schematized, blended with other pieces, analogically stretched, reframed; yet in all these cognitive operations it preserves what is an inalienable feature of any tangible object – its *texture*.<sup>8</sup> The intertextual model of language usage can be understood as a part of the usage-oriented approach that highlights the impact of unique textures of remembered fragments of speech on cognitive operations with language.

## 1.2. The notion of texture

It is characteristic of works in theoretical linguistics that some particularly striking examples have been used repeatedly, by different authors and for different purposes; this habit in itself can serve as a vivid illustration of the intertextual nature of language usage. Let me follow this tradition by revisiting the famous example from (Fauconnier [1985] 1994) for the purpose of showing the role of the texture of speech fragments in cognitive operations with language:

(1.1) The mushroom omelet left without paying.

It is hard to find a more vivid illustration of speakers’ creativity in dealing with language. Mapping one “mental space” (that of the mushroom omelet) onto another (that of the client who ordered it) involves an effort of imagination that could be neither prescribed nor predicted by any set system of rules. It is the cognitive “genius” of the speaker and the addressee

that enables them to create and comprehend such an improvised conceptual blending.

What remains to be explored after this product of creative blending has emerged as a fact of speech is: where does its discourse (as suggested by its texture) belong, i.e., who might say this, to whom, under what circumstances, and for what purposes. Of course, the fact that the imagined scene takes place in some kind of a restaurant is suggested by its subject matter itself; yet some details need further exploration. Let us suppose that there are customers sitting at the next table in that restaurant who witnessed this scene; would they use those words to convey their observations to each other, or to the waiter? The probability of this is rather low, unless the customers in question include admirers of Fauconnier's book who make the scene a live incarnation of his thesis by citing his example. Typically, we expect this remark to be made by one waiter or waitress to another. Why should this be so obvious? Because identifying people with the food they eat – ostensibly for the sake of brevity, but in fact adding a slight touch of mockery into the bargain – is a perceivable feature of "waiters' discourse." It is perceivable as such because each of us has experienced bits and pieces of that discourse, together with the psychological and social overtones involved in it, in real life and / or in fictional narratives. Furthermore, one senses behind the brusque rhythm of this remark the rushed atmosphere of a simple eatery; somehow, a phrase like *The terrine de canard left without paying* does not seem as perfectly natural as the one involving the mushroom omelet – unless, again, it is uttered by a Fauconnier reader as a sarcastic intertextual transplantation of the commonplace scene (made vivid by the original phrase) into the pretentious atmosphere of an American-French restaurant. One can also surmise that the hypothetical waiter / waitress uttering the phrase about the mushroom omelet was in fact more contemptuous than upset. A waiter really hurt by the loss of a mushroom omelet would probably have said something more sharply targeted at the delinquent client's personality. As the sentence goes, the imagined speaker, amidst the rush and clatter of an imagined American eatery, seems to be satisfied with a momentary outburst whose implied contemptuous mockery toward one of "them" – those ever-hungry, demanding, unscrupulous species, the clients – reasserts solidarity among his / her comrades-in-arms.

What hovers over all these psychological, social, and stylistic overtones of the sentence is a comic image of a mushroom omelet getting up from the table and surreptitiously slipping away. A literal incarnation of the expression is not completely obliterated by awareness of the conceptual blending

done to it.<sup>9</sup> *The mushroom omelet* remains ‘the mushroom omelet,’ whatever one chooses to make out of it. It stays in the sentence’s background, ready to be explored in further cognitive ventures – for instance, making an observation about the particular softness of the mushroom omelet’s tread that might contribute to its successful escape. An actual case of such secondary literalization of a metonymy can be found in one of Chekhov’s humorous pieces. It poses as a mock bookseller’s advertisement, in which the names of various books and magazines and the advertisement’s comments about them clash to create comic *double entendres*:

(1.2) *The Russian Thought* is available in hard cover only.

The expression *Russian thought* has its own allusional aura that evokes – particularly in combination with *hard cover* – certain mental landscapes, no matter how thoroughly we understand its actual usage as the title of a journal.

Full understanding of a fact of speech involves, alongside the cognitive abilities needed for its interpretation, recollections of certain situations and, most crucially, of shreds of their linguistic attire which have been retained by memory. The sentence (1.1) appears to us as a fragment taken from a comprehensive discourse. Our memories, which allow us to recreate this discourse in our mind, include previously overheard bits and pieces of waiters’ talk when they speak to each other, the atmosphere of a certain type of eating establishment, stereotypical roles and situations, and what was actually said, or could be said, by their various protagonists. Our capacity for manipulating mental spaces may well be inborn as an integral part of Kantian “judgment” (*Urteilkraft*). But what is needed, above and beyond general mental abilities, for a sentence like (1.1) to emerge, is allusional baggage drawn from particular facets of previous experience whose fragments have been retained by memory. The sentence’s fabric contains innumerable threads that connect it to the discourse from which it stems, and which it evokes. We take note of its brusquely concise syntax, of a certain way of labeling people – by the number of the table, by the food they ordered – with its business-like, but also slightly disdainful connotation; we perceive, if only as a hint, the intonation with which the sentence could be uttered, the tempo of speech and the emotional timbre of the speaker’s voice; one can almost hear the clatter of plates shoved into the dishwasher and the murmur of voices in the background.

This is what happens every time one person creates and another comprehends a fact of speech. It can never be a pure cognitive construct, fresh

from the speaker's mind; it always belongs to a certain domain of experience that exists outside the speaker's self, and largely out of his control. We cannot cast off the discourse from which the given object of speech has emerged and to which its texture alludes. Our creative imagination can put any fragment of language material to a variety of usages, transplant it to different mental landscapes, alter its shape; but it cannot shut off the instant, unmediated impression with which we react to this fragment as an existing fact of speech.

The notion of texture is related to but not identical with that of the semantic frame; it is more broad in scope than the latter. In a similar way to the frame, the texture discloses the meaning of a given expression as a "comprehensive scenario" (Fillmore 1976) whose meaning is always richer in detail than that of the sum total of its constitutive parts. But the texture of an utterance also includes, together with the scenario of the situation itself, a comprehensive scenario of its "speech situation," i.e., its speech genre, the profiles of the speaker and the implied addressee, and a peculiar social and psychological atmosphere that gave rise to this particular utterance.

Kay (1997e) illustrates the comprehensive character of meaning by analyzing a simple story about a chef who one day went to Fisherman's Wharf and bought some fish from a fisherman. Kay's "ideal reader" is able to comprehend the story because his knowledge of the linguistic structures involved in its expressions is inseparable from all kinds of information about chefs, fishes bought for a restaurant, Fisherman's Wharf, etc. What is absent from Kay's analysis is the genre of the story: a fairy-tale transplanted into a setting whose remoteness from the "chronotope" (Bakhtin [1975] 1981a) of a conventional fairy-tale creates a humorous effect, something that is fully understood by a reader well-versed in the "fairy-tale" wonders of Bay Area hedonistic culture. The implications of the genre are not without consequences for the subject matter of the story: the reader who recognizes the fairy-tale pattern attunes his expectation to await something extraordinary that has to happen with the chef, the fisherman, or the fish. (Was that particular fish bought on that particular morning extraordinary in some way?) If nothing happens, the ensuing effect of a thwarted expectation would contribute to the story's subversive / humorous modality.

The principal claim laid out by the notion of texture is that there is no such thing as the comprehensive meaning of a situation as such; the way the meaning is presented is always predicated on a particular facet of discourse to which the manner of presentation (i.e., its texture) alludes.<sup>10</sup> Whatever is conveyed in speech is always imbued with and modified by an

implicit understanding of who has conveyed it, for whom, in what mode, and under what life circumstances.

Wittgenstein and Bakhtin should be credited for emphasizing the heterogeneity and multifaceted nature of language experience.<sup>11</sup> To summarize their principal thesis, there is no such thing as “language” in general; rather, there is an enormous variety of specific “language games” (Wittgenstein)<sup>12</sup> or “speech genres” (Bakhtin [1975] 86).<sup>13</sup>

What I call the texture of a fragment of language material is its inherent intertextual potential. The texture of an utterance as a whole is built out of fragments – however modified – of remembered speech material that stand as tokens of a certain discourse or discourses. It impregnates the meaning of an utterance with particular experiential circumstances, from social parameters and the physical ambiance of the situation to psychological nuances concerning its participants.

A specific texture built in every fact of linguistic expression affects the cognitive operations to which it can be subjected. A similar operation of conceptual blending may yield thoroughly different effects due to the difference in the texture of the language material involved. In *David Copperfield*, Dickens describes the classroom at Mr. Creakle’s school by saying that if it had not had a roof over it, and if it had been pouring day and night ink instead of water from the sky, it could not have been more ink-stained than it actually was. The device used in this description – the imagined transplantation of a scene into a manifestly impossible situation – is identical with that shown in one of Fauconnier’s examples: that if Nixon were President in France, Watergate would not have hurt him. The conceptual similarity of the two sentences only highlights the striking difference of “speech scenarios” built into their discourses: one distinctively literary (i.e., belonging to a literary narrative more than to a conversation) and slightly old-fashioned (one could hardly expect it to emerge in a narrative by a modern author); the other distinctly modern, stemming from an intellectual conversation between a cosmopolitan-minded group of interlocutors of a certain educational level, social position, and political persuasion; one’s irony biting reticent, the other’s eagerly sarcastic.

The process of prototypical recognition is also affected by the diversity of textures. The chair in *The room had only one chair* is quite different from that in *I cannot remember anybody ever sitting in that chair*, or in *We need more chairs here*. A chair can never be simply (prototypically) ‘a chair,’ as far as it has been spoken about; whenever it surfaces in speech, it does so within a certain expression alluding to a particular discourse, which

bestows on it particular attributes and places it in a particular ambience. Even the most elementary, seemingly absolutely neutral *This is a chair* is by no means devoid of a discourse-specific aura: its exuberantly demonstrative tone, together with the total redundancy of the meaning (it is hard to find anyone in need of such an explanation, except a very small child – to whom it would most likely be presented in a different way),<sup>14</sup> focuses our perception on the “language game” of elementary language teaching and learning, recalling examples from a first-year language textbook (or its parodies).

Finally, the factor of intertextuality interferes with the way speakers operate with conceptual metaphors. It has become common knowledge (after Lakoff and Johnson 1980) that metaphoric expressions do not stand as individual phenomena: they are derived from a more abstract schema under which one conceptual domain is mapped onto another. Thus, the conceptual metaphor (i.e., the metaphorical schema) AN ARGUMENT IS WAR gives rise to an open number of concrete metaphorical expressions, in which various aspects of ‘war’ are mapped onto various aspects of ‘an argument.’ The far-reaching quality of this insight is indisputable. However, while following the process by which concrete metaphorical expressions emerge from a conceptual metaphor, one should not lose sight of their disparate discourse allegiances. *He demolished my argument* evokes the mode of an informal yet intellectually dense conversation – most probably, between colleagues or in an intellectual company, in an environment that is relaxed but appropriate for a high-brow exchange. *It was a critical bombshell* is reminiscent of an ornate but formulaic discourse on the “culture page” in a newspaper or magazine; one could hardly offer this to a company of one’s intellectual friends otherwise than as parody. *The journals geared up for a trench war* conveys the speaker’s posture of sarcastic alienation, which he presumes to be shared by the implied addressee; it distinctly belongs to a written narrative – probably, a description of the mores of literary / journalist circles à la Balzac. *Upon examination, no weapons of mass destruction could be detected behind the critic’s belligerent posture* – this realization of the conceptual metaphor bears an unmistakable imprint of Anglo-American political realities and political discourses of today, leaving no doubt about the speaker’s, and his addressee’s, position concerning these matters.<sup>15</sup>

Contrary to the claim that the metaphor “resides in thought, not just in words” (Lakoff and Turner 1989: 2), or that it is “conceptual, not linguistic, in nature” (Kövecses 2002: 201), the disparities between discourses of different expressions stemming from the same conceptual metaphor indicate

that their creation is not an internal conceptual matter. They appear at the intersection of cognitive operations with language, on the one hand, and tangible textures of speech material, on the other, as a compromise between cognitive patterns of creativity and the compulsory textures of remembered fragments of speech.

### 1.3. Dialogism

The usage-oriented model pays allegiance to the “experiential” approach to cognition; it sets itself against an abstract formal approach that strives to separate formal knowledge from concrete experience.<sup>16</sup> The opposition to “abstract rationalism” has been presented in particularly strong terms by Lakoff, Johnson, and Turner (Lakoff and Johnson 1980; Lakoff and Turner 1989; Lakoff and Johnson 1999; for the psycholinguistic perspective, see Gibbs 2006). The philosophical aspect of their argument is somewhat undermined by the authors’ tendency to present their critique of what they call “Western thought” in sweeping terms, without historical specification.<sup>17</sup> Nevertheless, the recognition of speakers’ experience in general, and of their experience of using language in particular, as the core issue of linguistic theory is refreshing, even striking, given how this experience has been contemptuously swept aside for decades as something *menschlches*, *allzu menschlches* and therefore not worthy to be an object of theoretical investigation. Another aspect of the “anti-Cartesian” critique consists in emphasizing speakers’ creativity as essential for dealing with language, in contradistinction to treating it at best as an ornament over “core” operational rules. The resulting portrait of speakers’ competence as flexible and adaptive, unconstrained by preset limitations, and always ready for bold leaps of imagination, is a vast improvement over the drab picture of the speaker as an assembly-line laborer, busy with “encoding” and “decoding” elements<sup>18</sup> of the given lexicon according to the given rules, somehow (don’t ask how) preprogrammed in his genes by “millions of years of evolution” (Chomsky 1964: 59; cf. also Chomsky 1993; Pinker 1994).

For all the richness of its critique of the rationalist approach, the new trend shares one important feature with its much-repudiated opponent. The speaking subject of cognitive linguistics remains *lonely* in all the endeavors of his creativity and imagination – as lonely as the speaking subject of structural linguistics and generative grammar were in their application of preprogrammed rules.<sup>19</sup> A speaker, as envisioned by cognitive psychology

and linguistics, does not need other speakers to be able to operate with language the way he operates. Once he has mastered a conceptual metaphor, such as AN ARGUMENT IS WAR, he can proceed in building an open multitude of derivative metaphorical expressions at his own discretion. Likewise, he does not seem to need anything but his own imagination and worldly experience for performing a metonymical blending (that of the mushroom omelet and the client who ordered it), or for mapping one situation onto another ('if Nixon were President of France'). To be sure, the products of cognitive operations must be comprehensible to other speakers. But each of those receiving and comprehending "others" is also acting on his own, performing similar operations in his mind; "sharing of experience" between different individuals becomes a matter of "simulation" (Gibbs 2006: 35). When Fauconnier and Turner (2002) speak of "the way we think," they do it in terms that make 'we' seem uniform, a simple multiplication of an 'I.'

Paradoxically, it is the emphasis cognitive models place on the creative subjectivity of speakers that often leads to universalist claims, much akin to the universalism of their antipodes, the formal models of language. Indeed, if the subject of a cognitive model operates with language on his own, the emphasis on the universality of his cognitive processes becomes the only way to explain how he is able to communicate with other subjects as lonely as himself. For instance, the theory of conceptual metaphor poses strong claims of universality, despite the recognition of some marginal differences between diverse cultures (see a rather cautious expression of the latter point in Kövecses 2002: 177). As far as one language and culture is concerned, an individual speaker is supposed to be in unconditional possession of the given repertory of conceptual metaphors. The universalist trend has been particularly strong in some works on prototypes.<sup>20</sup>

A peculiar combination of individualism and universality can be seen in the theory of "image schemes" (Lakoff 1987). Its principal claim is that abstract concepts are ultimately derived, via conceptual metaphors, from sensual bodily experiences (Johnson 2005: 22; see further discussion in Gibbs 2006). One can sense almost a messianic fervor in the repudiation of "disembodied symbol-manipulation" (Lakoff 1987: 8), that attribute of what is often summarily referred to as the "classical theory" or even "Western thought."<sup>21</sup> Presenting an abstract concept via a metaphorical embodiment is indeed a widespread phenomenon that can be observed in various languages and cultures. However, the claim of absolute universality for this cognitive pattern seems as much an exaggeration as any universalist



claim about language. Certainly, one can present one abstract conceptual domain through another ('mathematics is music,' or 'music is mathematics'), or a corporeal phenomenon through a non-sensual projection – as, for instance, in George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda*, where the solemnly unhurried gait of a rector's horse is described as "ecclesiastical." I cannot help sensing, in attempts to reduce the whole conceptual world to bodily experience, a whiff of narcissistic individualism. In its absolute concentration on the (corporeal) 'I,'<sup>22</sup> radical sensualism meets the radical idealism of Fichte.

It seems fair to say that the linguistic critique of "Western rationalism" has so far largely neglected an important point – one that, on the contrary, occupied the central position in a similar critique that emerged, approximately at the same time, from the fields of literary theory and cultural studies. I mean an array of ideas concerning the interpersonal aspect of expressing one's thought, an idea most often labeled as the principle of "dialogism."<sup>23</sup>

Cooperation between individual speakers in a dialogue has drawn considerable attention from linguists and psychologists in the last twenty years, especially among those who put an emphasis on the study of oral communication (Tannen 1988; Tannen 1993; Givón 1989; Givón 1995; Sanford & Moxey 1995; Chafe 1994; Schegloff, Ochs & Thompson 1996; Clark 1996). However, the notion of dialogism has a much broader scope than that of actual dialogue. It goes beyond the direct cooperation between interlocutors in a given speech situation. What dialogism means is that every act of speech, of any genre and mode, bears an imprint of the "other" – whether the "other" is directly present or implied, known to the speaker directly or construed.

Recognition among today's linguists of the importance of dialogical interaction led to the foregrounding of informal oral speech as the primary, most "natural" mode of using language (see in particular Halliday [1978] 1994; Chafe 1994; Clark 1996).<sup>24</sup> Dismissing written discourse, or at least pushing it to the background,<sup>25</sup> in fact mirrors the dismissal of oral discourse by proponents of formal models, who never took the trouble to notice how remote their constructs were, in particular, from the practices of oral communication. Both attitudes neglect the enormous variety of "language games" in which speakers are involved – oral and written, directly interactive or targeted at a hypothetical audience – which, I am convinced, constitutes the very essence of language. The notion of dialogism makes intersubjectivity as manifestly present in written texts as in an informal conversation. A written text, even of the most formal and abstract charac-

ter, always cooperates with its implied reader<sup>26</sup> whose shadowy presence determines the tacit understanding of what needs to be stated, refuted, explicated, argued for or against, with all the ensuing consequences for the choice of concrete means of expression.

The most far-reaching implication of the principle of dialogism lies in its contention that any expression ever used by a speaker, in whatever mode and for whatever purpose, is not entirely his own. However modified, an expression always bears traces of its previous usages. A speaker never has full control over the material he uses in speech.<sup>27</sup> Whatever his individual intention, he has to incorporate it in the material already used by other speakers on other occasions; his own “voice” comes through only when it is mixed with the voices of others. The result is what Bakhtin ([1975] 1981b) calls “heteroglossia” – the heterogeneous fabric of speech, never completely controlled by the unique “here and now” of the speaker’s present state of mind.<sup>28</sup>

In order to become fully effective, the cognitivist critique of linguistic rationalism has to abandon its summary attitude toward the “Western” history of ideas. A particularly important antecedent of the cognitivist approach comes from the linguistic thought of the early Romantics, especially Friedrich Schlegel and Novalis. In his *Fichte-Studien*, Novalis offered a profound critique of individualism, particularly of Fichte’s concept of the self. According to Novalis, the subject becomes aware of his own self only by assuming an outward observation point from which he can contemplate and recognize himself: “For the I to be able to establish itself, there must be a non-I.”<sup>29</sup> Novalis countered Fichte’s famous assertion of the absoluteness of the self, *Ich bin Ich*, with what can be taken as an aphoristic formulation of the principle of dialogism: *Ich bin nicht-Ich*.<sup>30</sup> Both Novalis and Schlegel strongly argued against any “system” – a phenomenon possible only under the condition of the hermetic isolation of the subject. Their vision of mind and language was that of a multitude of fragments involved in never-ceasing commotion.<sup>31</sup> Schlegel’s and Novalis’ thought has been echoed in modern times by such theoreticians of discourse as Mikhail Bakhtin, Roland Barthes, and Julia Kristeva. Their idea of dialogism opened the way to describing language as a *fragmented unity* that exists not otherwise than in a plurality of diverse facets and under diverse perspectives.

### 1.4. Memory and intertextuality

A crucial feature of the usage-oriented model is its strong emphasis on the necessity for a speaker to learn a “massively redundant” (Langacker) amount of primary language material in order to be able to speak the language adequately. One can appreciate the intellectual courage behind this thesis in that it was expressed, particularly by Langacker and Fillmore, at a time when academic conventions uniformly promoted the “economy,” “elegance,” and “coherence” of the scholarly description, regardless of the price at which these admirable qualities were to be achieved.<sup>32</sup> Still, even today this thesis looks striking: that one has to learn hundreds or even thousands of single representations of a pattern, when they could all be produced instead by a rule (however complicated), may seem an awfully inefficient way to proceed; it goes against the grain of our intellectual instincts which always strive for generalizations and shortcuts. For a person aware of his ability to discern patterns even among the most diverse data (and one can hardly become a linguist without possessing this ability to a high degree), it is hard to concede that whatever his intellectual efforts and achievements in this direction, he has, in order to become a fluent speaker, to absorb “a prodigious amount of actual learning” (Langacker 1999: 90), i.e., of the unstructured, almost random memorization of a vast quantity of primary speech data, to a degree that makes the implementation of patterns almost redundant.

The concept of language memory highlights an aspect in the usage of language that makes the requirement of the “massive redundancy” of speakers’ knowledge not so wasteful as it may overtly look. It adds to our perception of language a factor that is crucial in any actual usage of language yet is rarely, if ever, acknowledged by linguistic models – namely, the factor of the continuing nature of speech experience.

A linguistic description typically approaches language as if it were a one-time event – as if speakers had to prove their command of word forms and word combinations just once, in the way of a proficiency test. Such an approach does not address the qualitative difference between the knowledge that is necessary and sufficient for a successful one-time operation, and the competence suitable for repeated usage over a long stretch of time – in the case of language, over the speaker’s entire lifetime.

The usage-oriented approach to language is an approach that is *memory-oriented* and *time-oriented*. Our language is not a phenomenon to be grasped once and forever; it is a continuous life-long occupation. For recur-

rent usage, the accumulation of a massive unstructured body of knowledge is indeed the most efficient and “economic,” in fact the only feasible strategy.<sup>33</sup> If we had needed certain word forms or word combinations only once, it would have been strange to memorize all of them separately, instead of generating them by a uniform rule. But under the conditions of needing them on an uncountable number of occasions over many years of language usage, their direct retrieval from memory becomes more efficient than the repeated implementation of a generative rule, however striking in its explanatory power.

The mode of operation predicated on memory applies to much of our language competence. The question is – how much? It is obvious that most of the sentences that speakers produce rarely repeat themselves in their entirety (although the extent of their “novelty” is often exaggerated).<sup>34</sup> The emergence in speech of a non-formulaic sentence or sequence of sentences is in most cases indeed a one-time event, even though their components might be used repeatedly. The problem of fundamental importance is that of the relation between the routine and the new, between memorization and construction. How much memorization is employed in the creation (and respectively, comprehension) of a new product of speech as a whole? In other words, how do speakers manage, starting from what they actually remember, to create new constellations of language matter that never figured exactly in that way in their previous language experience?

The fact that linguistic expressions carry in their fabric recollections of and allusions to other texts has been initially explored in regard to literary texts only. Since the 1970s, this phenomenon has become epicentral in literary and semiotic studies. Within those disciplines, it is known as *intertextuality*.<sup>35</sup> While the intertextual nature of literary texts has become an axiom for literary and cultural studies, little has been done so far in exploring the role intertextuality plays in everyday communication.<sup>36</sup> Studies of intertextuality often limit their approach to literary texts while relegating everyday language to the conceptual confines of a system of objectively set signs. To this effect, (Barthes 1966: 54) speaks of the distinction between “linguistics” and “semiotics,” an opposition that proclaims openness and pluralism to be exclusive attributes of literary and cultural studies, while confining studies of language to a formal approach; cf. also (Kristeva [1974] 1984; Grivel 1974). (Kristeva [1977] 1980) reinforces this opposition when she speaks of linguists as “men” still persisting in “basking in the glory of the seventeenth century” – a statement clearly showing that to her, linguistics still remains exclusively the Chomskian “Cartesian linguistics.”

I believe that intertextuality is as pervasive, and as crucial, in everyday language as in literary discourses. The elucidation of the foundational role of this phenomenon in speaking is one of the primary goals of this study. It seeks to explore how every new artifact of speech emerges out of the material provided by previous speech experience.

The underlying premise for this exploration can be preliminarily formulated as follows: all new facts of language usage are always grounded in and related to speakers' memory of previous experiences in using language. In other words, speech is primarily the product of speech. Language memory provides the crucial link between the cognitive intention of a speaker and the material facts of speech – their texture – in which this intention is incarnated.<sup>37</sup> Any new communicative task, without exception, mobilizes in the speaker's mind some remembered fragments of speech that can be used, one way or another, in response to the present challenge. Such recollections, diverse, fragmentary, even not fully distinct as they are, constitute an implicit yet indispensable background of every act of speaking or receiving speech. It is the speaker's ability to draw from and allude to this background that gives his communicative effort a chance to succeed. This ability constitutes the essential part of the speaker's language skills – of what can, in fact, be described as his linguistic competence.

**Part I**  
**The Vocabulary**



## Chapter 2

### A coat of many colors: Speech as intertextual collage

But I must've said it before, since I say it now.

Samuel Beckett

Let us begin by examining a few examples of speech of diverse content, syntactic shape, and stylistic texture. All the examples are genuine, i.e., they were created by speakers of English for their own communicative purposes rather than constructed or elicited for the purpose of testing one or another linguistic model.<sup>38</sup>

For all their apparent differences, these facts of speech share one fundamental common feature. While they are all indeed newly created artifacts – not clichés, not ready-made speech formulas – none of them can be called a “virgin” creation, i.e., one built totally anew out of elementary signs – words or morphemes. Rather, each is woven out of various more or less extended expressions about which every “competent” speaker of English (including a sufficiently advanced non-native speaker) can say that they look familiar, i.e., they have somehow figured in that speaker’s previous experience of using the language. These familiar constellations of language matter can be strikingly diverse in shape, content, emotional color, and the presumable situations in which they might be used. Their only common property is that we somehow perceive them as something we “have met with” before – somewhere, sometime, perhaps many times. In a continual flow of speech, one recognizes such familiar configurations of language matter in momentary flashes, not unlike the way one catches a glimpse of a familiar face (or one that looks familiar) in a briskly moving procession.

(2.1) SINGAPORE. – In a major shift of policy, an increasing number of East Asian countries are considering highly risky measures to reinvigorate their economies. (*The International Herald Tribune*)

Although this artifact of speech as such, in its entirety, has in all probability never appeared before in the history of the world, it was not created out of elementary, communicatively neutral resources of language, in hermetic isolation from previous experience. Taking a closer look at its fabric, we



can discern within it many prefabricated ingredients, familiar to speakers in their entirety. Let us try to compile an approximate list of such familiar shapes found in (2.1):

- (2.2) in a [...] of [...]  
 a major [...] of [...]  
 a shift of [...]  
 an increasing number of [...]  
 a number of [...] countries  
 are considering [...]  
 a risky [...]  
 [very] risky  
 high risk  
 measures to [...]  
 their economies  
 to [...] their economies

All the expressions listed above figure in the ICE-GB corpus, most of them as multiple entries. Of course, no fixed corpus of texts, however large, can match the scope of expressions any native speaker can produce, or recognize, on the spot. The list presented above is neither exhaustive nor finite. Moreover, if there is anything certain about it, it is the fact that different individual speakers, upon examining it, could suggest additions to the list, as well as some modifications of the listed expressions. In doing so, they may find themselves in partial disagreement with each other. Karaulov (1993: 247), whose project of “associative grammar” has been based on the massive speech data of Russian, found partial disagreements among individual responses “typical.” This has also been my experience each time I presented an analysis of this type, involving either English or Russian, to an audience of native speakers of either language. Not only is a full consensus never reached among different individual speakers; even a single speaker cannot be certain how many distinct expressions he has recognized, and what the exact shape of each of them would be.<sup>39</sup> Nevertheless, speakers’ reactions, although never exactly the same, coincide to a substantial degree – a degree sufficient to maintain a satisfactory level of mutual understanding.

The considerable compatibility between the language experiences of individual speakers is a natural result of their continual communicative interaction.<sup>40</sup> Speakers constantly offer to each other speech artifacts whose material is drawn from sources familiar to all or many of them – in our case, for instance, primarily from the experience of reading newspapers.<sup>41</sup> Every

individual speaker emerges from this incessant process of “communicative metabolism”<sup>42</sup> equipped with a common stock of memories, sufficient to enable him to follow familiar pieces in the speech of others, and to offer speech artifacts others are able to follow.<sup>43</sup> This also means that the closer the contacts between certain speakers, or within a certain group of speakers, the more intense the communicative metabolism generated by those contacts, and as a result, the denser the texture of the familiar items these speakers are able to pick up from each other’s speech.<sup>44</sup>

Even a perfunctory analysis of our perfectly ordinary and rather pedestrian example reveals in it what Julia Kristeva ([1969] 1980), speaking specifically of literary discourses (first of all, the modern novel), called the “intertextual mosaic” – the array of recognizable features, drawn from and alluding to various facets of the writer’s and reader’s previous literary experience, that transpire in the given text, undermining its claim of complete distinctness. Actually, I would prefer to call this phenomenon *intertextual collage* rather than mosaic, since recognizable expressions do not remain discrete as mosaic-like corpuscles but appear interwoven with and superimposed upon each other. Returning to sentence (2.1), we can say that it presents itself as a collage of various speech fragments, each of which evokes in speakers more or less distinct recollections.

At first glance, the intertextual fabric of the sentence, as suggested by the list (2.2), appears rather slim, because of the fragmentariness of the listed expressions. However, within each expression positions indicated by dots are not merely empty syntactic slots, to be filled at random by any grammatically fitting material. Each firmly entrenched expression is not remembered as a unique and isolated artifact. It carries with itself more or less tangible suggestions of how it can be expanded; activation of such an expression in a speaker’s operative memory occurs together with an adumbration of a group of words, or whole expressions, that could serve as means of its potential fulfillment.

Consider some of the expressions in the ICE-GB containing the fragment *in a ... of*:

- (2.3) in a burst of futurology
- in a fit of passion
- in a frenzy of uncertainty

Although the corpus does not contain the expression *in a major shift of*, it clearly suggests the direction in which the speaker may look to find a fitting filler for the entrenched fragment *in a ... of*. The semantic-stylistic

vector of the expression points toward something sudden, dramatic, almost violent – an impulse that disturbs the existing condition. The choice of *a major shift* fits this suggestion quite well.

The same principle works in regard to every other expression in (2.2). For instance, the fragment *a major ... of* suggests a change, most probably, in the area of economy or policy. The fragments *their economies* or *to ... their economies* rather strongly suggest something alongside the lines of “development.” To cite the ICE-GB corpus:

- (2.4) a major expansion of domiciliary services
- a major restructuring of production locations
- to develop their economies
- in the development of their economies

This is how an intertextual allusion works. It does not point to a definite source, the way a quotation does; rather, it creates a climate of expectations of what may follow, an adumbration of possibilities that orients the speaker’s (and the addressee’s) mind in a certain direction, showing them the road along which the needed language material can be found.

Of course, a fragment like *in a ... of* appears within the cited corpus on many other occasions that have no relation to (2.1):

- (2.5) in a lot of other contact-based dance work you can actually ...
- left him in a bit of a state
- in a couple of weeks

But these and other such samples belong to a different language game or games – mostly, to that of an informal conversation. That the suggestive power of a recognizable fragment of speech is not absolute but contingent on a speech genre, that is, that it is connected to a particular texture of the discourse, is indeed one of the fundamental principles of linguistic intertextuality.

Looking now at (2.1), we can discern in it a complex and variegated fabric of language matter – a linguistic “coat of many colors,” in which one can spot many familiar threads. This seemingly simple instance of communication loses its monolithic character. It is flooded by a multiplicity of recalled expressions and their suggested expansions; they superimpose themselves over the structural contour of the sentence, complicating, if not altogether undermining, its claim to be a “new” product of speech, fresh from the assembly line of the speaker’s internalized grammar. Though in the final analysis it is indeed a unique creation of the speaker, it exhibits a

shared identity with a multitude of other speech products; the speaker's voice comes through mixed with and invaded by voices from the speaker's and his addressees' linguistic past.

The diversity and density of the intertextual fabric of an ordinary speech product seems by no means inferior to what we are used to dealing with in literature.<sup>45</sup> Moreover, I would venture to suggest that it is the intertextuality of literary texts, rather than that of ordinary speech acts, that constitute a relatively straightforward phenomenon. A plain message like (2.1) may contain fewer intertextual clues, and they may be less exciting, than what can be discerned in a densely composed poem. But there is nevertheless some grandeur in the anonymity of intertextual sources typical of the everyday use of language. Literary allusions, for the most part, stand out in the text;<sup>46</sup> they evoke if not a definitive source, at least a particular literary domain. But how many times, from whom, under what circumstances have we heard or read expressions like *high risk*, or *measures to* [...]? The very indeterminacy of this type of intertextuality signifies the high degree of its suggestive potential.

(2.6) (From Edelsky 1993: 197: a group discusses an article in the Sunday newspaper. The author's system of transcription is retained: succeeding expressions are arranged vertically; the moments at which a remark by one of the participants is joined by another are marked with ligatures).

<u>Marion:</u>	<u>Len:</u>	<u>Rafe:</u>
	Was in the Sunday paper	I don't remember where I read it
	_____	
There was a	Oh there	Yeah Sunday
_____		
big analysis	was a scathing analysis of	
Oh just –	oh was just dreadful	
	_____	
		His – it just tore the
		y'know from one end to the other so

The most conspicuous aspect of this dialogue is the simultaneity of the participants' remarks. Instead of waiting for the previous remark to be completed before responding to it, they begin their responses right in the middle of the utterances of their speech partners; this is in fact quite typical of informal conversation. Despite constant interruptions, participants successfully cooperate with each other.<sup>47</sup> The whole arrangement recalls a musical canon, or the collective improvisation of jazz musicians: each new remark, in spite of having interrupted the previous one, echoes and elaborates on it.

From a purely rational point of view, it would seem that one had to receive the other's remark in full in order to comprehend it and respond accordingly. The point is, however, that speakers retrieve what is being said from their own memory as much as from the actual speech they are listening to. Familiar expressions emerge in the listener's mind in their wholeness at an initial prompt before they fully evolve in speech. Each remark is anticipated, with different degrees of certainty, almost from the moment of its inception. Likewise, jazz musicians take instant cues from each other, and respond in accord, because what they have in mind are whole musical phrases and not a succession of single notes.

The moment Len heard the beginning of Rafe's remark *I don't rem...*, he anticipated – with the help of the known topic and general situation of the communication – the extension of the remark: *I don't remember where I [saw / read] it*, and was able to respond without waiting for its completion. Rafe, in his turn, was able to receive Len's remark: *[it] was in the Sunday paper*, while still busy finishing his own. When Marion offers the phrase *a big analysis* as an ironic paraphrase of the more conventional *scathing / devastating analysis*, Len takes the clue instantly, producing a plainer version: *a scathing analysis of...*. Marion's next *oh just...* suggests unmistakably a pronouncement of the type *just terrible / dreadful / awful*, which Len again catches in mid-trajectory. Before Len ends his move, Rafe begins his; what he is offering is another familiar expression: *just tore the [thing to pieces]* – closely akin to the *scathing / devastating analysis* and *just terrible / dreadful* that preceded it. He interrupts himself in the middle, however, deciding to substitute the too predictable remaining part with the more elaborate – yet still prefabricated – *[tore it] from one end to the other*.

Example (2.6) highlights the *anticipatory* dimension of speech behavior,<sup>48</sup> which comes as a natural result of the massive use of instantly recognizable expressions. Each can be recognized in its entirety at a prompt, and then projected in the mind before it is actually articulated.<sup>49</sup> The rest of the segment, as it eventually appears in speech, becomes just a confirmati-

on – or a partial adjustment and elaboration – of what the interlocutors have already anticipated from the moment this segment began to emerge. Both the speaker and the addressee operate with larger units that are perceived before they are actually produced syllable by syllable and word by word.<sup>50</sup> Moreover, each familiar expression brings with it more distant anticipations of what may follow, or how one might respond to it.<sup>51</sup>

This is in fact the only possible way of operating under the time constraints of oral speech. An attempt to produce, or receive, speech from elementary particles of language is doomed to failure in a natural speech environment – as beginning students of a language know all too well. But even in an elaborate written speech, where each expression can be more carefully chosen, reconsidered, and edited, the speaker's efforts concentrate on which familiar turns of speech to choose, and how to package them together into a whole, rather than on how to link one word to another. This is, in fact, the crucial difference between a genuinely "competent" *speaker* and a (not sufficiently advanced) *student* of a language. It is not that the former is doing the same work with language as the latter, only much faster and more efficiently; rather, their speech activity proceeds according to different strategies. A "student" will never become a "speaker" without accumulating in memory a sufficient – which means enormous beyond imagination – stock of concrete facts of speech, which will allow him to abandon the linguistic assembly line and concentrate on manipulating larger prefabricated units.<sup>52</sup>

(2.7) This, after all, was Mesopotamia, home of the some of the greatest monarchies of ancient history. (*The New York Times*)

(2.7) is a manifestly "ungrammatical" sentence; any speaker of English will instantly spot the impossible sequence *the some*, something that under no condition could be allowed. Yet this sentence exists as an empirical fact, in circumstances far from esoteric: on a page of a respectable newspaper. If its construction had proceeded according to syntactic rules, it would be baffling how those rules could have been so egregiously violated, apparently by a well-qualified native speaker. Yet if we assume that the author of this sentence created it from prefabricated expressions rather than from elementary units, it becomes easy to explain the speech accident that happened here.<sup>53</sup>

Among the ready-made expressions used by the writer as raw speech material, were such closely related alternatives as *of the greatest* / *one of the greatest* / *some of the greatest*. To cite the ICE-GB corpus once again:

- (2.8) some of the greatest tresses are coming in the UK  
a member of the greatest cricket club in the world  
one of the greatest inheritances in the Anglo-Saxon world

Each of these alternatives can easily be augmented with such additions as *in the world or in [ancient / recent / modern] history*:

- (2.9) One of the biggest parliament majorities in recent history  
the last ever large-scale land battle in world history

Out of these and similar suggestions grounded in the speaker's memory, an adumbration of the whole sentence is emerging:

- (2.10)                   the greatest [...]  
This was [the home of] one of the greatest [...-s]     of ancient history  
                             some of the greatest [...-s]

The error occurred because of interference between two different, albeit closely related ready-made expressions. The writer's mistake consisted not in combining the words *the* and *some* – an error which, as such, no English speaker would ever make – but in not clearing up the traces of his vacillation between the alternative prefabricated pieces he considered while building his message.<sup>54</sup>

Example (2.7) shows that speakers do not retrieve needed expressions from memory one by one. On the contrary, the prevailing mode of operation is that of *simultaneity*. At each point, the speaker is confronted with a multiplicity of anticipations as to how his speech could be continued, or what is to be expected in the speech of his interlocutor. A multitude of potential expressions, each more or less fitting the occasion, arise in mind concurrently. Only a fraction of these possibilities will actually find their place in the uttered or written message. Many others will make only fleeting appearances in the speaker's mind as he proceeds with his communicative effort. As a result, any phenomenon actually emerging in speech appears, in the minds of the ones who create or receive it, wrapped in an ethereal web of unrealized alternatives, cursory reminiscences, and rejected or lost opportunities. The fact that the unuttered reminiscent background of speech is always much richer than the actual communication gives the latter a high degree of flexibility. Our speech becomes creative not despite the fact that we remember so many ready-made expressions but because of it – thanks to the fact that our memory prompts us to so many simultaneous alternatives, each more or less fit to be used. In most cases, speakers man-

age to keep this incessant commotion of recollections in check to a satisfactory degree, although, as we have seen in (2.7), accidents do happen.

So far we have been dealing with speech artifacts belonging to discourses whose general constitution clearly favors formulaic, cliché-like expressions – an informal conversation, a newspaper report. Does this mean that prefabricated expressions are used predominantly in these kinds of discourses but will be less evident in other kinds? To answer this question, let us turn to another example taken from a radically different domain of language usage.

(2.11) And it was never but once a year that they were brought together anyway, and that was on the neutral, dereligionized ground of Thanksgiving, when everybody gets to eat the same thing, nobody sneaking off to eat funny stuff – no kugel, no gefilte fish, no bitter herbs, just one colossal turkey for two hundred and fifty million people – one colossal turkey feeds all. (Philip Roth, *American Pastoral*)

The familiar expressions every reader would be able to spot in this artifact are legion. Without making any claims as to the completeness of our list, let us put some of them on record:

(2.12) And it was [...]  
was never [...] anyway  
never but once [...]  
once [a year / a month / a week / in a lifetime]  
were brought together  
on the [...] ground  
the [familiar / safe] ground  
[just] once a year, on Thanksgiving  
got something to eat  
the same thing  
sneaked off [into the kitchen]  
good stuff / terrible stuff  
gefilte fish  
no [sugar / salt / meat / butter]  
this turkey is [huge / enormous]  
colossal statue [of the golden calf]  
five loaves of bread [to feed five thousand people]  
two hundred and fifty million people (population of the USA)  
to feed [them] all / to satisfy all  
winner takes all / one takes all  
one size fits all



The ingredients out of which (2.11) is composed are drawn from strikingly diverse facets of language experience. Literary intertextuality in a strict sense – that is, allusions to various literary texts and genres – goes hand in hand with reminiscences evoking everyday speech situations. One can perceive hints at literary narratives of different genres, from the fairy tale to the “Jewish” tale. At the same time, one can also discern traces of prototypical real-life conversations: one is a generic story about a family whose members see each other only once a year, on Thanksgiving, or a discussion of how one has to suffer at family gatherings, this happening, fortunately, but once a year; another is also a generic conversation about funny people – foreigners, immigrants – and the funny stuff they have the habit of eating, interspersed with a typical anecdote about a stiff dinner party from which one sneaks off to nibble furtively at something habitually palatable. There are biblical allusions in which the Old and the New Testaments are intricately blended (the principal protagonists of the story are a mixed Catholic-Jewish couple, which adds an uneasiness to the yearly summits at the Thanksgiving table). One can also spot some vestiges of newspaper language, advertisement, and professional jargon.

This is indeed a coat of many colors. Its threads come together in intricate, almost teasingly suggestive patterns. The intensity with which this linguistic product appeals to our linguistic resources, the variety of tasks with which it taxes our language experience are tremendous. One has to appreciate, for instance, the multitude of allusional avenues to which the expressions *colossal turkey* and *one [...] feeds all* point simultaneously: ritual exclamations of appreciation at the enormous size of the Thanksgiving turkey; the colossal statues of pagan antiquity, in particular that of the Golden Calf, as a symbol of a “dereligionized” communion; five loaves of bread from a story in Exodus that fed “all,” those “all” of the wandering tribe now posing as two hundred and fifty million Americans; and last but not least, the commercial formula *one size fits all*, and its association with the XXL size.

Creating and receiving such an artifact is an experience profoundly different from the casual, highly anticipatory ways by which such messages as (2.1), (2.6), and (2.7) are created and received. And yet, what is common between them and (2.11) is that the latter dissolves, upon analysis, into a multitude of familiar linguistic shapes with a similar or maybe even higher pervasiveness than the former.

We can now say that the novelty of a speech artifact is a quality which is by no means opposed to the familiarity of the ingredients out of which that artifact was composed. It is not their non-belonging to our habitual stock of

language experience that gives some of the turns of speech in (2.11) their novelty of meaning; on the contrary, they owe their striking inventiveness precisely to the fact that they do appeal to our experience, but do so in an imaginative and provocative way.<sup>55</sup> They impress us by challenging our routine use of language, not by abandoning it. To comprehend this linguistic artifact, to appreciate its complexity, to admire the author's originality, we need more of the routinely used resources of language that are stored in our memory, not fewer of them.

Let us consider one of the most challenging instances in (2.11): *the neutral, dereligionized ground of Thanksgiving*. This expression sets in motion a whirlwind of disparate linguistic reminiscences, each of them resounding with a certain aspect of the story at large. For instance, *the neutral ground // neutral territory // no man's land // demilitarized zone* evokes, in this particular context, images of family tensions coming to an uneasy truce at the holiday table. The neologism *dereligionized*, built after the pattern of and in association with *deregulated* / *disinfected* / *detoxified*, evokes a collateral reference to religion as "poison" and "the opiate of the people" in leftist parlance (the story evolves in the 1960s, its heroine eventually becoming involved in the radical left-wing movement). Another possible shadowy member of the family of suggestions out of which the word *dereligionized* has emerged is [*completely*] *deracinated* – a standard expression referring to the fate of immigrants. Finally, yet another potential associative environment for *dereligionized* is presented by such bits of professional terminology as *dehairing* / *degreasing the hide* – expressions repeatedly used in the story in connection with the family business of glove-making. Such is a possible (though by no means exhaustive) set of memories lurking in the background of this phrase. It is the wild diversity of those memories and the intensity with which they blend together that give the phrase its daring extravagance and poignant suggestiveness.<sup>56</sup>

Samuel Beckett's provocative maxim, "But I must've said it before, since I say it now," like many absurdist pronouncements, is in fact not as absurd as it may at first seem. The intertextual fabric of speech woven out of familiar expressions supercedes any straightforward opposition between "new" and "familiar," "creative" and "formulaic," "unconventional" and "conventional." The more familiar the voices, routine situations, and formulaic expressions that are evoked in language memory by the given fact of speech, the more open-ended, complex, and unique appears the net result that emerges out of their conflation.

(2.13) If if I'm Napoleon then you're Karl Marx then she's Queen Victoria  
(from Kac 1992: 48)

Despite the extravagance of its texture, the sentence (2.13) can be considered “genuine,” in the sense that it was actually created by a speaker, to serve a certain communicative purpose. The purpose in question is that of a laboratory-type experiment with language matter. Specifically, (2.13) was constructed in order to test the limits of the notion of grammaticality. The creator of this artifact strove to make it purely technical, i.e., devoid of any of the “pragmatic” support that could be drawn from an actual speech experience, to avoid undue influence by pragmatics on the judgment of grammaticality. Yet in this case, as everywhere, the resulting speech product reveals many features alluding to conventional expressions, and together with them, pragmatic features to which those expressions are linked. What immediately catches the eye of a linguist is that (2.13) in fact follows an example by Chomsky: “The man who the boy who the students recognized pointed out is a friend of mine” (Chomsky 1964: 11). This intertextual clue immediately attunes a qualified reader’s perception to a certain discourse, communicative goals, even the anticipated subject matter. However, the allusional fabric of a speech phenomenon of considerable length, like this one, is rarely homogeneous. Upon closer inspection of (2.13), one can discern in it allusional threads pointing in quite different directions. *If ..., then* refers, of course, to a multitude of phrases establishing a causal connection between two clauses; a specific subdivision of this class is that of logical or mathematical definitions that are generically familiar to any speaker with some schooling. Reduplication of this device as an embedded *if [if .... then] then* brings this generic association to the point of exaggeration; one can conceivably project it into a logical or mathematical disquisition of extreme strictness. On the other hand, the expressions *if I’m [X] then you’re [Y]*, or *if I’m [X] then he / she’s [Y]* bring to mind situations of jocular friendly exchange that invite extravagant yet in fact quite predictable improvisations. *Who do you think you are, Napoleon? / Karl Marx? / Queen Victoria?* – within a certain type of conversation, these and similar expressions are at everyone’s disposal. Many have heard one story or another of the following generic pattern: someone tries to get coveted theater tickets or a restaurant reservation by phone, claiming that he / she is a famous person. The protagonist of the story may say, for example, *I’m Barbara Streisand*; to which the person on the other end of the line responds: *Yeah? – and I’m Queen Victoria*. Or one can recall a scene from Michelangelo Antonioni’s film *Zabriski Point*: protesting students are arrested on the UCLA campus; to a

police officer's question: *Your name?* – one of the students responds: *Karl Marx*; the officer diligently types on his report: *Marx, Carl*. These primary blocks of conversation can easily be expanded, with the help of another ready-made formula, into pseudo-scholastic propositions such as *If I'm Napoleon then you're Karl Marx*, or *If I'm Napoleon then she's Queen Victoria*.

Together, reminiscences of these or similar linguistic trivia build in the mind the distinct thematic and stylistic landscape out of which (2.13) emerged – contrary to the aura of laboratory sterility it strives to project. One can sense the atmosphere of an American campus, with a whiff of the 1960s in it: a company of young men and women jokingly throwing at each other famous names that, for all their apparent extravagance, turn out to be quite close to the surface of their memories (all of them being fresh from a course on “Western Civ” or the like), and tossing them together with bits of scholastic jargon, occasionally stretched to the point of parody. Someone says: *If I'm Karl Marx then she's Queen Victoria*; another makes the rejoinder: *No, it's like this – If if I'm Napoleon then you're Karl Marx THEN she's Queen Victoria*.

Such is the allusional environment that emerges on the background of (2.13), whether its creator wanted it or not.<sup>57</sup> In the final analysis, (2.13), with its ostensibly severe formalism, sounds not unlike a Monty Python sketch. Likewise, the allusional texture of examples favored by the generation of structural linguists of the 1930-40s, such as Sapir's (1921) immortal duckling killed by the farmer, or *John hit Bill* vs. *Bill hit John* in (Wells 1947), revealed, with equal poignancy, the experiential landscape of pre-1960s suburban American life.<sup>58</sup>

We now confront another universal property of remembered expressions, namely, the fact that each of them is charged with a certain *communicative potential*. It has become an axiom of the usage-oriented model that any given utterance “is produced and understood with respect to a presupposed context” (Langacker 2001: 143). But the same principle applies to remembered pieces of language material as well. A familiar expression is familiar to us precisely because we have dealt with it in certain communicative situations in the past. We can fail to remember the concrete situation or situations out of which it has been drawn; in fact, in most cases we do not retain such individualized memories. What we always retain, however, is a generic perception of a communicative situation out of which this particular expression may have come.

For a speaker who recognizes it, a recalled expression is more than merely a prefabricated combination of words. It evokes, with the same unre-

flective immediacy with which the speaker recognizes its shape, a glimpse of a whole situation to which it is tied. Its generic parameters may include the character of the conversing parties, the genre and general tone of the discourse, potential topics to be raised, even some typical attributes of the physical environment.<sup>59</sup> A single item of speech drawn from previous experience is capable of creating around itself a whole *mental landscape* into which it can be naturally accommodated. This means that such a piece in fact never remains “single.” Any familiar turn of speech evokes a multitude of other turns of speech associated with the same or a similar generic situation; one expression draws with it a host of others.

This is why attempts to treat language as a neutral matter, subject to abstract experimentation, are essentially futile. Language is not a mute object, to be interpreted by a detached observer, like a bacteria culture or particles in a synchrotron (except, that even there the presence of the observer affects the state of the observed object). Whether he would acknowledge it or not, an observer of language can never detach himself from his object, because it is impossible to extricate oneself from remembrances stemming from one’s life in language. Whatever such an observer attempts to do with language, in the way of selecting and recombining its material, language will always talk back, evoking a chain reaction of recollections and allusions in response. Neither an ordinary speaker when he uses language material in order to create a message, nor a linguist when he uses the same material in order to test or illustrate a theoretical point, are exempt from the mnemonic environment that arises involuntarily and inexorably every time they touch their language experience.

The allusional auras of turns of speech of different provenances, when meeting together in an utterance, clash and reverberate with each other, complicating the connection between the “signifier” and the “signified” in each of them. As a result, the road from the speaker’s intention to its realization in language turns out never to be straight and fully predictable. It is wrought with allusional synapses that can enrich the intended message, or wreck it, or both.

I hope that these cursory examples suffice as a preview of what is going to be the main thesis of this book: namely, that speaking can be viewed as a ceaseless interplay between familiar expressions, which are stored in speakers’ memory, and their current communicative tasks. Quotations from and allusions to our previous language experience permeate all our dealings with language. Any expression, whether created or received, presents itself as a collage of more or less recognizable pieces of language material. To-

gether, all these recollections, associations, and anticipations constitute the fluid allusional environment of every communication. Not a single moment in our linguistic life passes without our being able to recognize in it – or rather, being unable to avoid recognizing – some allusions that appeal to our memory of past speech experiences. Such allusions can be transparent or vague, straightforward or paradoxical. Yet, despite their often nebulous and elusive nature – or perhaps because of it – intertextual allusions in speech constitute not merely an important but an absolutely *inescapable* aspect of our knowledge of and dealing with language. There is nothing in what we might conceivably produce or receive in speech, I mean *absolutely nothing*, in which we could not discern some familiar shapes, however transformed, emerging from our past life in and with language.

Pervasiveness in speech of word combinations, or “collocations,” drawn from previous speech experiences (“primed” in that experience, to use the author’s term), has been emphasized in a growing number of corpus linguistics studies, initiated by John M. Sinclair (1991); (a farther-reaching genealogy of the approach points to John R. Firth; cf. Firth 1968). According to (Hoey 2005: 5), “. . . at least some sentences (and this puts it cautiously) are made up of interlocking collocations such that they could be said to reproduce, albeit with important variations, stretches of earlier sentences.” The phenomenon as such was, of course, known in linguistics long ago. What has been highlighted, and to some extent documented in recent studies is the scale of its presence in speech, which is such as to suggest a possibility of revising some fundamental premises about the nature of linguistic competence of speakers.

I prefer the semiotic term “intertextuality” to that of collocation, since it emphasizes not merely the empirical fact of typical co-occurrences of certain words in discourse, which suggests their reminiscent nature, but the consequence of such reminiscences for the meaning of utterances, the way it is built by the speaker and interpreted by the addressee. Empirical observations of the intertextual fabric of speech, however important for legitimizing the issue, are not sufficient for establishing this phenomenon within the general framework of theoretical linguistics. What is needed is an outline of the “lexicon” of prefabricated expressions stored in speakers’ memory; an analysis of their “semantics,” i.e., of the nature of their meaning as primary language signs; and a study of their “syntax,” i.e., of the devices by which ready-made expressions can be put together in speech. These are the tasks the subsequent chapters will attempt to attend to, or at least to approach

## Chapter 3

### The principal unit of speech vocabulary:

### The communicative fragment (CF)

Ты хоть бы форточку открыл.  
Еще разок – и по домам.  
Жратва там, правда, будь здоров.  
Сил больше нету никаких!  
Какая рифма к слову «пять»?  
Упрямый, как не знаю что.  
Шесть букв. Кончается на «пе».  
Ну все. Пока. Я позвоню.  
Ему? Лет пятьдесят. А что?  
Ты, кстати, выключил утюг?  
Вот так приходит и сидит.  
Ты в зеркало давно смотрел?

[Can't you let some fresh air in, at least? / One last round. / The food there is fantastic though. / Can't take it any more! / How about something that rhymes with "luck"? / Stubborn like I don't know what. / Six letters, ending with "p." / OK, so long. I'll call you. / Him? About fifty. Why? / And I bet you left the iron on. / Always just coming and sitting like that. / When's the last time you looked in a mirror?]

Lev Rubinshtein, *The Emergence of the Hero*

In Chapter 2, we have discussed intertextuality as a phenomenon that is pervasive in all genres of everyday speech, oral and written – from casual conversation to newspaper discourse, to expository prose, etc. My argument was that intertextuality should by no means be confined to studies of artistic, or more generally, culturally “prestigious” discourses (such as philosophical treatises, public oratory, etc.), where it has been universally acknowledged as one of the central theoretical concepts and analytical tools. On the contrary, intertextual associations, appealing to speakers’ memory, are, if anything, more ubiquitous, to the point of being inescapable, in quo-

tidian speech, products people create and receive in the course of their entire lives. Due to such associations, every utterance turns out to be grounded in speakers' memories of previous instances of speech experience, the same way a literary work is grounded in memories drawn from its forerunners in a literary tradition.

However, to point out the relevance of intertextuality as a general principle underlying every instance of speech is not enough. In order to establish this concept as a working category of language description, one has to show how it can be grounded in linguistic form. What are the units of language that can be posited as carriers of intertextual associations? How are they related to conventional units of language structure, such as words, phrases, and sentences? In short: in order to be able to study the impact of intertextuality on the production and interpretation of speech, we must first assess the *intertextual vocabulary*, i.e., linguistic items through which intertextual associations enter the utterances. This is the principal task of the following chapter.

### 3.1. Preliminary definition

One of the fundamental principles of theoretical linguistics for the greater part of the twentieth century was a sharp opposition between memorized units of language, which present themselves to speakers as a given list, and syntactically articulated phrases, which are not given but created. A striking (if somewhat exaggerated) expression of this principle can be found in (Pinker 1994: 22): "... virtually every sentence that a person utters or understands is a brand-new combination of words, appearing for the first time in the history of the universe." Within the framework of twentieth-century modernist culture, which tended to equate novelty with creativity, and reiteration with routine, this position led to a strong bias against everything in language that had to be accepted as a given fact, to be repeatedly used rather than constructed anew.

A good example of this attitude is Di Sciullo and Williams (1987). The authors profess disdain verging on hatred towards what they call "listed" units of language. Having violated the principle of linguistic constructivism, the "listemes" deserve to be identified solely by the crime they committed:

If conceived of as the set of listemes, the lexicon is incredibly boring by its very nature. It contains objects of no single specifiable type ..., and those



objects that it does contain are there because they fail to conform to interesting laws. The lexicon is like a prison – it contains only the lawless, and the only thing that its inmates have in common is lawlessness (Di Sciullo and Williams 1987: 3).

(The fortunes of the lexicon aside, this does not look as the most productive attitude toward prison inmates).

One of the consequences of this mindset is a tendency to reduce the “listemes” to the most elementary level possible, by the same token increasing the domain to which “interesting laws” of morphosyntax apply. Theoretically, the absolutely minimal unit bestowed with meaning is the morpheme. However, it proved difficult actually to describe syntactic structures in terms of morphemic rather than verbal combinations. Although generative grammar and some structural models proclaimed the former as a matter of principle, in actuality, when it came to formulating rules of grammar, generative syntax in most cases reverted to words.

That words are the primary building blocks from which speakers construct linguistically encoded messages is a broadly if often tacitly accepted convention. “Folk linguistics,” i.e., popular perception of and reflection upon language, shares this conviction with language textbooks and at least some linguistic models.<sup>60</sup> Expressions roughly corresponding to the English *word by word*, *in so many words*, *(did not utter) a single word*, etc., probably exist in all languages.<sup>61</sup> Although a word can be viewed as a combination of morphemes, it is obvious that words – at least, the overwhelming majority of them – are directly “listed” in speakers’ vocabulary as ready-made units.

Once the step has been made from the “absolutely minimal” semiotic unit (morpheme) to a unit of a higher order (word), which, despite its analyzability, is known to and used by speakers directly as a single item, it opens the way to asking whether speech segments of an even higher order, i.e., certain word combinations, can also be treated by speakers as single prefabricated items, even if their inner structure follows syntactic rules. It was always well known, of course – particularly to teachers of language and authors of dictionaries – that communicatively adequate speech is rarely, if ever, assembled entirely from single words, let alone single morphemes, without taking into account conventional word combinations. Dictionaries usually attach to a word’s entry a more or less extensive list of standard expressions, knowledge of which is necessary for using that word in speech. However, until the 1980s the attitude toward such ready-made expressions in theoretical linguistics ranged between outright dismissal and

strictly controlled acceptance.<sup>62</sup> There was a strong tendency to confine them to a linguistic ghetto, describing them as marginal phenomena outside the core of “free” syntactic combinations. The very terms used to describe these units, such as idiom, cliché, or speech formula, suggest thoughtless repetitiveness and a lack of creativity.<sup>63</sup>

In works of the last two decades, the wall between “lexicon” and “grammar” began to crumble. As the classical analysis of *let alone* (Fillmore, Kay and O’Connor 1988), followed by a few more recent works,<sup>64</sup> has shown, ready-made units of speech larger than a single word are so widespread as to defy the marginal place in the picture of language they had heretofore been accorded as “speech formulas” or “idioms.”<sup>65</sup> In an earlier work, Fillmore emphasized the vast volume of the stock of “fixed expressions” whose meaning remains inscrutable to someone who knows only the grammar and vocabulary of a language.<sup>66</sup> Studies of spoken language reinforced this approach by exposing the pervasiveness of ready-made phrasal blocks.<sup>67</sup> Even earlier, this thesis was spectacularly demonstrated in regard to oral poetic tradition (Lord [1960] 2000). Finally, recent studies in corpus linguistics (Sinclair 1991; Sinclair 2004; Stubbs 2001; Hoey 2005; Mahlberg 2005; Hoey, Mahlberg, Stubbs and Teubert 2007) showed a possibility of building a solid empirical basis for this approach. The decisive theoretical step was taken by cognitive linguistics when it recognized all “entrenched” (i.e., stocked in speakers’ memory) expressions – be they single words or entire phrases and sentences – as primary building blocks of speech. Langacker defines a “unit” of language as an expression of any length and shape whose sole constitutive feature consists in its being “a preassembled whole ... thoroughly mastered by a speaker”; what a speaker possesses is an inventory of entrenched units and an ability to perform cognitive operations using these units (Langacker 1987: 15). This approach focuses not only on idioms in the traditional sense but on all “common word combinations” (Harris 1998: 56). It has also been noted that the extent of entrenchment shown by different expressions is far from uniform; in fact, it can vary with every particular expression and for every particular speaker (Harris 1998: 55). Some recent works offer an extensive typology of formulaic expressions based on the degree to which they can be perceived as assembled according to general rules.<sup>68</sup>

According to Fillmore, Kay and O’Connor (1988), the ubiquitous presence of recognizable turns of speech makes it impossible to draw a strict line between the abstract syntactic design of a phrase and its lexical realization. This discovery gave rise to the “construction grammar” (Fillmore

1988; Kay 1997b, c and d) that approached grammatical form as linked to particular constructions. Construction grammar surpasses the traditional distinction between grammar and lexicon (Langacker 1987 and 2002; Nuyts 1992; etc.). The way a phrase is structured is inextricably intertwined with its lexical composition, i.e., “lexically motivated” (Gawron 1995).<sup>69</sup>

My intention is to carry this approach a step or two further. First, I would like to expand the range of palpable speech phenomena that could be recognized as “constructions” in the sense of construction grammar, and the variety of ways in which they can be interwoven in utterances. Second, I emphasize the importance of texture, i.e., of a particular speech genre and other speech circumstances, which such palpable units carry with themselves, and which are inalienable from the way they function in speech.

I suggest, as a working hypothesis, that ready-made expressions stored in speakers’ memory play not only an important but an absolutely fundamental role in how speakers compose and interpret artifacts of speech. Speakers’ ability to use a language – their “competence” in that language – depends first and foremost on acquiring an adequate repertory of prefabricated,<sup>70</sup> or entrenched expressions – “adequate” meaning in this case truly mind-boggling in scope and variety.<sup>71</sup>

Let us now return to the thesis to which we had come at the end of Chapter 2: any act of speech, of whatever subject matter and whatever stylistic domain, carries in its fabric traces of various turns of speech that are familiar to any competent speaker of the language. I propose to call such familiar turns of speech *communicative fragments (CFs)*. *A CF is a concrete segment of speech of any shape, meaning, and stylistic provenance that speakers are able to recognize spontaneously and to use as a conventional expression that fits certain communicative purposes.*

Speakers retrieve a CF directly from memory, as a ready-made segment of speech, whenever they feel the need for it, and recognize it with the same directness in the speech of others. Insofar as a speaker recognizes a certain segment of speech as a whole piece, and expects it to be recognizable to other speakers, this segment constitutes a CF in his linguistic competence.<sup>72</sup>

The accumulation of CFs in the memory of each speaker is an individual process involving the experience of that particular speaker throughout his entire life. However, this process evolves through a continual communicative exchange with others, by dealing with various communicative tasks and situations that are common to certain communities of speakers. Due to a constant exchange within the speakers’ community, the repertoires of CFs

that accumulate in the memory of different individual speakers, although never identical, turn out to be compatible to a high degree; moreover, they continue to be adjusted and accommodated to each other as the process of the communicative exchange continues to evolve.

CFs constitute a *primary vocabulary* that is at least as important for speakers' knowledge of their language as the vocabulary of lexical units. It is CFs first and foremost out of which speakers compose, and through which they interpret, all the artifacts of speech that come their way in the course of their life in language. Although a CF can be divided into smaller meaningful components – words and morphemes – by an analytical procedure, for a speaker it exists as a single unit. Speakers recognize such a unit and deal with it with the same unreflecting directness with which they handle all the habitual operations, however complex, of their everyday life.

It is obvious that the general definition of the CF given above could cover a great variety of phenomena that can be observed in speech. It is necessary therefore to discuss in more detail various attributes of the CF as a particular unit of language structure. Each of these attributes presents the CF from a particular perspective, defining it in contradistinction to a different linguistic unit or category; together, they offer a stereoscopic view of this pivotal yet elusive phenomenon.

### 3.2. Fragmentariness: CFs vs. speech formulas

As the term “communicative fragment” suggests, the formal shape of a CF is characterized, first and foremost, by fragmentariness. I mean by fragmentariness the absence of any universal constraints pertaining to CFs' structure; there are no restrictions whatsoever as to the way in which an orderly syntactical structure can be split in the composition of a CF.

Typically, a CF comprises a segment of speech, usually a phrase or a part of a phrase consisting of two to five words. This size seems to be universal as the prevailing range for CFs; so far as my observations of different languages go, they do not show any significant differences in this respect.<sup>73</sup> However, CFs comprising a whole sentence,<sup>74</sup> or even a succession of sentences, sometimes function as ready-made units as well. Consider, for example, the following exchanges, both parts of which in effect serve as a single entirely memorized speech unit:

- (3.1) I can't do it. – Yes you can.  
I saw him yesterday. – Did you?

On the other hand, a CF can consist of just a single word, or, as we will see later, even a splinter of a word, not necessarily coinciding with a morpheme.

CFs that are shaped as a whole clause, a whole sentence, or a predictable chain of sentences, are conventionally known as idiomatic expressions or speech formulas. Although most conspicuously represented in spoken speech, this phenomenon is widespread in a variety of styles and speech genres:

- (3.2) Seeing is believing.  
It's all for your own good.  
Road construction ahead.  
It's been a long time.  
Wish you were there.  
Sorry! – It's alright.  
Smoking is prohibited by law.

One should not underestimate the number and variety of such syntactically complete ready-made pieces, as well as the frequency with which they are used in speech. Their pervasiveness in everyday linguistic life is made manifest in Lev Rubinshtein's poem *The Emergence of the Hero*, a fragment of which I quoted at the beginning of this chapter. The poem features several hundred lines in crisp iambic tetrameter, each introducing a speech cliché that evokes an instantly recognizable situation from everyday life. Within every single line, we find ourselves immersed in a whole communicative environment prompted by the cliché; we behold instantly the nature of the situation as a whole, the characters of its protagonists, and the nature of their relationship; we perceive their expectations and frustrations, understand what they are trying to imply, and anticipate how the "story" could evolve further. Yet the "story" never comes forth; the next line plunges the reader into an entirely different situation, as palpable with suggestions as the previous one. What emerges from this collage of disconnected formulas is a mosaic-like yet poignantly suggestive picture of everyday existence and its linguistic attributes.

However, as numerous as syntactically complete prefabricated units are, their number pales in comparison with that of ready-made expressions comprising only a splinter of a phrase. It is the latter that make the CF an

even more widespread phenomenon than clichés and idioms. Moreover, those truly “fragmentary” pieces constitute the very essence of the phenomenon of the CF. Their presence in speech is indeed ubiquitous.

Being nothing but the sediment of past speech experience, CFs can settle in the memory of speakers in any shape whatsoever. They seem indifferent to conventional syntactic divisions; indeed, their shapes seem to violate those divisions more often than comply with them.

This situation can be illustrated by a feature of contemporary spoken English that could be called *enclitic auxiliaries*. Having reached a position in speech in which a noun phrase is expected, the speaker produces an article or a preposition that presumably introduces the coming noun phrase. He does that, however, without the slightest pause, sometimes making the auxiliary word virtually fuse with the preceding lexical item. Another variation of this feature is represented by enclitic conjunctions, in which a conjunction or a relative pronoun is closely attached to the preceding clause. What follows is a distinct pause of varied length, as if the speaker is searching for the appropriate noun or the following clause, to be appended to the already pronounced article, preposition, or conjunction:

- (3.3) to create-a [...]
   
the need-to [...]
   
what was-the [...]
   
(the temptation) of-a [...]
   
(to deal) with-the [...]
   
all I want to say is-that [...]

The phenomena described here can often be observed in transcriptions of real-life conversations. The device is sometimes imitated in literary dialogues, to show the speaker’s hesitancy:

- (3.4) I really go for like *a* // a big nose (Eckert 1993: 59)
   
It just tore *the* // y’know from one end to the other (Edelsky 1993: 197)
   
‘cause I had *a* ... a thick patch of barley there (Chafe 1994: 66)
   
“I thought it best he should know, so that, so that – ” And Isabel paused.
   
“So that what?” “So that he should act accordingly.” (Henry James, *The Portrait of a Lady*)

An example of this feature surfaced in the following transcript:

- (3.5) Q. Have you ever talked to Monica Lewinsky about the possibility that she might be asked to testify in this lawsuit?

A. I'm not sure, and let me tell you why I'm not sure. It seems to me the, the, the, the – I want to be as accurate as I can here. ... Seems to me *the last time* she was there ... (*The New Yorker*, January 1998)

What the frequent occurrence of enclitics of this type in speech may suggest is the prevalence of the repertory of available CFs over structural order in the process of speech composition. A CF often (in fact, more often than not) comprises a syntactically incomplete speech segment that ends with a preposition, an article, a conjunction, or a relative pronoun:

- (3.6) an increasing number of [...]
- (all necessary) measures to [...]
- it could be a [...]
- (to determine) which of the [...]
- (I'm) fully aware that [...]

Only after the speaker has produced such a fragmentary segment in one breath, does he go in search of another speech unit that could fit the previous one, in order to fulfill the syntactic expectations. For instance, in (3.5) the expression *It seems to me the ...* is produced automatically, as a single unit; after that, another piece of speech material has to be selected – which eventually, after a rather long moment of suspense, turns out to be *the last time she was there*. The emerging syntactic blueprint is recognized after the fact of a speech segment being already produced, showing what is still missing, rather than serving as the starting point of the production. As a consequence, speech comes to a halt or is interrupted not after a syntactically coherent segment but in the midst of a syntactic phrase, in a position that, from the perspective of the syntactic blueprint of the sentence, would seem most unlikely for pausing in search of a continuation.<sup>75</sup> When (3.5) is considered in terms of CFs, however, the interruption appears well motivated, since it comes exactly at the point of juncture between two fragmentary pieces which are stored in the memory in a syntactically splintered shape. In extreme cases, which are not so rare in oral discourse, the speaker, having not found an opportune continuation, abandons the presumable syntactic design altogether for a fresh start, leaving the enclitic suspended.

It seems virtually unthinkable even for a fairly advanced non-native speaker to use an enclitic article before making the final selection of the noun that must follow it. To proceed in this way, one must be fairly certain that one appropriate continuation or another can be easily found, since al-

most always such a continuation – or even a few alternatives – lies close at hand in the speaker's memory. The speaker whose facility in retrieving and manipulating memorized fragments of speech is inferior to that level has no other option but to choose the noun first and only then, depending on its meaning, to consider which article could be appropriate as qualifier. A moment of hesitation may occur before the noun phrase as a whole, not in the midst of it. In other words, a less proficient speaker has to proceed according to the guidelines of the syntactic hierarchy, the way grammar would suggest. The irony of the situation is that native speakers of English do not produce ungrammatical phrases involving articles (barring some speech accidents) while speakers who have a non-native knowledge of English often do. The latter have to rely on rationally (even if only intuitively) formulated "rules" for shaping a noun phrase – a tool that, while helpful in a limited way, cannot substitute for a direct and unreflective knowledge of how one says certain things, and the ability to mobilize this knowledge in a fraction of a second.

Sometimes the shape of a CF cuts across the boundaries not only of a syntactic phrase but of a single word, or even of a morpheme. Let us consider, for instance, the expression:

(3.7) (measures) to re(...) the economy.

While the carcass of this expression is firmly entrenched in memory, the position marked by dots in the brackets can be defined as semi-open. Anchored in its entrenched carcass, (3.7) suggests to the speaker a relatively wide (although by no means infinite) choice of the material that is fitting to be used for making the expression complete. To cite only a few of possible alternatives:

(3.8) to re...	...structure	<i>the economy</i>
	...assess	
	...build	
	...construct	
	...energize	
	...fuel	
	...vitalize	

We can say that all these possibilities, and many others, form a collective background for CF (3.7). They present an array of fitting possibilities, each of them ready to be retrieved from memory in order to complete (3.7).



A more extensive list of such potential alternatives could easily comprise several dozen expressions. Let us take note of the following among them:

- (3.9) *to re...*    ...ctify                    *the economy*  
                          ...pair  
                          ...scue  
                          ...surrect  
                          ...suscitate

As far as the repertory of fitting expressions for filling (3.7) goes, the cases (3.9) hardly present any difference from those listed in (3.8). In a majority of speech situations, speakers would not think twice before choosing such alternatives as *to revive*, or *to resurrect*; *to revitalize*, *to reanimate*, or *to resuscitate*; *to restore*, or *to repair (the economy)*, etc. From the point of view of speech composition, these options come extremely close. To select one of them, the speaker has either to ponder over subtle semantic or stylistic consequences of his choice (so subtle indeed that they may well pass unnoticed), or to proceed haphazardly, picking whichever of the alternatives comes to mind first. Yet if we consider the morphemic structure and derivational history of these *re*-expressions, the difference between (3.8) and (3.9) is substantive. In all cases (3.8), *re*- functions as a prefix, whose addition to the stem results in a transparent and predictable derivational effect. In (3.9), on the other hand, *re*- does not function as a prefix – at least, not in modern English. In words like *resuscitate* and *resurrect*, the parts *\*suscitate*, *\*surrect*, although they functioned as stems historically (Lat. *surrectio*, *suscitatio*, Fr. *susciter*), in contemporary English have lost their formal and semantic distinctiveness and become inseparable from *re*. As to the cases of *rectify* or *regulate*, their *re*- is purely a homonym that has nothing to do with the prefix *re*- altogether. Despite these differences, important though they be for a grammarian, the cases (3.8) and (3.9) stay close together in speakers' memory, serving as interchangeable alternatives. This happens because for the CF in question, i.e., *to re[...] the economy*, its morphemic structure is irrelevant. It is an expression that is remembered as such, whether the segment *re*- within it constitutes a "legitimate" prefix or not. The composition of a CF overrides the morphemic structure of a word in the same way it overrides the syntactic structure of a phrase or a sentence.

It can now be stated as a matter of general principle that although there are many CFs whose borders coincide with conventional syntactic or lexical units, for an expression to coalesce in speakers' memory, i.e., to become

a CF, its structural integrity, either on the syntactic, or lexemic, or even morphemic level is redundant. A CF easily cuts across all the established repertory of linguistic signs. This feature distinguishes CFs from such closely related concepts as entrenched units of speech (Langacker), intonation units (Chafe)<sup>76</sup> or tone groups (Halliday), and collocations (Sinclair 2004, Hoey 2005), which consider such units always within a syntactically coherent border.<sup>77</sup> The concept that comes closest to the CF in regard to the latter's fragmentariness is that of Fillmore and Kay's construction. Yet even constructions, judging by such classical examples as *let alone*, *at least*, etc., are syntactically compact, in a sense that they are always confined within a single syntactic phrase, even if they do not constitute the entire phrase. Many CFs, on the other hand, satisfy a stronger definition of fragmentariness by defying not only completeness but structural consistency; their shapes come across structural boundaries of syntactic phrases or even single words. Being veritable splinters of language material, CFs easily defy any presumptions of syntactic shapeliness. Yet their own shapes, capricious as they may look from the point of view of grammatical conventions, are quite palpable, so far as speakers' ability to retrieve them as a whole is concerned.

In fact, speakers tend to remember splinters of language material rather than grammatically well-rounded shapes, because this allows the most productive usage of this material. The open-ended, unfinished shape in which a typical CF is retained in memory makes it easier to fit it into a variety of junctions that open up in speech. What a speaker's memory contains is not just one huge set of puzzle pieces which fit each other in a single predetermined way; rather, there is a multitude of such sets, so that one can always find a number of possible fits for every piece. With a sufficient degree of prowess, one is almost always able to retrieve a few pieces that come together in a satisfactory way. Had the contours of prefabricated expressions always coincided with the parameters of syntactic structure, had they always taken the form of "constructions," they would never have had such an extensive ability to attract by association, merge with, and superimpose upon each other in speech.<sup>78</sup>

We can now say that fragmentariness is not only a typical but a crucial feature of CFs. The existence of an enormous number of fragmented splinters of speech makes the phenomenon of the CF much broader than that of the conventional idiom or cliché. The latter constitute only a relatively small, and perhaps less vital, part of the former. Even more important than their numerical preponderance is the fact that fragmented CFs manifest the

principal function of this phenomenon more completely than firmly settled ready-made expressions. The very indeterminacy of fragmentary pieces of language matter leaves them open to all kinds of modifications and manipulation, makes them volatile, capable of modifying their contours and fitting each other in many alternative ways. These abilities are crucial for creating new speech artifacts out of ready-made segments of speech.

Ironically, we can now admit that well-rounded idioms, clichés, and speech formulas can be considered marginal phenomena of language after all. Their marginality, however, becomes manifest not vis à vis so-called “free” syntactic phrases, a phenomenon whose pure manifestation hardly exists at all in actual speech practice, but in comparison to the overwhelming majority of CFs that are prefabricated yet fragmented, recognizable as a whole yet incomplete at the same time.

### **3.3. Anonymity: CFs vs. quotations**

The fact that speakers treat a CF as something they “know,” “remember,” or “recognize” means that there might have been precedents in their past when they dealt with it one way or another. However, most CFs remain as anonymous with regard to their speech sources as single words. Typically, quotidian situations of language use are casual, transient, and as such, not memorable. We do not retain in memory a conversation, a note we wrote or received, a newspaper article, or a business report as distinct “texts,” in the way we may recall many pieces of literary and intellectual significance.<sup>79</sup> Transient situations of our linguistic life evaporate from memory, or rather, dissolve into the indistinct mass of our lifetime experience as speakers. A fragmentary expression, the distinct syntactic rhythm of a phrase, a characteristic intonation contour can be remembered without being tied to any particular event as its individuated source. Sometimes we can draw from memory one particular occasion on which we encountered a particular expression – but was it the only experience of that kind? Was it the first one? More often, we remain altogether in the dark about our “sources,” nor do we care about them.

The generic conventionality of CFs distinguishes them from individuated quotations. While a CF belongs to a general convention, a quotation is pinned down unequivocally to a particular source. We may not even remember the quotation precisely, but what remains certain is the fact that this particular speech artifact comes from a known text. Written texts are

not the only, and perhaps not even the most usual, sources of quotations. Any person's memory contains a store of aphorisms, *bons mots*, and various memorable instances of speech attributable to particular individuals and circumstances. Insofar as one is inclined to prefix an expression with the qualification *As they use to say in ...*, or *As X would have said*, etc., one treats this expression as a quotation.

One obvious difference between a CF and a quotation is their potential length. Although, as we have seen, the length of different CFs may vary from a single word or a splinter of a phrase to a whole sentence or even a formulaic combination of short sentences, the range of these variations is rather limited. In order to stay in the mind of a speaker as a conventional unit ready to be used on a number of occasions, a CF must be easily observable as a whole. Different languages seem to be quite close to each other with regard to the prevalent length of their CFs; this similarity, perhaps related to human mnemonic capacities, supercedes the structural variety of languages. As for quotations, they are practically unlimited as to length. It is not unusual for people to remember continuous texts of enormous length: large pieces of poetry (the whole of *Faust*, or *Eugene Onegin*, or a Shakespeare play), whole operas (both music and words), the code of law or large extracts from it, a yearlong cycle of liturgical services, etc.<sup>80</sup>

The individuated and often voluminous character of quotations imposes limits on their usage in spontaneous oral or written speech. Quotations do not dissolve in the fabric of speech the way CFs do; rather, they stand out as marked, highlighted moments. Even if only a splinter of a quotation has been introduced, the quoted text emerges in the background of the message, making its meaning contingent on its relation to that background. This is the phenomenon predominantly acknowledged as "intertextuality" in literary studies.

The usage of CFs is also "intertextual" in a way. The presence of a CF in the fabric of a certain utterance bestows an additional layer of meaning on the latter: besides addressing its direct subject matter and actual situation, the utterance also comprises, however vaguely, the remembrance of previous experiences alluded to by that CF. Sometimes this allusional background simply confirms and reinforces the apparent content of the message; sometimes it enriches it by adding to it certain overtones; on other occasions, it creates semantic clashes that subvert or radically transform the message. What makes intertextuality particularly complex in everyday language is the fact that in most cases, there are no particular "texts" in sight as sources of an intertextual reference. The emerging intertextual effect is

more subtle and at the same time more fluid and transient than in the case of a quotation. It does not attract attention; the continuity of the discourse is not interrupted.<sup>81</sup> The semantic implications, emotional tones, and verbal associations imported into a message by CFs appear faint and transient, like a procession of shades. They come and go, merge together or momentarily brush past each other, only to give way to a new wave of allusional shadows.

This makes the generic allusions produced by CFs maddeningly complex and elusive. When one suggests that such-and-such scene in Tolstoy's *War and Peace* recalls certain situations and protagonists in *The Iliad*,<sup>82</sup> or that a certain scene in *Don Quixote* parodies a generic situation in novels of chivalry, one contemplates a distinct phenomenon, unique or collective, that can be examined, argued for or against, and appraised in terms of its consequences for the meaning of the given work. But when one asserts that the expression, say, *flying in the sky*, resounds in one's language memory, one refers not to a definite source that can be pointed out for everyone to observe, but to elusive, ever-changing fields of language memories, ostensibly shared by a majority of other speakers.

An area of linguistic experience in which the distinction between CFs and quotations tends to be blurred is that of memories stemming from childhood and early adolescence.<sup>83</sup> These memories often seem to be tied to the distinct situation out of which they had been drawn. Any person's memory contains an unfathomable number of expressions to which she or he had been exposed as a child and adolescent, together with distinct memories of the circumstances under which many of them were received. It still costs me little effort to retrieve innumerable fragments of conversations, songs, stories, verses, nursery rhymes, formulas of the family's speech routine, textbook locutions, boys' profanity, radio programs, sports commentary, pieces of news, street vendors' cries, railroad announcements, political exhortations, signposts, advertisements, movie titles, and so forth, stemming from my early years. The very triviality of this material contributes to the spontaneity with which particles of it pop up in one's mind, sometimes without any apparent provocation, and the almost superfluous richness of accessory detail that only an unreflective knowledge can supply. Our language memory from the years of childhood seems to contain an unusually high number of pieces of these trivia in the manner of precise quotations pinned down to distinct sources.<sup>84</sup>

Elias Canetti, in his memoir *The Salvaged Tongue*,<sup>85</sup> tells the story of a dramatic linguistic shift that he experienced at the age of seven. Until that

time, his family had lived in London, and he grew up as a monolingual English-speaking child (earlier linguistic memories of the first eighteen months of his life, spent in Bulgaria, had completely faded away). After his father's death, his mother, a passionate Germanophile, decided to move to Zurich. Eager to make her son fit into the new environment as quickly as possible, she invented a peculiar method of teaching him German. Every morning, she wrote down thirty arbitrary sentences in German that he was supposed to memorize with absolute precision. The slightest deviation from the text in his evening recital drew her bitter admonishment. After spending a rather nightmarish summer at these exercises, he was capable of entering school without being spotted as a foreigner, his accent being explicable as possibly coming from an obscure German dialect. Eventually he grew up to become a Nobel-prize winning writer in German. What Canetti lived through in a few weeks largely reflects what every child experiences in the course of 10 to 15 years: the inflexible, compulsory early accumulation of speech experience, recollection of which constitutes the foundation upon which one's life experience of language is built.

I venture to suggest that the distinct character of early memories of language may play a role in shaping that peculiar quality of language competence that we call being a "native" speaker. It may be amassing the rigid, pinned-down, unequivocal recollections of childhood that gives to the native speaker his particularly clear vision of the boundaries in language use that can never be crossed without immediately attracting attention. Non-native speakers can reach a high degree of richness, diversity, and flexibility in their knowledge of a language, but they may still lack the sharp focus on certain imperatives of language use founded in the imperative character of childhood experiences.

What makes earlier memories of language, for all their idiosyncrasies, an integral part of speakers' knowledge of language is their ability to dissolve, as time passes, into generic conventions.<sup>86</sup> One can still remember the precise circumstances under which one experienced a certain turn of phrase as a child; but this turn of phrase itself becomes a part of one's linguistic experience at large, to be reused on innumerable occasions. This way, a remembered scene from childhood turns into a generic situation. Without losing the personal background stemming from individual memories, it becomes transferable from one speaker to another.

### 3.4. Prefabricated shape

The ready-made, prefabricated character of a CF implies that speakers do not need to assemble it anew each time a possibility of using it arises in speech.<sup>87</sup> Whenever a speaker recalls a certain CF, it pops up in his memory as a whole, ready to be used. The speaker may still consider whether to use this CF directly, or to make some modifications to it, or to put it aside and choose another one. But neither its basic composition nor its meaning pose any problem. He does not have to think how to construct it,<sup>88</sup> since his memory offers the whole piece in its entirety; neither need he worry whether this expression is “grammatical” – he knows for a fact that it is.<sup>89</sup>

I once observed a little boy on a bus from the aircraft to the air terminal. Fascinated by all the planes we were passing, he pointed to each of them in turn and exclaimed: *Airplane! Airplane!* – apparently a word he had recently learned. Here was a child who seemed to have no use of the article yet; an isolated word sufficed for a whole communication.<sup>90</sup> In a few moments, however, the boy’s attention shifted to his immediate surroundings, to which he reacted with the message: *On-the bus!* I was struck by the perfect precision of this speech artifact, its chiseled-out structure, intonation, and rhythm, up to the typically colloquial enclitic conflation of the article with the preceding word: *on-the*. Had I, as a non-native speaker, had to produce this message myself, I would have had to brush, however fleetingly, with various constructional dilemmas: should the bus be treated like a car or like a train – that is, are we *in* the bus or *on* the bus? Should the described situation be perceived as immediately experienced or generic – in other words, are we on *the* bus or on *a* bus? For the little native speaker, all these problems, as well as the means by which one might solve them, simply did not exist. He produced the whole expression as a single familiar unit, the same way as the exclamation: *Airplane!*

It has been noted in some recent studies, particularly in works on functional grammar, that our everyday spoken intercourse is woven from such ready-made turns of speech, which speakers produce, receive, tamper with, and adapt to the needs of the moment. However, this phenomenon is by no means confined to the stylistic domain of informal oral speech. We find the same phenomenon as compellingly present in all other types of discourse, no matter how formal and complex. What distinguishes a more elaborate discourse from a nearly-formulaic dialogic exchange is not the absence of prefabricated speech units but the much higher degree of ingenuity required in order to weave them together. The higher degree of elaboration is a func-

tion of the larger amount of time at the speaker's disposal, which enables him to try different versions until a satisfactory result can be achieved (cf. Chafe 1994: 49).

Let us consider a speech artifact that is exceedingly remote from everyday spontaneous communication:

(3.10) Given the high ranking of interpretability, all output vowels must have a tone (from Pulleyblank 1997: 93).

This message as a whole is, of course, far from being as simply formulaic as *(flying) in the sky* or *(Right now I'm) on the bus*. The pieces of prefabricated speech material woven into it are put together in a rather complicated way. But as far as those familiar pieces themselves are concerned, their production or reception should not pose any constructional or interpretational problems either to the writer or to the readers. Consider, for instance, the recognizable frame of the first half of the sentence:

(3.11) Given the [...] of [...], ...

Cf. in ICE-GB:

(3.12) given the state of the economy ...  
           given the size of America's domestic market ...  
           given the lapse of time ...

Not only is the fragment (3.11) as such well entrenched in memory, but its actualization immediately focuses the speakers' perception on a certain type of discourse (mathematics, natural sciences, social science), and brings to mind a possible place for the whole statement within that discourse. This particular focusing, stemming from the fragment's texture, in its turn facilitates the retrieval from memory of other fragments of a similar thematic and stylistic provenance, such as *the (high) probability of ..., the [...s] output*, or *the output [...s]*. To cite the continuation of the sentences (3.12):

(3.13) the probability of achieving viable hybrids in plant crosses  
           construction of the output templates  
           different, and often compatible, output devices

All of this does not, of course, make the utterance (3.10) totally predictable; but it provides a rich and flexible background to which its composi-



tion and interpretation are anchored. My point is not that speech is produced automatically, merely by retrieving the appropriate formulas from memory; such a contention would be manifestly absurd. What I am prepared to argue for is that whenever speakers proceed in their communicative efforts, they start not from elementary linguistic particles and abstract blueprints but from tangible ready-made fragments of speech.

This, first of all, greatly facilitates and accelerates the process of speech production and reception. As Harris (1998: 69) put it, “multiword units provide language that is ‘ready to speak,’ thus facilitating fluency” (cf. also Fillmore 1979; Vanlancker-Sidtis 2003). For the speaking party, this means that most operations involving the selection of proper word forms and establishing proper syntactic connections have been executed beforehand in the composition of a prefabricated turn of speech. The process of production proper starts at a higher level: it involves putting together larger blocks of speech and maintaining structural control over their junctions.<sup>91</sup> For the receiving party, this means that reception does not proceed as a hierarchically organized decipherment – from phonemes to morphemes and words, and from word forms to phrases and sentences. Instead, the listener or reader anticipates segments of speech that are looming ahead by projecting whole blocks of speech after an initial prompt (cf. Harris 1998). Even if what follows does not match that anticipation precisely, it is always somehow related to it. All the listener / reader has to do is to register the deviation from what was expected, rather than to reconstruct the whole phrase from scratch.

An anticipatory, CF-related strategy of speech recognition explains naturally speakers’ ability to disentangle distinct phonemes out of the sound continuum that characterizes the pronunciation of a whole speech segment between two pauses. Perhaps speakers do not dissolve speech into separate phonemes at all, since they are following speech by making leaps from one extended segment to another rather than as a linear succession of elementary units. This ability of speakers becomes apparent when it is lacking, i.e., in the case of those who are not sufficiently competent CF-wise. The difficulties such speakers typically experience concern not so much the recognition of morphemes and words as such as their inability to accomplish this in due time. Having received one corpuscle of speech, the incompetent speaker is unable to project it forward to a whole anticipated segment. As a result, he repeatedly finds himself frustrated in his attempts to keep up with a normal pace of listening or reading.

Speakers' ability to jump over constructional problems that look formidable to an outside observer is particularly manifest in languages with a rich inflection. In such languages, even producing correct forms, let alone using them properly, looks a laborious task, failing which even the simplest syntactic connection becomes impossible. Pinker (1999) evokes Mark Twain's words about the "horrors" of German and Russian morphology. Indeed, when one learns that German nouns are divided into three groups distinguished by grammatical gender, every gender requiring a particular declension of the preceding article (four cases, singular and plural), and occasionally (but very irregularly) also different case forms of the noun, all of this aggravated by the fusion of certain (but not all) prepositions with certain article forms, and by the double treatment of adjectives under the auspices of a "strong" and "weak" declension – one can hardly imagine, theoretically speaking, how a coherent discourse could be produced with any degree of fluency under such conditions. All of this, however, pales in comparison with the problems one encounters in such languages as Russian, Lithuanian, or classical Greek.

I would not claim that this monstrously complicated linguistic machine poses no difficulties at all for a native speaker. Occasionally one encounters marginal or mixed cases about which speakers are not sure or disagree with each other; in such cases, analytical reflection may well be in order. In the overwhelming majority of instances, however, the appropriate forms and their combinations are produced by speakers, after little or no explicit training, without the slightest trace of effort or hesitation. The key to this miraculous handling of a seemingly unfathomable mechanism lies in the fact that there is no handling of such a mechanism at all. Speakers do not generate paradigms of individual nouns according to the labyrinthine algorithm that would be needed for that purpose; they simply know each form of each noun as a given fact – that is, they know not the word forms as such but various fragments of speech in which each of those forms is featured, together with their immediate syntactic connections.<sup>92</sup> For a competent speaker of German, the set of problems described above dissolves into myriad ready-made expressions, for which no analytical effort is needed.<sup>93</sup> By dealing with such blocks as *von der Zeit*, *auf dem Tisch*, *am Ufer*, *dem Deutschen Volke*, *des Krieges*, *an die Wahrheit*, and their further combinations, such as *von der Zeit des zweiten Weltkrieges*, speakers are absolved from asking themselves to what gender the noun belongs, what case is required by the preposition, what the correct form of the article for that gen-

der and that case should be, and whether it should be fused with the preposition.<sup>94</sup>

The fact that speech is based on extended prefabricated blocks means that the process of speaking requires knowledge and skills that are qualitatively different from what is implied by the rules of grammar. Most of the problems that besiege the student of a language, as well as the teacher or linguist who tries to explicate them, do not concern a qualified speaker of that language at all. Viewed from the perspective of a qualified “speaker” and a “student,” the relation between speech performance, on the one hand, and an analytical procedure that explicates it, on the other, turn out to be inverse. While the latter tends to produce speech on the basis of rules, the former may try to formulate rules by reflecting upon the facts known to him directly from speech.<sup>95</sup>

Instead of worrying whether the identical endings of nominative cases of the Russian words *stená* ‘wall’ and *luná* ‘moon’ means that all their case forms are identical as well, I simply retrieve from memory scores of familiar expressions involving different case forms of either word: *otskochil ot stený* ‘bounced off the wall’ vs. *svet luný* ‘moonlight’ (gen. sing.); *piatno na stené* ‘a spot on the wall’ vs. *pervye liudi na luné* ‘first people on the moon’ (loc. sing.) – so far so good. But: *ustavilsia v sténu* ‘(he) stared at the wall’ vs. *poletel na lunú* ‘(he) flew to the moon’ (acc. sing.) – here the stress shifts to the stem in the first case but not in the second. So, as it turns out, there is a difference in the accentual contours of the two paradigms. One can say that they belong to different accentual subtypes within a larger declension type of feminine nouns with nom. sing. *-a*; one can then formulate rules for generating each of these subtypes.<sup>96</sup> However, awareness of the distinction itself as a phenomenon that can be accounted for by a rule comes after the fact of primary, unreflective knowledge of expressions in which this distinction can be observed as given.<sup>97</sup>

Of course, direct knowledge of forms as they are used within ready-made expressions would in itself be insufficient for successful speech performance. Speakers do have to deal with rare word forms or less usual combinations that are not covered directly by the repertory of CFs.<sup>98</sup> We will look at this aspect of speech performance in Part II. As will be argued then, prefabricated expressions play an instrumental role in composing unconventional combinations as well. Whenever a constructional problem arises in speech, speakers tend to seek its solution by searching for an analogy with some known concrete precedents rather than by applying abstract rules.

### 3.5. Communicative allusiveness: CFs and their contexts

One of the features distinguishing CFs from words is their greater proximity to the actuality of speech. More constructional operations stand between individual words and an accomplished fact of speech, than what separates individual ready-made expressions from an actual communication woven from them. CFs are nothing but bits and pieces of speakers' actual language experience. Even though this experience remains anonymously generic in most cases, a recognized CF always bears the imprint of a concrete communicative situation from which it "might have" or "must have been" drawn into the speaker's memory;<sup>99</sup> it is this imprint that I call texture. Whenever a CF is being considered, it induces, by virtue of an allusion to past experience via its texture, the whole communicative environment from which it came. Consequently, its appearance evokes "discourse expectations" (Langacker 2001). By the same token, expressions received in a vivid speech situation (what Gibbs calls "enactment statements") have the best chance of being retained in memory (Gibbs 2006: 350), i.e., becoming a CF.

Not all words are different from CFs in this respect. Many words bear a clear stylistic imprint. The very presence of such a word portends a certain intellectual content, genre, stylistic domain and emotional tone for the speech act as a whole.<sup>100</sup> What distinguishes words from CFs is that while the former *may* be communicatively charged, the latter *always* are.<sup>101</sup> Many words remain neutral to the character of the discourse in which they may appear. Looking at such words as *figure*, *yellow*, or *see*, one cannot infer from them alone, without a more specific context, the character of the speech situation in which they could be used, the implied relationship between the speaker and the addressee, the presupposed content of the speech act and its potential continuation. On the other hand, there is no such thing as a communicatively neutral CF.<sup>102</sup> The CF's texture, i.e., its ability to evoke an integral communicative situation is one of its constitutive features.

Like a snail, a CF carries its communicative home on its back. Each CF possess an elaborate communicative profile indicating the genre, stylistic mode of communication, and larger potential thematic area to which it belongs.<sup>103</sup> Moreover, every invoked CF attracts a host of related expressions capable of following, substituting for, or merging with it. A CF does not need an external context to determine its meaning; on the contrary, it is the CF itself that evokes a distinct communicative landscape. One can say that

a CF radiates its proper communicative environment from the inside, instead of absorbing it from the outside.

It is not unusual to see a communication whose verbal components, if taken separately, all appear indeterminate with regard to their thematic and stylistic potential. However, the utterance as a whole, despite the neutrality of all the verbal components it consists of, always attains a distinct communicative physiognomy. This seeming paradox becomes easily explicable if one takes into account that what any communication actually “consists of,” i.e., what its linguistic fabric is made from, are not single words but CFs, which are always communicatively charged. Consider the expression *(He) could have been taken for a/n ....* Its lexical composition is extremely “plain.” In fact, it consists almost entirely of auxiliary words; the only non-auxiliary lexeme is the verb *taken* – one of the most widely used, and as a result, communicatively most non-specific words in English. And yet, the expression as a whole, being a CF, possesses a palpable communicative character. It suggests the genre (a story), a tone of restrained irony, even an anticipated profile of the subject who is to emerge. Cf. an example in which these anticipations, arising even before any subject matter is introduced, are fulfilled in the second part of the utterance:

(3.14) He could have been taken for an important Russian aristocrat or maybe some foreign duke. (Vassily Grossman, “In Kislovodsk”; cited from *The New Yorker*)

The difference between words and CFs with regard to their allusional potential becomes manifest in instances where a CF consists of a single word. In such cases, the word functions at two different levels: as an individual CF and as an isolated word that may show up as a part of many different CFs. For instance, the one-word inscription TAXI, or the exclamation *Taxi!*, serves as a CF, and as such is communicatively charged. Upon encountering either of these expressions, the speaker instantly gets a comprehensive understanding of the situation involved; he realizes what to expect in this situation, how all the participating parties, including himself, are supposed to act, and most importantly, what else can or must be said on the occasion. On the other hand, the same unit *taxi* as a dictionary item may surface in many conventional expressions, each evoking a communicative environment of its own:

(3.15) The only way to get there is by taxi.  
The taxi never came.

All taxi drivers (in New York City) are (...)  
 Finally, a taxi appeared.  
 Finally, the taxi appeared.  
 Call for a taxi.  
 Let's hop into a taxi and ...

It is the communicative neutrality, or indeterminacy, of the word *taxi* as a single verbal unit that allows it to serve as a component in all these stationary expressions, each evoking a unique constellation of circumstances and narrative implications.

An important consequence of the context-inducing capacity of CFs is the self-inducing character of speech. Each CF invoked in speech calls to the speaker's (and his audience's) attention a number of other CFs ready to be used in fulfillment of its communicative potential – as its expansion, continuation, and implied antecedents. What appears on the surface of a communication is always only a fraction of what simultaneously evolves in the minds of its participants. The messages actually created and received are floating in a sea of possibilities, anticipations, asides, moves unrealized yet considered, however fleetingly. At every moment speakers are confronted with alternatives offering themselves and fighting for attention. This plurality of choices, faced by speakers at every moment of their speech activity – not abstract choices drawn from a matrix, but involuntary, almost compulsory recollections evoked by the communicative texture of each used CF – is essential for speech proficiency. It is the “noise” of alternatives, potentials and implications that creates an environment out of which an utterance emerges as a palpable instance of communication.

In a scene in Alain Robbe-Grillet's *The Confession*, one of the most notorious examples of the French *nouveau roman* of the 1950s, an overtly trivial phone conversation is interspersed with pages of italicized text recreating the stream of consciousness of the speakers as it proceeds in the background of their terse formulaic remarks. In fact, the incessant chaotic movement of corpuscles of language in the mind of a speaker presents a picture whose complexity and dynamism may dwarf the most daring experiments of avant-garde prose. We all experience this phenomenon all the time in our everyday speech practice. We would not be able to speak without it.

### 3.6. Volatility: CFs vs. words

Let us return to some examples cited in Chapter 2:

(2.1) In a major shift of policy, (...)

(2.11) And it was never but once a year that they were brought together anyway.

Both expressions are, if not entirely formulaic, at least composed out of established formulas. Should each of them be acknowledged in its entirety as a single CF? Or should they be viewed as conjunctions of smaller units each of which constitutes a separate CF? If the latter is the case, into exactly how many such smaller units should (2.1) or (2.11) be divided, and where should their borderlines be drawn? For instance, which of the following segments should be recognized as distinct CFs:

(3.16) a shift of  
in a shift of  
a major shift of  
a shift of policy  
a major shift of policy  
in a major shift of policy

(3.17) it was never but once  
once a year  
never but once a year  
it was never but once a year  
and it was [...] anyway  
and it was never but [...] anyway

These questions can hardly be answered definitively. Individual speakers may have slight preferences for one answer or another, but no version can be deemed definitive and unequivocal. Turning to a textual corpus would simply confirm most if not all these collocations.<sup>104</sup> What can be stated with certainty is that a majority of English speakers would acknowledge familiarity with the abovementioned list of variations as a whole, even though they may disagree about particular items on that list.

This situation is typical of the way CFs stay in memory. On the one hand, speakers remember a multitude of speech fragments, effortlessly retrieve them from memory whenever they have a need for one or another

among them (or even do it involuntarily, without any apparent need), and instantly recognize them in the speech of others. In these respects, CFs function as ready-made signs, similar to single words. On the other hand, however, in most cases speakers are neither able nor willing to determine the exact shape in which a given CF dwells in their memory. Familiar and conventional as they are, CFs are not safely “stored” as distinct objects that could be itemized in a finite list; rather, their state in a speaker’s memory can be described as that of constant floating or drifting.<sup>105</sup> CFs are perceived as “given facts” of language, ready to be used; but what exactly is “given,” and how many such given facts our memory contains, is impossible to say with certainty, due to their volatile nature. Instead of being solid and distinct, as items of linguistic hardware are supposed to be, CFs exhibit the fluidity typical of allusions.

Henry Bergson was perhaps the first to point out the existence of two types of memory, which he called “representation” and “action” memory. One “captures” the recalled phenomenon in an instantaneous perception, regardless of its actual physical duration, the other recreates it in its proper duration; one is spontaneous and involuntary – the other learned and voluntary (Bergson [1912] 2004: 91-95). It will be discussed later that the connection of different memories with their “duration” is indeed important for the way the meaning of CFs, and their combination, is processed.

Bergson’s philosophical argument looks prescient to an immense amount of experimental research done in the last twenty years. I mean the dual-processing theory of memory that distinguishes between “recollection,” on the one hand, and “recognition,” or “familiarity,” on the other.<sup>106</sup> In the former case, respondents were able to recreate the precise shape of a previously seen item; in most such cases, they were well aware of the source of their recollection. In the latter, they find the item they confronted “sort-of-like-old” (Brooks 1978: 170), but were uncertain about its exact shape and source. Recollection is a product of rote familiarization, while recognition emerges out of a collective of associated memories.<sup>107</sup>

Recognition can be shown in experiments on so-called “false memories”: when asked to recreate a word list they have seen briefly, respondents make mistakes by putting in words drawn by association; for instance, if the original list included a certain piece of furniture, in their response speakers may give some other piece of furniture.<sup>108</sup> In other cases, false memories stem from paronomastic resemblance (Sommers and Lowis 1999), or from a mix of phonological and semantic associations (Watson, Balota and Roediger 2003).



Both recognition and recollection enhance “fluency,” i.e., the speed with which informants respond to stimuli (Jacoby 1983; Whittlesea, Jacoby and Girard 1990; Whittlesea and Williams 2000; Whittlesea and Williams 2001), although there is no uniform opinion about which type is more conducive to fluency (Yonelinas 2002). It is interesting that recognition and its attribute, false memory, tend to increase with age, at the expense of recollection (Norman and Schachter 1997; Lövdén 2003). The reason may be not only changes in the nature of memory itself but the increase and diversification of the network of associations between speech items that occurs in the course of a speaker’s lifetime language experience. The fact that false memory affects high frequency words (i.e., those included in a richer network of associations) more than low frequency words<sup>109</sup> seems to speak in favor of this hypothesis.

Unfortunately, all the works cited above deal with single words and not longer expressions. Nevertheless, they show the extent to which volatile, associatively bound recognition affects the way speakers process linguistic information. The vastness of the stock of speech fragments that our memory retains is unimaginable. However, we never attain a definitive grasp on all our possessions. To be sure, conventional speech formulas and idioms are remembered in a set way. But even they can be tampered with by speakers, who can bend their grammatical shape and alter their semantic applicability.<sup>110</sup> As for non-formulaic, truly “fragmentary” CFs, they typically emerge from a nebulously indistinct agglomeration of previous experiences. This is why, when different speakers look at the same linguistic artifact, their perceptions of its texture usually coincide to an extensive degree yet not completely. Moreover, if the same speaker were to take a second look at the same piece, he might well come out with a somewhat different account of its intertextual fabric.<sup>111</sup> In this regard, “reading” speech CF-wise is not unlike the act of reading texts of high artistic value: there is no such thing as two totally identical acts of reading, yet this indeterminacy neither undermines our conviction that the text in question possesses a certain meaning nor contradicts the feeling that by each act of reading we arrive at a satisfactory understanding of it.<sup>112</sup>

This is where the crucial difference between CFs and words lies. Speakers of a language show a remarkable degree of coincidence in dividing speech into single words. The individual lexicon of any speaker, as well as the lexicon of the language at large, features a word list that is large but not indefinite. The creation of improvised words deviating from and potentially expanding that list is a culturally important but relatively minor part of

language experience, compared with the scope of situations in which speakers operate with words belonging to the approbated corpus of lexical items. Moreover, a newly created word is usually marked in speakers' perception as something exceeding the boundaries of their stationary vocabulary. In contrast, neither any individual speaker nor a community of speakers of a language can claim a firm grasp on a definitive, or at least observable, corpus of CFs. We cannot say with certainty where one CF ends and another begins in our memory, or whether this or that CF encountered in speech is featured there in a "full," or "truncated," or "augmented" shape. Likewise, one cannot simply count all the CFs directly present, let alone alluded to, in a given artifact of speech – even when one is oneself its creator. Looking at the alternative divisions shown in (3.16) and (3.17), we may well acknowledge our familiarity with each of those versions separately and with all of them together. The associatively overlapping perception of the individual phenomena precludes their definitive listing. To imagine a "dictionary" of CFs of a certain language, one must envision a book that is constantly in flux, its entries merging together, scattering into smaller pieces, and reconstituting in new larger units. And yet, what remains constant in this fluid "dictionary" is the fact that its "entries" remain recognizable in all their alternative versions and through all their possible transmutations. This paradoxical ability to be instantly "grasped" in the process of speech, yet never "caught" in a list, constitutes the very essence of how CFs function as linguistic signs. Not only do CFs allow alteration of their form and meaning, but the plurality of simultaneously available alternatives emerges as the fundamental modus of their existence in memory and their function in speech.

The emphasis on the fragmentary shape and volatile nature of CFs distinguishes this notion from the concept of entrenched units in cognitive grammar. The latter treats entrenched expressions, even those allowing variations, as distinct units. I am not quite happy with the very term "entrenched," since it suggests – by evoking such collocations as *entrenched attitude*, *entrenched mentality* – something inflexible, something that is set firmly and irrevocably in the mind of a speaker. This may be true for speech formulas but not for the overwhelming majority of CFs. The latter are *familiar* to speakers but not *formulaic*. Their contours are eroded by repeatedly rubbing against other CFs, through their ability to contract, expand, and fuse with each other. As a consequence, it is impossible to separate them into distinct units as confidently as single formulaic expressions or single words.

The principal claim of this chapter has been that if language is approached from the point of view of the actual skills necessary for producing successful communications, CFs should be treated as the units of vocabulary out of which speech is composed. In this capacity, they function as primary signs through which speakers convey and interpret each other's communicative intentions. However, CFs are semiotic phenomena of a peculiar nature due to the fluidity of their form. They are *fluid signs*, profoundly different from *stationary signs*, such as words and morphemes.

Fixed signs receive their identity through differentiation, by being distinguished from each other. The meaning of word A is determined by the fact that it is recognized by speakers as “not B,” “not C,” “not D,” etc. Each differentiation highlights a distinctive semantic feature on which it is based; in the final analysis the meaning of a word can be defined by a matrix or a tree of semantic features, each of which becomes apparent in opposition to another quantum of meaning. In contrast, the meaning of a CF arises not from differentiation but from attraction – i.e., from each CF's ability to evoke, allude to, and merge with other CFs. The identity of a CF is determined by its *conflation* with other CFs rather than by *opposition* to them. To ask what is the shape of a given CF means to ask how this CF can be perceived in the given situation of speech, in which it appears adapted to and partially conflated with other CFs. A CF can be most naturally perceived through a set of simultaneous associations and overlapping alternatives, not as an entry in a matrix or a list. Whenever one contemplates a familiar turn of speech, one perceives simultaneously a host of related phenomena, i.e., other expressions similar in shape and/or meaning, alongside further possibilities of them being augmented, truncated, followed, or anteceded by yet another expression. They serve as a collective background to each CF that has been actualized in the speaker's memory. At every moment, the speaker is dealing not with a single distinct unit but with a whole field of related and overlapping pieces of speech. Every single expression always appears to the speaker in an associative symbiosis with others. This is why, for all the familiarity of a certain expression to the speaker, it remains ever in flux. It never fully extricates itself in the speaker's perception from an agglomeration of other expressions, and as a result, never becomes an absolutely solid piece of “hardware,” distinct among other pieces.

Studies in corpus linguistics and “formulaicity” (Wray 2002), while convincingly demonstrating the pervasiveness of the phenomenon in speech, still treat it as an extension of the repertory of stationary signs at speakers' disposal. According to this approach, speakers use “collocations”

or “speech formulas” the same way they use words, i.e., as building blocks that are put together in utterances. The novelty of utterances emerging in speech consists in the fact that they recombine words and collocations in ever new constellations. In other words, the vast expansion of the vocabulary, due to the inclusion into it of a massive amount of collocational expressions, does not change the principal understanding of speech novelty as a purely combinatorial phenomenon.

Recognition of the fluid nature of conventional expression as their inalienable property that distinguishes them from words and morphemes has fundamental consequences for the way we categorize language and linguistic competence. The emphasis in producing new speech artifacts is shifted from rule-based combinations of signs to various manipulations with signs themselves, suggested by their fluid contours and associative interconnections. Including CFs into the primary repertory of signs allows us to treat them as the principal source of linguistic creativity. The very recognizability of CFs carries in itself infinite creative potential, since it is only a familiar phenomenon that can be altered, tampered with, manipulated, or even distorted in a productive way.

Interestingly enough, the introduction of fluid signs reinforces the theoretical principle of the arbitrariness of the signs of language established by Saussure. As Jonathan Culler (1986: 28-32) convincingly argued, the Saussurean notion of arbitrariness can be understood beyond its overt, rather trivial sense, i.e., beyond the idea that no connection, except a purely conventional one, exists between the form and the meaning of a word. According to Culler, arbitrariness means that no meaning is guaranteed for a given form of a sign, since it has no foundation either in logical reasoning or in a natural order of things. As a consequence, the meaning of a sign can change at any moment, contingent on changing circumstances and the intentions of its use. Interpreted in this way, arbitrariness emerges as the prerequisite for the principle of the openness of meaning, not as its antipode.<sup>113</sup>

Taken in this vein, the principle of arbitrariness seems to be further buttressed by the fact that our language experience is anchored in fluid signs, i.e., ones whose form is as non-guaranteed, and as contingent on communicative circumstances, as their meaning. The phenomenon of fluid signs makes the openness of meaning not only possible but unavoidable. It takes a special effort to invest a word with a new meaning, by finding for it a convincing placement in a new context. But with each CF functioning not

otherwise than as a plurality of alternatives, constant reconfiguration of the meaning becomes an inalienable attribute of the speech process.

### 3.7. Accessing the repertory of CFs

From what has been said about constitutive features of the CF, it becomes apparent that an empirical description of this phenomenon poses certain challenges. The fluidity of the form in which a CF is acknowledged by a speaker, together with its propensity for being retrieved from memory simultaneously with a plurality of alternatives and suggested continuations, makes any corpus of CFs tentative and non-exhaustive. Any conceivable list of CFs is not only subject to revisions; it in fact provokes revisions by activating the memory of a speaker who would try to apprise it, and as a result, setting it into a commotion. Instead of offering to the speaker a piece of solid language matter that would fit in a certain position, a CF suggests a *process* by which it can enter speech – a process in which the contours of the utterance appear to be as much in flux as the shapes of units out of which this utterance is to be composed. Because of the fluid nature of CFs, their listing has ever to remain *suggestive* as much as *descriptive*.

The fluid, semi-improvisational nature of the CF – its ability ever to “re-invent” itself depending on its association with other components of the current speech situation – resembles the character of mental processes described by cognitive linguistics, such as conceptual blending, or prototypical recognition of phenomena. And yet, CFs are not purely cognitive phenomena; they always involve tangible language matter. Due to their double-edged connection to fluid mental processes on the one hand and to linguistic hardware on the other, CFs constitute the crucial link between the cognitive and the operational aspects of language – between creative efforts of the mind and the concrete material that allows those efforts to emerge as tangible facts of speech.

Although the agglomeration of CFs in speakers’ memory does not yield itself to a finite description, it can be made more palpable if approached from several different angles. There is a variety of ways by which an empirical description of CFs in a certain language can proceed. The results obtained by pursuing one or another descriptive road are complementary; they provide snapshots of the elusive phenomenon taken from different perspectives.

### 3.7.1. Speech corpora and dictionary entries

The most obvious way to approach CFs is by browsing through large corpora of speech data that now exist for a number of languages – such as The International Corpus of English (ICE-GB), the British National Corpus (BNC), and the Santa Barbara Corpus of Spoken American English (for German, the Digitales Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache (DWDS), whose composition largely follows the BNC). A particularly extensive corpus (50 million words) exists for Russian (*Natsional'nyi korpus russkogo iazyka* ‘The National Corpus of Russian Language, NCRL’); it comprises texts of various styles, dating from the late eighteenth century to the present day. The increasing availability of varied speech corpora gave rise to a new branch of linguistic “corpus studies,” some of which use a corpus as large as a hundred million words.

Many conventional dictionaries contain an extensive list of stationary combinations with an entry lexeme.<sup>114</sup> Dictionaries of synonyms – notably, the WordNet and its Russian counterpart, RussNet (cf. Ufimtseva 1998) – are also useful in this respect, since they highlight, explicitly or by implication, different combinations within which each of the synonyms is conventionally used. Although never exhaustive, the lists of word combinations found in dictionaries can be used in the same way as textual data, i.e., as catalysts for an informant’s mnemonic process, and at the same time, a controlling device checking on it.

However, no established textual corpus guarantees inclusion of all lexemes present in dictionaries of that language, let alone particular word forms. For instance, a brief check of the ICE showed that it misses such words as *analyzability*, *connectivity*, *ideogram*, all of which are fairly common in scholastic parlance and present in various dictionaries of English; the word *formula* is there, but not its derivative *formulaic*, and so on. No less conspicuous is the absence of many widespread colloquialisms, particularly of American provenance, such as *muzak* or *jay-walking*. This aspect of the language is addressed by the Santa Barbara collection, which, however, is not large enough to “capture” all the colloquialisms. Even the much more extensive Russian corpus turns out not to be exhaustive in this respect. For instance, the word *ideogramma* ‘ideogram’ is missing there as well; certain lexemes may be present only in some of their forms; for instance, there is nom. *mnemonicheskii* ‘mnemonic’, gen. *mnemonicheskogo*, but not dat. *mnemonicheskomu*. Even more sketchy is the representation of semi-improvised words which, although not present in a dictionary, are

easily comprehensible to any competent speaker and are being actually used occasionally. The word *reinvigorate*, which we have seen being used in a newspaper article [see ex. (1.1)], did not appear in any textual corpus of English. In the Russian corpus, the word *neizbezhnost'* 'inevitability' has a number of representations in various forms of the singular, but its plural correlate *neizbezhnosti* is missing; although the plural for this abstract noun is not a stationary word form, a speaker of Russian may remember at least one conspicuous instance of its actual usage – a chapter's title in Pasternak's *Doctor Zhivago: Nazrevshie neizbezhnosti* 'The ripe inevitabilities'.

If the full list of words and word forms cannot be captured even in a very extensive corpus of texts, such collections prove to be even less efficient in representing CFs. Both the sheer number of CFs, and the degree of their fluidity, i.e., the proliferation of semi-improvised variations, vastly exceed any conceivable corpus of lexemes or word forms. This makes the reliability of any textual corpus, however large, in detecting CFs far from absolute. There is no way any closed corpus could keep up with the ability of a speaker, or a collective of speakers, to generate or recognize familiar turns of speech as a matter of their live speech practice. Nevertheless, the available textual data is helpful for catalyzing the process of recognition / recollection, and at the same time, checking on it. The investigation moves shuttle-like between what a speaker's or speakers' memory retrieves (or they think it retrieves) and what is or is not present in the available corpus. Speech corpora can also be instrumental in assessing the relative frequency of usage of various familiar turns of speech.<sup>115</sup>

It cannot be emphasized strongly enough that the enormous variety and total discontinuity of conceivable "language games" in which a certain item of language can be involved (sometimes, in dramatically different ways) pose the most formidable challenge both to any compiled corpus of texts and to any data drawn from informants' responses. This problem is often ignored in models that pursue the phantom of a "neutral" language – a fiction indicative of nothing but the limitations of stylistic sensibility on the part of the observer.

### 3.7.2. Registering speech associations

A particularly useful tool for searching for speakers' mnemonic resources has been offered by the *Associative Dictionary of Russian* created by a group of linguists led by Yury Karaulov (2002).<sup>116</sup> The data for the diction-

ary was obtained from questionnaires filled out by 11,000 native speakers – all college students from different cities in Russia. Each informant was offered 100 speech items – isolated words in various forms, and concise (mostly two words long) word groups; altogether, there were 7,000 such basic items offered to different informants. Perhaps because of the still evolving nature of the project, the number of times various individual entries were included in questionnaires was not uniform; it varied rather widely, mostly in the range between 100 and 500. The informants were asked to write down within a short amount of time the first association evoked in their mind by each given stimulus. Associations could be of any shape – a single word, a phrase, a sentence – and of any relation to the stimulus: either collocations or synonyms, antonyms, and paronyms (most typically, words rhyming with the stimulus). The crucial requirement was the spontaneity of the association; the short time allotted to the experiment did not leave the informant any possibility of thinking over and selecting his or her responses.

The two volumes of the Dictionary reflect two complementary perspectives from which to observe the results of the research. Vol. 1 featured the stimuli as its entries, each entry accompanied with all the responses given to it by the informants (in order of descending frequency); vol. 2 took as its entries all the received associations, each garnished (again, in order of descending frequency) with all the stimuli which elicited this response.<sup>117</sup>

As far as I know, this has been the first large-scale project of this type.<sup>118</sup> Its particular advantage, for the purposes of this book, consists in the fact that it appeals to speakers' memory directly and not via already existing texts. Thus an associative dictionary is a tool better attuned to the task of exploring the language memory of speakers than a textual corpus or a lexicographic description. True, the usefulness of this particular Dictionary in this regard seems somewhat limited due to the fact that its authors' stated goal was the description of the "linguistic mentality" of native speakers of Russian<sup>119</sup> rather than their linguistic resources as such.<sup>120</sup> Hence the quasi-psychoanalytical procedure of free association, out of which the collective persona of thousands of respondents is supposed to emerge. The requirement that the respondents always give just one answer – the "first" coming to mind – contradicts the simultaneity that is typical of the way language memory works; I suspect that in many cases the "first" answer had to be picked arbitrarily from several alternatives simultaneously arising in the respondent's mind. Finally, a strong majority of the stimuli consisted of single words rather than expressions, mostly (although not always) in the



initial form (nominative singular for a noun, infinitive for a verb), which, of course, both hampered the associative process and channeled it in a particular direction. Nevertheless, much of the data presented in the Dictionary is indicative of the way words feature within stationary expressions in speakers' memory. By following the threads of those associations, one perceives palpable manifestations of speakers' implicit knowledge of innumerable expressions, each capable of being unreflectively actualized in memory – even if the picture offered there, due to the above mentioned limitations of the process, comprises only patches from the enormous mass of that knowledge.

I want to illustrate how the Dictionary works, CFs-wise, by observing a single randomly drawn example:

- (3.18) беда 'calamity, disaster, trouble, grief' (106 informants, 71 different responses).

A majority of responses (about 60 out of 71) offered collocations which, together with the word-stimulus, form a recognizable expression – a CF or a part thereof. In several respondents the word evoked a proverbial expression *prishla beda–otvoriai vorota* 'when a disaster comes, it always finds your gate wide open'; they responded either with the full expression or with some of its parts: *prishla [beda]* 'a disaster has come' (a stationary expression in its own right); *otvoriai vorota*, and *prishla, otvoriai vorota*. Another proverb: *[beda] ne prikhodit odna* 'a calamity never comes alone,' alongside its modifications *odna ne prikhodit* and *ne byvaet odna* 'is never alone,' and a fragment *ne odna* 'not alone'. Other collocations are less formulaic yet fully conventional: *bol'shaia* 'big'; *sluchilas'* 'happened'; *postigla* 'befell'; *striaslas'* 'struck'; *proshla* 'gone'; *neozhidannaia* 'unexpected'; *okh* 'oh' (suggesting the standard interjection *okh beda!*); *da* 'yeah' (another interjection: *da, beda!*); *s nim* (a conventional exclamation *beda s nim* 'he is in (such) trouble'); *u soseda* 'in the neighbor's (family, household)'; *eto tochno* 'indeed'; *ne uspet' za toboi* 'cannot catch up with you' (*beda–ne uspet' za toboi!* – a generic admonition to someone who is too fast, physically or mentally); *likha* 'tough' (a fragment of the proverb *likha beda nachalo* 'the beginning is always hard'); and *likhaia* (the long form of the same adjective that points, however, to an entirely different stationary expression *likhaia beda* 'tough / painful trouble').

A sizable number of associations feature a word that, while not directly connectable to the stimulus, shows a more or less obvious semantic relation

to it. Such associations point to larger “stories” whose adumbrations emerge as the background of every expression: *pokhorony* ‘funeral’ (implying a generic speech exchange like: *smotri, pokhorony – u kogo eto beda?* ‘look, here goes the funeral – who is afflicted?’); *prorvemsia* ‘we’ll fight our way through.’ (Again, part of an imagined typified exchange: *Beda! – Nichego, prorvemsia!* ‘Trouble! – Don’t worry, we’ll fight our way through’ – a residue of World War II parlance and its reflection in fiction, originally referring to the situation of breaking out through the encircling enemy). Some of such stories, which are implied by a particular response, show pretty daring leaps of fantasy. Among the latter are such overtly enigmatic reactions as *Vrungel’* (referring to the title character of an extremely popular animation film *The Adventures of Captain Vrungel*, 1981; the hero, a Russian version of Baron Munchausen, experiences numerous comic misadventures navigating his yacht “*Beda*”); *mul’tfil’m* ‘animated cartoon’ (probably referring to the same animated film); *tomaty* ‘tomatoes’ (in Russian, the tomato is called *pomidor*, while the word *tomaty*, pl., refers to making tomato preserve, a popular domestic activity; an integral part of this activity is complaining about the poor quality either of the tomatoes themselves or of how the preserve came out, a situation that gave rise to generic utterances such as *V etom godu tomaty – prosto beda* ‘This year’s tomatoes / tomato preserve has been a disaster’).

Finally, there were a few responses guided by semantic or phonetic relations between words rather than idiomatic associations. Among them a few synonyms: *gore* ‘grief’; *i gore*, lit. ‘and grief,’ probably referring to a conventional *gore i beda* or *beda i gore*; *neschast’e* ‘disaster’; *zlo* ‘harm, evil, calamity.’ There are also some purely paronomastic associations: *pobeda* ‘victory’, *eda* ‘food’ (the latter, however, may serve as a collocation as well, implying some sayings such as *ne eda a prosto beda* ‘this food is just a disaster’).

Vol. 2 shows all the cases in which the word *beda* appeared in response to various stimuli. The most interesting feature of this data is that it is not restricted to the initial form of the word (nom. sing.). The stimuli that triggered each separate member of the word’s paradigm turn out to be strikingly diverse. In their responses, speakers offered the word *beda* in different forms of case and number, according to the association prompted by a particular stimulus:

(3.19a) БЕДЫ (gen. sing.): *сигнал* ‘the signal,’ *знак* ‘a sign,’ *год* ‘the year,’ *утро* ‘the morning,’ *час* ‘the hour,’ *последствие* ‘the consequence’ [of the

disaster]; *избежать* and *миновать* ‘escape’ (both hinting at the generic negative expressions *не избежать / не миновать беды* ‘one cannot escape the calamity’).

(3.19b) БЕДЕ (dat. sing.): *быть* ‘to be’ (the convention *быть беде!* ‘the disaster is coming!’); *навстречу* ([*идти*] *навстречу беде* ‘to go out to meet one’s calamity’); *случаться* ‘happen’ (the stimulus verb is given in the imperfective aspectual form, for which there is no credible CFs with dat. sing. *беде* in sight; the perfective form of the same verb, however, yields such firmly entrenched expressions as *как бы не случиться беде* or *не случиться бы беде* ‘beware of the possibility of a disaster’).

(3.19c) БЕДОЙ (instr. sing.): *сплоченный* ‘closing ranks’ (strictly speaking, in the stationary expression the participle typically is in the pl.: *сплоченные бедой* ‘having closed their ranks in the face of the calamity’).

(3.19d) БЕД (gen. pl.): *узел* ‘a knot’ (*узел бед*, lit. ‘a tangle of calamities’).

(3.19e) БЕДАМ (dat. pl.): *нет конца* ‘no end’ (‘there is no end to [one’s] calamities’).

The examples (3.19) show how speakers handle word forms in the process of retrieving conventional expressions from memory. Apparently, they approach word forms from two opposite perspectives.

On the one hand, they recognize correlations between members of one paradigm, treating them as variants of the same lexeme. This allows speakers to substitute one word form with another in order to achieve the conventional shape of the expression they have in mind. For instance, in (3.19b) the stimulus *sluchat'sia* forms a CF with the response *bede* only if it is substituted with its perf. correlate *sluchit'sia*; in (3.19c), the stimulus *splochennyi* forms a CF with *bedoi* only if the sing. is substituted by the pl. *splochennye*. In a similar vein, speakers recognize synonymic and paronymic relations between lexemes, as evidenced by such responses to the stimulus *beda* as *gore* ‘grief’, *zlo* ‘evil, calamity’ on the one hand, and *pobeda*, *eda* on the other. In all such instances, speakers show their recognition of various paradigmatic relations between word forms and lexemes, treating thus related items as variations that can opportunely substitute for each other.

On the other hand, each word form evokes associations with stable expressions of which this form is an integral part. Such associations tend to be extremely idiosyncratic for each word form; they often have little or noth-

ing to do with associations evoked by other forms of the same lexeme, or by its synonymic or paronymic correlates. In this dimension of the usage, paradigmatic correlates appear dissociated from each other in speakers' perception by their different syntagmatic allegiances. Each word form appears totally immersed in the environment of expressions to which it belongs; it loses its connections to other word forms, each of which is in its turn immersed in its own unique environment of conventional collocations. Viewed from this perspective, the speaker's lexicon functions in a patchwork, manifestly non-systemic fashion. When the expression *u nas beda* 'we have been struck by a disaster' is activated, the speaker uses nom. sing. of *beda* without thinking of alternative forms of case and number; even such a seemingly trivial shift as changing the nom. sing. to nom. pl. produces a result that, although not impossible, is unconventional, even slightly odd: *u nas bedy*, in contradistinction to its fully conventional counterpart in sing. On the other hand, when the expression *bedy nad golovoi* 'disasters hover over our heads' is activated, the speaker does not think of the form of nom. sing. as a potential alternative; in this case, it is the introduction of the sing. that would produce a slightly odd speech artifact. Viewed from the perspective of their collocational potentials, the forms of nom. sing. and nom. plur. do *not* function as correlates. Differences in the repertory of CFs attracted by each word form override systemic correlations between them.

Speakers' reactions as registered in the Dictionary reflect *correlation* and *dissociation* as two contradictory but equally relevant strategies with which speakers approach the verbal lexicon. Both strategies are required for producing and understanding speech. As has been discussed above (Ch. 3.4), speakers do not need rules to build a paradigm of correlated word forms – for instance, to build all case and number forms of a noun, or tense / aspect / person forms of a verb. All those forms are known to them separately, each within a number of expressions that speakers are able to retrieve directly from memory. The way a speaker "knows" one word form is independent of the way he "knows" another. (A marginal and only partial exception to this principle comes from exceedingly rare words and neologisms, which are handled by analogy with well-known lexemes: see Ch. 5).

To this we can now add that speakers operate simultaneously on two different levels. On one level, they treat familiar expressions (CFs) as basic units of speech. Each expression is perceived and handled as a whole, regardless of its inner lexical and grammatical composition. Speakers may contemplate the expressions *let alone*, *to say nothing of*, and *not to mention*

as close alternatives, often (although not always) capable of being used interchangeably, regardless of the fact that their inner structures have nothing in common with each other. From this perspective, word forms within *let alone*, *to say*, *to mention* etc. cease to exist as relevant entities. Each expression is retrieved from memory as a familiar whole, without any care about its composition. On the other level, speakers treat lexemes as basic units of speech. They use perceived relations between these units for expanding and modifying the repertory of expressions contained in memory. Thus, they can modify a fully entrenched CF *to rebuild their economy* to an array of less entrenched expressions, such as *to revitalize their economies*, or *to reinvigorate their economies*.

Speakers need CFs as basic units for the *production* and *recognition* of speech. To this end, they apply their mnemonic knowledge of language, which is manifestly patchwork, non-systemic, riddled with logical overlaps and contradictions, and tends to be used sporadically, as an opportunity arises. However, when it comes to *manipulating* familiar expressions, in order to fit them one to another, or to deviate on purpose from their conventional appearance, speakers turn to their known verbal lexicon. The latter, although far from being fully systematic, is interfused with correlations of all kinds – grammatical, synonymic, antonymic, paronomastic. Using those correlations allows speakers to introduce changes into memorized speech material.

### 3.7.3. Internet sources

Both speech corpora and a dictionary based on associational questionnaires, while useful for retrieving the repertory of speech fragments at speakers' disposal, show certain shortcomings in regard to this goal. A corpus of speech data can be expanded almost indefinitely; as studies in corpus linguistics have shown, statistical results for words' collocation, based on large corpora, can be compelling. The main shortcoming of this source is its inflexibility. The corpus shows all examples of a collocation given in a definite shape; it misses a crucial feature of CFs – their fluidity, i.e., the ability of each CF to present itself to speakers not as a fixed collocational unit but as a collective of partially overlapping variations. In order to check all these variations with the corpus, the researcher should compile their list beforehand; they do not arise spontaneously from the data stored in the corpus. Besides, pure statistics in not already a reliable guidance in deter-

mining the degree a certain expression is entrenched in memory; there exist expressions that, although rarely used, are securely present in speakers' memory due to pertinent circumstances with which they are associated. The dictionary of associations, on the other hand, is better suited for capturing the dynamic aspect of language memory. It shows each expression interacting with a network of related expressions that constitute its mnemonic environment in a speaker's perception. However, the price to be paid for the associative fluidity of this picture is its impressionistic subjectivity. Many reactions registered in a dictionary of associations are produced by a single respondent, which makes it difficult to ascertain their validity as a common currency of speakers' language memory.

In a sense, corpus studies and association questionnaires are complementary: the former are more objective (although an element of subjectivity is inevitably present in the initial decision about the corpus' size and composition) but rigid, the latter more flexible but too dependent on individual speakers' transient state of mind. One feature shared by both procedures is the active role of the observer, who receives responses only to a preset repertory of collocations or associative stimuli, which has to be chosen by himself.

There is a possibility of another research procedure that allows one to avoid, or at least alleviate, these shortcomings. It involves interaction with internet information networks (first of all, Google, supplemented by other sources, such as Amazon.com, etc.). A big advantage of this method lies in the fact that the initial stimuli from which research starts do not need to be preset by the observer. A random utterance taken from an actually existing text of any stylistic provenance can serve as an initial prompt from which the procedure begins.

Of course, one can feed an entire utterance into a corpus too; but the response from the corpus would show only exact shapes in which words and word combinations are featured in that utterance. The advantage of a Google procedure consists in the fact that the received responses contain not only exact matches of an expression in question but also *partial matches*, in which the initial stimulus appears in a more or less radically altered way. Thus, the procedure combines the objectivity of a corpus search with the flexibility of an associative network. What emerges as a result are stationary expressions whose re-occurrence is not only confirmed by a massive data but presented together with multiple possibilities of alterations, by means of which they are combined and interspersed with other stationary expressions.

Let us consider a few random, and by necessity sketchy, examples of the procedure.

(3.20) Economic indicators continue nose dive. (*Washington Post*, Dec. 6, 2008)

Even a cursory checking of this sentence for matches in Google yields rather rich results:

(3.21a) economic statistics // economic fundamentals // economic data // United States economic outlook

(3.21b) Latest *economic indicators continue* dire news // Leading *economic indicators continue* dropping // Leading *economic indicators continue* to provide nothing but positive news // *Economic indicators continue* to grow // *Economic indicators continue* slide

(3.21c) *Nose dive* to *continue* // Car sales *continue nose dive* // Land sales *continue nose dive* // Hospital profits *continue nose dive* / *Economic nosedive continues* // Stock market *nosedive continues* // *economic nosedive* // the upcoming *nosedive* of the US *economy* // Oil, Gold plunge on economic woes

What emerges from these matches is, first, the repertory of CFs out of which the fabric of (3.20) is composed. Second, they suggest at least some of their possible modifications (*continue nose dive* // *nose dive to continue*) and expansions (*latest* / *leadings economic indicators*). Finally, a multitude of related expressions whose shapes and / or meanings are partially overlapping with the CFs actually used in the stimulus utterance. Together, they form a background of that utterance, working as potential sources of its alteration and expansion. The repertory of the used CFs as their modifications, together with an associative “support cast,” as reflected in this data, are the following:

(3.22) [latest / leading / U.S] economic indicators  
 economic indicators continue ...  
 ... continue nosedive / nosedive to continue / the nosedive of [...] continues  
 (economic fundamentals) (economic data) (economic outlook)  
 (... continue slide / dropping/ to grow) (... plunge)  
 (economic woes) (dire news) (positive news)

The example (3.20) has been drawn from newspaper language, which is notorious for its formulaic repetitiveness. However, a random example from fictional prose reveals in it both reproductiveness and variation whose extent is by no means inferior to what we have seen in newspaper language:

(3.23) By noon they'd left the road and were riding southwest through the open grassland. (Cormac McCarthy, *All the Pretty Horses*)

The following are just a few samples of internet matches for the utterance and its various segments:

(3.24a) *they'd left* them behind. // They *left* the hotel for the steamer an hour before *noon* ... back *by noon*. // *they'd* be ready *by noon*

(3.24b) Where His Wheels *Left the Road* lyrics // ... is *left* lying in the *road* // Driver *left* *by road* for six hours

(3.24c) six men *on six horses were riding through* an apple orchard // we're *riding through* on ... // *riding through* hell // *riding through* Obama country

(3.24d) found in open grasslands // African Elephants walking in line *through open grassland savanna* // The Wide *Open Grasslands*

Once again, the CF-wise composition of the initial sentence comes forth together with numerous alterations and associative potentials. The fabric of the stimulus sentence consists not only of words and expressions directly used in it; it includes this fluid environment without which neither composition nor understanding of the utterance would be practicable.

One setback of working with the internet data is its bias in regard to speech genre; the majority of retrieved articles represent either titles or initial sentences of a text. This limitation can be overcome by supplementing the Google search with the data drawn from corpora and dictionaries. Such a combined search has clear advantages over any single method. Starting with internet search allows the observer to avoid a preset list of expressions; the search begins with genuine samples of speech, out of which stationary expressions emerge automatically as it were. The internet data gives an adumbration of the repertory of CFs that capture not only their typical shapes but their fluidity and variability. The picture thus received can be then fine-tuned with the help of other, stylistically more varied sources. To this effect, one runs all variations of a CF that emerged from



the internet through a corpus data, checking the results with combinatorial and associative dictionaries. Any new constellations of language matter that emerge from those procedures could in their turn be subjected to a further search for matches in the internet.

### 3.7.4. A history of a sentence

In early 1900s Ferdinand de Saussure tried to write a review article about the newly published book on general phonetics by Eduard Sievers.<sup>121</sup> The effort turned into yet another confirmation of the late Saussure's severe writing problems that eventually made him incapable to produce anything but fragmentary notes. As so many of Saussure's other projects from that time, big and small, this work was never completed. The following example shows Saussure's hesitant attempts to begin his review:

En regard de Sievers avec // Ce Sievers consacre une page et demi à cette question des phonèmes que peuve ce suivre dans la syllabe // La question du présent travail, le genre de connexité [replaced by 'relation,' 'rapport,' and again 'connexité'] qui existe entre la syllabe et la nature de divers phénomènes, est traité en une page et demi par M. Sievers // M. Sievers a réussi à traiter en une page et demi la question que nous ne faisons // En moins d'une page et demi M. Sievers s'acquitte de la tâche // Il n'y a pas une page demi dans Sievers sur la question. . . .<sup>122</sup>

Saussure's writing highlights a phenomenon that every speaker experiences, if usually in a less severe form, when striving to produce an utterance that would respond to his intentions while rendering them in a well-packaged linguistic shape. Whatever the speaker's "thought" might be, the only way to express it is to use available pieces of conventional language material at his disposal. To be sure, those pieces are pliable, yet their flexibility is not infinite: they pose demands and limitations as to how they could be used in conjunction with other conventional pieces. As a result, the process of writing turns into continual negotiating efforts aimed at finding a compromise between an optimal expression of the speaker's thought and an optimal conjunction of the available speech material.

Saussure's draft consists of partially overlapping expressions featuring more or less the same speech material, although variedly packaged. In a way, it resembles a family of overlapping responses to a certain stimulus one could obtain from Google. This similarity points to the validity of the data that emerges from rewriting a sentence. What the process exposes is,

first of all, a repertory of stationary expressions out of which the speaker is trying to forge his message, and second, the way they need to be modified in order to join each other, and the problems that can arise from tampering with the conventional material.

Editorial revisions are not totally alien to oral speech either, despite time constraints involved in its production, and general lower standards for smoothness of seam lines in its composition.<sup>123</sup> As to written speech, its products often emerge as a result of a chain of successive editorial revisions. One again, electronic technology can help capture this process. When the editing is done on a computer, it can be easily put on the record by retrieving all the versions of a sentence overrun in the process of its composition. Thus obtained, the editorial history of a text provides a valuable supplement to other means of studying the intertextual fabric of speech. By closely following all subsequent drafts that emerged in the process of composition, we can gain access not only to the repertory of CFs at the writer's disposal, but also to instances at which the speaker succeeded – or failed – in adapting them to each other in an utterance.

### 3.8. Conclusion: approaching a linguistic model based on volatile signs

In 1522, Erasmus of Rotterdam published a book under the title *Familiarium colloquiorum formulae*.<sup>124</sup> The book, which subsequently underwent several expanded editions, contained thousands of speech formulas in Latin pertaining to everyday speech situations, such as greetings, invitations, congratulations, and typical “domestic conversations.” Starting with the simplest formulaic accessories of a certain situation, the book then allowed the gradual expansion of this rudimentary repertory by offering ever more extensive and inventive combinations of the basic items, until the process reached a level at which well developed dialogues and elaborate short stories on the given topic became possible.<sup>125</sup> For instance, the section on “greetings” begins with the most rudimentary expressions, such as *Greetings, father*; *Greetings, honorable master*; *Greetings in good measure, my uncle*; *Greetings, my most charming nephew*. The communicative profile of the items from this basic stock of conventional expressions is sometimes outlined by meta-remarks; it is indicated, for instance, that greetings such as *Hail, governor*, or *Hail, officer* do exist, while *Hail, bootmaker* or *Hail, shoemaker* do not; or that in Latin one has to use expressions such as *father* or *distinguished gentleman* as euphemistic ways of addressing an old man,

while in Classical Greek a more straightforward formula  $\hat{\omega}$  γέρον ‘you, old man’ does exist and is acceptable for this occasion. Soon the formulaic greetings grow into micro-dialogues, first rather plain, then ever more inventive, and eventually becoming exuberantly confrontational, replete with jokes and hilarious paradoxes:

(3.25) Greetings, little old woman of fifteen years.

Greetings, lass of eighty years.

Good luck with your baldness!

Good luck to you with your crooked nose.

χαίρε (lit. ‘rejoice!’) – Remember you are in Basel, not Athens. – Then why do you dare speak in the Roman tongue, when you’re not in Rome?

The book was addressed, first of all, to Erasmus’ students who had undergone the conventional training in Latin grammar (some of them had already become schoolmasters) without successfully learning Latin as a language proper, that is, as an all-purpose tool of expression and communication. Erasmus’ manual, alongside a few books of a similar kind by other authors, represented a new approach typical of the age of humanism, in contradistinction to the scholastic tradition of learning. It rejected the rich classical and medieval tradition of “the art of memory,” i.e., precise memorizing with the help of elaborate devices (Yates 1966; Carruthers 1990), offering instead a more flexible and creative way of mastering the needed linguistic data.<sup>126</sup>

Erasmus’ *formulae* correspond neatly to the phenomenon which we agreed to call the CF. As is always the case with CFs, their meaning is vibrant with allusions to concrete situations, speakers’ roles, and speech genres. Together, the *formulae* yield a tangible picture of contemporary life, particularly that of the academic community – young students, scholars, teachers, and their typical experiences with various people and in various situations.

At the same time, the book gives an insight into how a language is mastered and used by those who aspire to become its fluent speakers. To achieve this goal, one has first of all to learn a multitude of concrete expressions. At first glance, the size of this task seems horrifying. However, as the process of learning evolves, its speed increases exponentially. The more expressions one already knows, the easier it becomes to retain in memory new items, since each of them receives support by analogy from expressions one has already mastered.<sup>127</sup> Even as one continues memorizing

formulaic expressions, one begins tampering with them, combining familiar material in a more creative way – doing this, however, not arbitrarily, but by looking at concrete examples of creative usage of the basic material that already figured in one's experience. The further this process advances, the more volatile the contours of each memorized expression appear. The road to competence in language proceeds through the erosion of the contours of CFs, not its solidification.

The non-“listable,” fluid, dynamic nature of CFs by no means undermines their role as signs of language. Although it makes it harder to capture them in a formal description, the volatile character of CFs in fact greatly facilitates the exchange between speakers. The not fully fixed, somewhat eroded, fluid shapes in which CFs drift in speakers' memory turn out to be extremely helpful when it comes to the task of fitting different CFs to each other.<sup>128</sup> A familiar expression can contract and expand, have some of its components altered, even be reduced to a slight hint, all of this without losing its familiarity to speakers. The fluidity of a CF does not diminish its reliability. If anything, the relation between the former and the latter is direct rather than reverse: the more confident speakers feel about a certain item (and by the same token, about its associative connections with a multitude of other familiar items), the greater the facility with which they can manipulate it without compromising its recognizability.

A stable, orderly, prescribed code of linguistic behavior, attractive as it may look as a rational concept, would be impracticable as a common denominator for a community of speakers. For one thing, such a code would not stay in place for a fraction of a second, since people and circumstances under which they communicate never cease to change. The moment we would somehow manage to agree on a code, it would immediately begin to splinter into subcodes reflecting different subcommunities of speakers and different genres of communication.<sup>129</sup> Even within an absolutely monolithic subcommunity – if such could be imagined – the implementation of a code would require “pragmatic” adjustments to infinitely varied speech situations. All of this would go on top of the superhuman complexity of the combinatorial rules needed for assessing the whole variety of “grammatical” sentences (to say nothing of “ungrammatical” yet fully acceptable ones) actually produced by speakers, and of the superhuman speed with which speakers would have to employ those rules, provided they had complete and perfect intuitive command of them.<sup>130</sup>

These difficulties dissipate when one considers the gigantic conglomeration of CFs accumulated by each speaker, each “flickering” in memory

between a collective of variants and included into a synaptic network of associations. No repertory of constructions made out of fixed elements, however rich in variety and ingenious in design, could ever match the natural fluidity of this movable assembly, which makes it adaptable to ever-changing profiles and intentions of speakers, speech genres and speech situations that constitute the very essence of speech.<sup>131</sup>

Whether speakers' "tacit knowledge" of language comprises all the extensive algorithmic rules necessary for producing even the simplest grammatical sentence is, strictly speaking, a matter of faith – precisely because of the "tacit" nature of such presumed knowledge.<sup>132</sup> What speakers can recognize explicitly, and not only "tacitly," are conventional turns of speech.<sup>133</sup> Once one knows a certain expression, one just cannot help knowing it. One can choose to use or not use an available turn of speech on certain occasions, to tamper with it, to make a travesty of it. What one cannot do is erase it from one's memory at will.

Our everyday life evolves in an environment filled with thousands and thousands of concrete objects, from multitudes of personal articles to buildings and rooms, street pavements and traffic signs, etc. etc., each serving its particular purpose and handled in its own way. As long as these ready-made pieces of our everyday existence remain securely at hand, we barely acknowledge their presence, let alone the scope of competence – or rather, of innumerable and diverse pockets of competence – that is needed for living in their environment. In the same vein, the language environment of our everyday life is furnished with a myriad inconspicuous speech artifacts which we handle with unreflective assurance, as something inalienable from our everyday life. This "existential" knowledge is so vast and at the same time flexible that it supercedes all rational rules for operating our language that we might have formed consciously or intuitively.

Unspectacular as it may look from a perspective of abstract rationalism, this ad hoc knowledge, at best interspersed with some pockets of rules and generalizations, turns out to be more effective than an all-encompassing, coherently organized system, simply because it offers speakers the only means to match in speech the fluidity of their mental processes and the communicative situations they experience.

About two decades ago, when I began considering a model of language that would be based on memorized expressions and their alterations, rather than on a stable lexicon and rules, the notion of the CF looked as a theoretical concept that could be captured in research as an adumbration at best (cf. Gasparov 1996). Since then, the emergence of powerful research tools has

made the task of building lists of CFs, their variations, and associative connections quite practicable. The goal of this book, however, remains primarily theoretical; I believe that while the ubiquitous presence of collocational phenomena in speech has been demonstrated compellingly, the fundamental consequences of this fact for our understanding of how meaning arises in speech are yet to be explored. This is the principal problem addressed in the following chapters.

## Chapter 4

### Integral meaning

. . . In philosophy we often *compare* the use of words with games and calculi which have fixed rules, but cannot say that someone who is using language *must* be playing such a game. . . . The most that can be said is that we *construct* ideal languages. But here the word “ideal” is liable to mislead, for it sounds as if these languages were better, more perfect, than our everyday language; and as if it took the logician to show people at last what a proper sentence looked like.

L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, I: no. 81

A crucial thesis of this book is that there exist two principal classes of linguistic units that function as primary signs, each in its own way: single words and memorized expressions (CFs). Together, they constitute the *double vocabulary* of a language.<sup>134</sup> A crucial aspect of a speaker’s mastery of the language consists in his ability to use both layers of its vocabulary simultaneously and in close interconnections.

Describing various shapes taken by CFs in speech and laying out criteria for distinguishing them in the fabric of utterances constitutes only one part of the task of establishing them as a full-fledged vocabulary, with its own ways of operation that run a parallel course with the verbal vocabulary. To be comprehensive, the description of CFs should also address the character of their meaning. If indeed CFs function as signs of a peculiar kind, whose fluidity makes them different from words, their full description should explain how their meaning can be related to their form under this peculiar semiotic condition. In this respect, the study of CFs takes a step beyond corpus and formulaic studies, which are mainly focused on exposing collocations as tangible entities ubiquitously present in speech. The following chapter begins exploration of the meaning of CFs as stationary linguistic units.

#### 4.1. Signification and deduction: integral vs. constructed meaning of a word

A common feature of the meaning of all signs that can be called primary – i.e., signs that speakers retrieve from memory as a whole – is its holistic nature. A certain expression, or a word with a complex structure, after having been domesticated in one's speech experience and entrenched in one's memory, becomes an *integral* entity – a primary fact of speech, accepted as it is, in its unique wholeness. Whatever the components out of which this speech entity has been assembled, they cease to be relevant in the face of the direct, unreflecting, and unmediated reaction it evokes. This principle applies not only to the shape of such entity but to the way its meaning is perceived.

At first glance, many words do not look like primary signs. A word may contain several morphemes whose meanings, taken separately, are quite distinct. It seems logical then to construct the meaning of a word as the semantic sum of its morphemic constitutive parts: *teach-er* 'an agent of teaching, i.e., one who teaches,' *bake-er* 'an agent of baking: one who bakes.' Looking at examples like these, one is tempted to believe that speakers arrive at the meaning of *teacher* by adding the agentive meaning to that of the action of 'teaching.'<sup>135</sup>

The most obvious objection against deriving a word's meaning from its morphemic components arises from cases such as German *auf-* 'to move up, to open' and *hören* 'to hear' producing together *aufhören* 'to cease, to stop'; or *über-* 'over' and *setzen* 'to place, to settle' adding up to alternative meanings that, although not unrelated to their components, are related to them in radically different ways: *übersetzen* (1) "to cross a waterway by a vessel," (2) "to translate," and (3) "to overbid." More importantly, one can spot trouble even in seemingly straightforward cases such as those first cited. "Teaching" your son how to handle the ball does not qualify you as a "teacher"; "baking" fish or vegetables does not make you a "baker" – that is, not everyone involved in the action that is designated by the verb fits the meaning of the derivative noun. As it turns out, the meaning of the noun contains certain components that are nowhere to be seen in its constitutive parts.<sup>136</sup> More trouble arrives with the case of *boil-er*: adding the agentive suffix to *boil* results in the meaning "a device that boils" while adding the same suffix to *bake* or *teach* produces 'a person who bakes / teaches.' We have no way of knowing that *teacher* means a person rather than a teaching gadget – unless we simply *know* this.



This is one possible way in which Saussure's concept of the "arbitrariness" of signs can be interpreted: the sign is arbitrary because its meaning needs not, and usually cannot, be analytically constructed; a sign functions as a sign only insofar as its use is grounded in convention, i.e., if it is known to speakers as a given fact of their language. The examples usually given to illustrate Saussure's notion of arbitrariness are primary (non-derivative) units of vocabulary. Obvious (almost too obvious) as such examples seem to be – like Eng. *house*, Fr. *maison*, Rus. *dom*, or Fin. *talo* all referring, quite arbitrarily, to the (more or less) same object – they are in fact misleading as to the full scope of the Saussurean concept. If the case were that trivially simple – if the Saussurean principle of arbitrariness were merely a cumbersome paraphrase of Shakespeare's *What's in a name? that which we call a rose By any other name would smell as sweet* – it could be easily challenged by the presence of derivative signs whose meaning seems to be logically constructed rather than arbitrarily declared.<sup>137</sup> I am convinced, however, that the understanding of arbitrariness as mere lack of motivation is too simplistic; rather, this notion indicates that no motivation is *sufficient* for defining the meaning of a sign, be it a derivative word or a metaphorical expression. The crux of the matter is that even in the latter cases the strategy of constructing meaning does not work, or works only to a limited extent (how limited, can be different in every individual case). Does *housekeeper* mean one who guards the house, or owns it, or retains it temporarily – or perhaps, it is not a person but a device that prevents the house from collapsing? Does *housebreaking* mean demolition? The only way to know that all these educated guesses are false is to know the meaning assigned to *housekeeper* or *housebreaking* by convention, i.e., to treat them as arbitrary signs.

Direct (arbitrary) knowledge of signs and the ability to dissect some of them into logically congruent components belong to different domains of speakers' competence. The former reflects speakers' knowledge of a language in a proper sense, which is necessary for producing and understanding speech in that language; the latter is the product of meta-linguistic reflection, which is possible only after the fact of the primary knowledge. Once one knows the meaning of a word for a fact, one may well perceive its derivational history.<sup>138</sup> But in most cases this operation would be impossible to perform in the opposite direction, i.e., to arrive securely at the word's meaning solely by applying to it a certain derivational pattern.<sup>139</sup> At best, this method might result in a lucky guess. An analytical procedure can show the logic by which the meaning of a given sign can be assembled

from elementary parts only when the final destination of the analytical procedure is already known.<sup>140</sup>

Beginning students of a language are encouraged to observe patterns of derivation and to use them in recognizing new words, a device alleviating the dire need to expand their meager vocabulary. As the latter gradually evolves, however, they find, first, that the derivational devices at their disposal lead to misinterpretation as often as to a correct guess; second, that even if they succeed in applying an analytical procedure, it slows down the pace of their speech performance to such an extent that makes it impossible to keep up with normal conditions of speech; and third, that their dependence on analytical devices has shrunk, since more often than not they recognize the meaning of a word directly, without looking at its inner structure. As qualified speakers, they retain the ability to construct the meaning of a word on occasion – for instance, when they are confronted with a neologism or deliberate wordplay; in other words, their recognition of analytical patterns is typically called on “special cases.” Within the main corpus of speakers’ linguistic experience, however, the form and the meaning of the words they know are related to each other directly as facts of unmediated knowledge.<sup>141</sup>

However, the problem with analytically constructed meaning runs deeper than just its impracticality. The crux of the matter is that constructed meaning, even if inferred correctly, always remains *qualitatively different* from the meaning of a primary sign as it is understood by speakers.

The meaning of a primary sign is never equivalent to the sum total of the meanings of its components<sup>142</sup> because speakers, who directly draw this sign from their speech experience, perceive it as an integral phenomenon.<sup>143</sup> As a result, the sign as a whole always contains something that is not present in any of its components prior to their integration into that sign. Compared with the information that could be inferred from its constitutive parts, the meaning of a sign as a whole is always more tangible and richer in detail.<sup>144</sup>

For instance, the whole meaning of *baker* exceeds by far what could be inferred from putting together the meaning of the stem and the suffix. It involves a broad variety of semantic ingredients whose constellation is indeed “arbitrary”: a *baker* is not simply one who bakes but one who bakes bread and/or pastries; does this as a trade and not just for his or her household; and does it in a facility that can be called a “bakery” rather than a bread factory (a distinction that in itself is fairly complicated). Above all, the word *baker* evokes a holistic image whose parameters it would be hard

to disentangle one from another and to present as an exhaustive list. It includes certain typical traits of the “baker” – his appearance, personality, body language, the ambiance in which he is expected to be seen, even some typical situations in which he is supposed to be involved. Ethereal as these suggested attributes are, their presence is attested by the varying amounts of speech effort needed in order to revoke or subvert them. For instance, a *baker* is presumed to be male – which means that a female baker would invite special linguistic attention, typically in the form of added qualifiers or commentary.<sup>145</sup>

In the novel *The Corrections*, Jonathan Franzen plays with a similar presumption concerning the word *chef*. One of the novel’s characters frequents various restaurants in Philadelphia, to compare them with *Mare Scuro*, his personal favorite:

When he was sure that he still liked Mare Scuro best, he called the chef and made a proposal.

“The first truly cool restaurant in Philly,” he said. “The kind of place that makes a person say, ‘Hey, *I* could live in Philly – if I had to.’ I don’t care if anybody actually feels that way. I just want a place that makes *me* feel that way. So whatever they’re paying you now, I will double. . . .”

“You are going to lose a vast amount of money,” Denise said, “if you don’t find an experienced partner and an exceptionally good manager.”<sup>146</sup>

The reader is given plenty of narrative space to envision the figure of the “chef” – and moreover, a budding celebrity, soon to be “discovered” in a big way – before the chef’s name is mentioned. The effect of thwarted expectations is clearly calculated by the author as he exploits the holistic image built into the meaning of the word *chef* in readers’ perception.

The totality of the more or less persistent (i.e., requiring more or less of an effort in order to be qualified or refuted) features of the meaning of the word constitutes that word as a semiotic whole. For speakers in direct command of the word, a baker is a baker: they recognize the phenomenon, together with its natural environment in speech, the way one recognizes a bird or a cat.

Such comprehensive understanding of the meaning, which arises from a direct, non-reflective response to a familiar sign, can be called *signification* in the proper sense. Signification is a crucial feature of any phenomenon that functions as a sign. It is inseparable from the sign’s arbitrariness: a sign is arbitrary because its signification always goes beyond any possible ra-

tionalization of its meaning; signification becomes possible insofar as the sign is perceived as a given fact, unconditionally, i.e., arbitrarily.

For most words – barring radically idiosyncratic cases, such as *aufhören* – the meaning that can be constructed analytically from their derivational history is not entirely off the mark; typically, it approximates signification to some extent. Still, something always remains to be fleshed out by experience of the actual usage of the word in speech in order to arrive at its integral meaning; the latter can be understood as an equivalent of what Clifford Geertz called a “thick description,”<sup>147</sup> in contradistinction to the bare bones of “structural anthropology.”

The analytically constructed meaning of a word represents a *deduction* of its meaning, not the meaning itself.<sup>148</sup> A deduced meaning always has a schematic and hypothetical nature. It offers a noetic construction of what a competent speaker recognizes in an integral and unreflecting way, due to his speaking experience. It remains a more or less lucky guess until it is corroborated and elaborated by a holistic comprehension of the meaning that comes from direct knowledge.

I comprehend the meaning of the classical Greek ἀνα-βαίνω as an ascending walking motion; as such, it agrees well with the meaning of its stem and its prefix combined. But I still remain in the dark about how exactly, in what physical manner, this motion is being performed. How should one picture the proper physical scenery amidst which this motion takes place – walking up a steep road? climbing a ladder? setting foot on a scaffolding? What is the nature of the discourse to which the word belongs? what type of “story” does it suggest? what stylistic aura does it convey?

Arriving at a meaning by way of deduction is a legitimate part of dealing with language. Its importance both for heuristic and didactic purposes is obvious; it can also be indispensable in all kinds of mental play with language. To be true to its own purposes, however, deduction should not claim to be what it is not, namely, the representation of the meaning of a linguistic sign as it is understood by competent speakers of the language.<sup>149</sup>

Looked at from the perspective of their potential for deduction, words such as *teacher*, *baker*, *worker*, *fisher*, *player* form a matrix whose members are uniformly related to their respective derivational bases and to each other: “teacher” : “teach” = “baker” : “bake” = “worker” : “work,” etc. When, however, these words are confronted with their respective domains of signification, they show each its own domain of specific parameters, imagery, and contextual implications whose relation to other domains would be impossible to either calculate or predict.<sup>150</sup> Those integral seman-

tic worlds rest solely on speakers' ability to "inhabit" them, i.e., to treat them as familiar facts of their linguistic life.

Fillmore was the first to suggest that the meaning of a word constitutes a comprehensive "frame" that always goes beyond its structurally construed semantic features.<sup>151</sup> This thesis has now become one of the cornerstones of cognitive linguistics. In Johnson's neat formulation: "To consider only the image schema skeletons of understanding and thought is to miss the flesh and blood meaning and value that makes the skeleton into a living organism" (Johnson 2005: 29). Moreover, this approach is now receiving some recognition outside cognitive linguistics as well. Particularly telling is remark that the meaning of every word "goes beyond the features and functions under the CS [Conceptual Structure]" (Jackendoff 1996: 12).<sup>152</sup>

Still, there remains some vagueness as to the nature and extent of the information that gives "flesh and blood" to meaning. Jackendoff revokes the old opposition between "structural" and "encyclopedic" knowledge, admitting that the latter cannot be separated from the former in the meaning of a word (Jackendoff 2002: 289). What proponents of frame semantics usually have in mind is diverse cultural information that goes beyond an "encyclopedic" knowledge in a strict sense.<sup>153</sup> At the same time, as Fillmore (1982b: 134) emphasized, the frame may be narrower than the encyclopedic knowledge; such encyclopedic information about 'carpenters' as their union affiliation, average wages, job related diseases, etc. is not included in the frame evoked by that word.

What this insightful understanding of the integral meaning still omits is the *texture*, i.e., the imprint of speech conditions under which a word is supposed to be used. In the next section, we will consider a well-known example of Fillmore's analysis of the deixis, to show the difference between a purely cognitive understanding of the integral meaning and the one connected to the speech texture of linguistic signs.

#### 4.2. Signification of CFs: the case of *May we come in?* revisited

In her autobiographical essay, Marina Tsvetaeva recalls a daily ritual of her Moscow childhood: a walk with her nanny along Tverskoy Boulevard to a symbolic destination – the famous statue of Pushkin. So habitual was this event, together with the words *pamiatnik Pushkina* that apparently accompanied it, that this (slightly ungrammatical<sup>154</sup>) expression remained imprinted in her perception as a single word:

The statue of Pushkin was not the statue of Pushkin (genitive case), but simply the-statue-of-Pushkin, a single word, whereas the notions of statue and of Pushkin separately did not exist and would have been equally incomprehensible.<sup>155</sup>

Everyone can probably find similar experiences in memories from his or her childhood. However, the holistic perception of a habitual speech item, when its constituent parts lose their distinctiveness and are fused into an integrated concept, is by no means a phenomenon peculiar to the consciousness of a child. The popular idea that thinking in holistic images rather than analytical patterns is the prerogative of children and poets has recently been challenged both by psychologists, who have shown experimentally that prosaic-minded grown-ups in fact retrieve holistic images from memory with more agility than small children (Kosslyn 1980), and by linguistic studies of the holistic features of spontaneous speech.<sup>156</sup>

The fact that CFs are known to and manipulated by speakers as ready-made units similar to words means that their signification, like that of words, has to be integral. In most cases (except some idioms) the meaning of a CF is analyzable in terms of smaller units (words and morphemes) that are used as its components. But the speaker familiar with that CF needs an analytical procedure as little for arriving at its meaning as for producing its prefabricated shape. This principle applies not only to idioms in a narrow sense of the term, i.e., expressions whose meaning deviates from that of their components in a manifest way.<sup>157</sup> Speakers react to all CFs with the same directness as to familiar words.<sup>158</sup> The meaning of a CF acquires the integral immediacy of a familiar phenomenon. In other words, the meaning of a CF is a product of signification, not deduction. Speakers' familiarity with CFs is as "arbitrary," i.e., based solely on convention, as their familiarity with items of verbal vocabulary.

In Balzac's *Lost Illusions*, a hero finds a cheap restaurant for students which advertises itself to its patrons in the following way:

(4.1) *PAIN À DISCRÉTION, c'est-à-dire, jusqu'à l'indiscrétion.*

'BREAD BY [the patrons'] DISCRETION, that is to say, up to an indiscretion.'

The ironic "translation" of the announcement exposes its actual meaning as being opposite to what might be deduced from its words by an uninitiated reader. The point is, of course, that it is addressed to the establishment's regular visitors who do not care about the logical structure of the

announcement, in so far as they know for a fact that it means the offer of bread in quantities limited only by their own “discretion.” It is only on the hero’s first encounter with the formula that he gives any thought to its paradoxical composition.

However, even in cases when the integral meaning of a CF does not clash with what could be deduced from its structure, this meaning is always richer in specific features, more palpable, more vividly tied to certain generic situations and narratives than all its lexical and grammatical ingredients taken separately. The integral meaning of a CF exceeds, in regard to depth of detail and the palpability of picture it evokes, the comprehensive scenario offered by frame semantic analysis. The CF always conveys, alongside the situation it describes, tangible parameters of the speech situation, i.e., the character of the speaker and the addressee, and the genre of the communication.

Fillmore’s analysis of the sentence *May we come in?* (Fillmore 1997b) stood in marked contradistinction to abstract semantic exercises, such as Bar-Hillel’s *The box is in the pen*. Ironically, one does not need to be a speaker of English to be able to construct the meaning of such a sentence. Perhaps one is even better off in such cases if one’s English is limited; a true speaker would have to make an extra effort to shut out his natural linguistic sensibilities in order to take these sentences with a straight face. According to Fillmore, what an “abstract” approach to meaning is lacking first and foremost is the “deictic anchorage” of the analysis, i.e., its ability to show how an expression’s meaning is “anchored in some social context” (Fillmore 1997b: 8). The first prerequisite of a “deictic” analysis is to have a real-life sentence as its object.

The sentence *May we come in?* is “real” in the sense that it is spontaneously recognizable for speakers of English; in other words, this sentence is a CF. Its comprehensibility as a whole is a given fact for speakers of the language. This unequivocal direct knowledge allows it to be dissected, examined piece by piece, and reassembled in an analytical reconstruction, only because the primary understanding of the final product of the analysis is always there, serving as a yardstick against which the analysis can be properly aligned. Characteristically, Fillmore tells us the whole “story” (i.e., the little drama and its protagonists evoked by the sentence) before embarking on his analysis. Yet the analysis itself proceeds by moving sequentially from one word form to the next;<sup>159</sup> as a result, it leaves untouched certain properties of the expression that fall “in between” the lexical units and grammatical forms involved in its composition.

Let us consider just one aspect of the situation involved in the sentence – the character of the acting parties. As Fillmore indicates, there are three of them: A – the speaker; B – the addressee; and C – a companion of A. A and B must be speakers of English, while C need not necessarily be – as in the case, for instance, when C is A’s “pet beaver” (Fillmore 1997b: 10). The roles of the parties is that of A asking permission, on behalf of himself and C, to enter an enclosed space, which B has the authority to grant.

Is this all we understand about the character of the involved parties? In his analysis, Fillmore does not specify the quantitative parameters of each party; he only mentions briefly that “of course, the number of A’s addressees may be greater than one and the number of A’s companions may be greater than one” (Fillmore 1997b: 11). Does, however, the suggested number of individual participants just follow the general meaning of the grammatical plural, i.e., is it no more specific than “greater than one”?

Speaking in abstraction, the collective subject (or the implied collective subject) of *we* may indeed comprise any number and any kind of individuals:

- (4.2) We, the people,  
       We, the spirits of air and water,      solemnly declare that [...]  
       We, the flowers of the earth,

In our case, however, the subject *we* shows a quantitative restriction that could not be predicted either by the meaning of the pronoun itself or by the meaning of the plural in general. The summary number of supplicants A and C asking for permission to enter is limited to a very small crowd – most typically, two, perhaps three, individuals. On second thought, one can reach out to more remote possibilities in which the presumed quantity behind *we* would be greater (pilgrims caught in a rainstorm? a party whose car crashed just outside your door? a Halloween crowd in need of a toilet?); but the bigger the crowd, the more extraordinary the situation has to be to justify the use of the expression. One pays a price for such an extension of the conventional usage by working out additional qualifications under which it could be allowed.

The quantitative characteristics of B (the addressee) are even more severely restricted. Typically, B is represented by one participant or, less typically but still plausibly, by two. As the size of party B grows beyond this number, the communicative plausibility of saying *May we come in?* becomes increasingly strained. Imagine a crowd of people emerging from



inside upon A's and C's arrival, to take a look at them; in this case, the casually polite *May we come in?* does not sound like a natural opening. At the very least, instead of treating the whole party as B, A would be likely to seek one or two persons in that crowd to address his request to.

Let us now take a closer look at the presumed roles of the involved parties. The speaker and his / her companion(s) are not just a small group of any kind that happened to appear at the addressee's door. Typically, they are tied together by a common purpose to which their request is related: a team of detectives who have come to ask questions (a situation occurring more often in movies than in real life – but there, very often, which makes it quite real as far as language experience is concerned); a pair of street preachers or political activists with their leaflets and brochures; prospective buyers of your house; people caught in an emergency. While the general modal meaning of *may* in this sentence is that of a request,<sup>160</sup> in typical cases of its usage, it is specifically qualified as a request justified by an implied purpose.

But what if a couple of friends drop by unexpectedly? My understanding is that if they indeed did this without any distinct purpose, just on the spur of the moment, it would be more natural for them not to say *May we come in?* at all, but rather to wait to be invited, or to say something more casual. If they do utter this phrase, a tinge of jocularly and/or hesitance in the tone and body language – brighter smiles, a higher rise of intonation – would be in order, to disavow the aura of purposefulness. Otherwise, the question might sound slightly alarming to the addressee, perhaps implying that there is some “serious” reason for the friends’ or colleagues’ unexpected appearance – important news to be told, a sensitive issue to be discussed in private. The fact that casual usage of *May we come in?* needs some special device(s) to defuse its potential purposefulness finds support in the possibility of using it in a jocular mode, for example in a situation in which the speaker is accompanied by a baby, a pet beaver (to use Fillmore's example), a teddy bear – in short, by a companion not fully qualified as a third party of this linguistic exchange. Such subversion of the phrase's *we* diffuses the tinge of purposeful formality it would normally evoke.

What is at stake here is not just the grammatical meanings of person, number, or modality, but the situation as a whole: the profiles of the protagonists, their implied relationships and goals, the tone and body language involved, and finally, the potential larger “story” one can expect to evolve around each of these situations. The protagonists of a “story” implied by

*May we come in?* and their dispositions show idiosyncratically specific features that go far beyond the potential meaning of any of the sentence's ingredients, be they single words or grammatical forms.

To feature an integral meaning, a CF does not have to be a full-fledged idiom or speech formula like *May we come in?* For instance, there is nothing "idiomatic," in the conventional sense of the term, in the following segment of speech:

(4.3) Mr. Brooke sat down in his arm-chair, stretched his legs towards the wood-fire, [. . .] (George Eliot, *Middlemarch*)

However, our perception of the situation exceeds by far anything that could be deduced if its vocabulary were taken apart. We perceive, at least in an adumbration, the situation as a whole: the look of the interior, the light, the appearance and the character of the person. We also know that there is an *and* to follow, introducing a next segment that would in all probability describe either Mr. X's actions or his words addressed to someone in the room. We perceive the style, the discourse, the type of narrative to which the expressions *sat down in (his) arm-chair* and *stretched his legs towards the fire* naturally belong.

If anything, the signification of CFs is even more compelling and vivid than that of words. CFs always possess a signification that goes beyond the deduced meaning grounded in their potential analyzability. Their ability to induce a comprehensive semantic frame comes directly from concrete instances of speech experience to which they allude. As concrete pieces of our past speech experience, CFs carry with them memories about the nature of the situations in which that experience might take place.

#### 4.3. CFs and words: the double vocabulary

When we compare the integral meaning of the two types of primary signs at speakers' disposal – words and CFs – one important difference between them comes to light. It concerns polysemy, a feature widespread on the level of verbal vocabulary but all but nonexistent among CFs. Most words appear to have more than one meaning; or rather, they occupy a semantic space that cannot be covered by just one universal definition, or one comprehensive holistic perception. Consider the following set of typical usages for the word *figure*:

- (4.4) to figure out how ...  
 ... cut a rather pathetic figure  
 a figure of speech  
 six-digit figure  
 figure skating  
 see figure 1

Each entry in (4.4) features an integral meaning of its own, including a comprehensive scenario and the stylistic ambiance it induces. However, the meanings that emerge in different entries are strikingly diverse.<sup>161</sup> Theoretically speaking, this diversity could be attributed to different meanings of the word *figure*. The difficulty with this approach, as anyone who has ever either compiled or used a dictionary knows, lies in the impossibility of determining how many separate meanings of a word should be distinguished within its entire semantic register. The semantic space of each word appears in speech as a continuum of variations, more or less distanced from each other; any demarcation line drawn within that continuum would be arbitrary. The matter becomes even more complicated if we confront words in different languages that seem to have a common meaning. Upon closer scrutiny, that “commonality” proves to be illusory, since it is always partial. If we compare the word *figure* and its approximate Finnish counterpart *luku* as dictionary entries, the relationship between the words appears extremely complex: intersecting in some areas, wildly diverse in others. Some Finnish expressions with *luku* closely correspond to English ones: *kuusinumeroinen luku* ‘six-digit figure’; *työttömyysluvut* ‘unemployment figures.’ Others, however, are totally different: *ensimmäinen luku* ‘Chapter One’; *1990-luvulla* ‘in the 1990s.’

A person who has just begun learning a language could easily despair of ever finding a solution that would fit all the pieces of this jigsaw puzzle together. The answer to his worries, as it gradually emerges in the process of mastering the studied language, is that there is no jigsaw puzzle into which all those individual pieces must be fitted. True understanding of the word comes not as a coherent intellectual construct but as a patchwork of its usages within different familiar expressions. Unlike students and lexicographers, to whom the phenomenon of polysemy gives much pain, genuine speakers seem not to be perturbed by it in the least. What are listed in a dictionary as different “meanings” of a word are compartmentalized in their memory within different expressions that rarely interfere with each other in their practice of using language. Viewed from this perspective, the set (4.4)

ceases to be a “set”; each CF exists separately from the others as a memorized entity.<sup>162</sup>

In contradistinction to the word *figure* as such, there is no disparity in the comprehensive meaning evoked by each entry in (4.4). The word is polysemic, but the expressions to which it belongs are not.<sup>163</sup> The idiosyncratic diversity of the different meanings of a word ensues from the arbitrariness of the repertory of memorized expressions in which it takes part. Different CFs agglomerate in speakers’ memory in an ad hoc fashion, following diverse speech practices rather than any inner logic. As their repertory grows incrementally without any coherent strategy or overall control, the semantic space occupied by each single word becomes increasingly widespread and dispersed.

That the meaning of words is determined by, and polysemy resolved in, the context is trivially obvious. The introduction of CFs into the picture allows us to make two qualifications to this article of common wisdom.

First, the notion of the “context” itself acquires a more specific content. Instead of referring to an indefinitely broad speech ambiance (“in the context of Dostoevsky’s novels . . .”), or to vague categories of “real-life knowledge” (“in the context of local business practices . . .”),<sup>164</sup> the context can be defined in linguistic terms proper as a plurality of compact, observable expressions whose repertory constitutes a legitimate component of the speaker’s knowledge of a language.

Second, and most importantly, projecting words onto the background of ready-made expressions highlights the fact that the word as a sign does not have its own semantic “essence.”<sup>165</sup> The familiarity of speakers with a word means that they approach that word not as an isolated dictionary entry but within a plurality of concrete instances of speech crystallized in conventional expressions.<sup>166</sup>

The non-essentialist, contingent nature of verbal meaning helps to explain a curious phenomenon many speakers experience without giving it any thought: the existence of words that are recognized by a speaker *as words*, while their referential content remains vague if not obscure. The speaker seems to comprehend such a word; he may well use it in his own speech. But if asked to describe the phenomenon in question, he would at best be able to give a vague and generic answer. City dwellers often have a rather nebulous perception of how certain trees, plants, mushrooms, birds, etc. look;<sup>167</sup> a person well-read in nineteenth-century European novels is used to dealing with many phenomena that are exotic to contemporary experience – various kinds of equipages, certain articles of clothing, dances –

typically, without taking any pains to learn their exact appearance and function.<sup>168</sup>

Having grown up in a steppe region, I still experience gaps in my perception of the forest landscape. For example, I am not sure whether I would be able to identify an “aspen” (*osina*) if asked to; I certainly could not have done it in my adolescent years. Nevertheless, I possessed then, as I do now, a certain facility in dealing with this word in speech. Without knowing exactly how an *osina* looks, I conceive it as a somber-looking tree, sturdy but not spectacular; without knowing the exact shape of its leaves, I picture them as easily susceptible to fluttering in the wind. The typical ambiance in which the *osina* is visualized also appears somber, unspectacular, even depressing: grey skies, wind, rain that seems never to stop. On top of this comes a distinct perception of the *osina* as something undistinguished, common, of low value, a fixture of a rather desolate autumnal landscape.

How could this signification of the word be formed without real-life experience? It is easy to trace it to a set of expressions of which the word *osina* is an integral part:

(4.5) дрожит, как осиновый лист

‘[he] is shivering like an aspen’s leaf’ [referring to someone who is shivering violently from cold or fear]

родные осины

‘native (homegrown) aspens’ [a mildly sarcastic reference to an unprepossessing landscape, and generally, the non-glamorous character of one’s home place]

осиновый кол

‘an aspen stake’ [to be planted on the werewolf’s grave, to prevent him from rising from the dead; more generally, a stake looking ugly and ominous, that is closely associated with a sinister nocturnal landscape]

осина не горит без керосина

‘one needs kerosene to set fire with aspen logs’ [referring to the poor quality of aspen as firewood, to be used only if one is lacking birch logs]

пойду и повешусь на первой попавшейся осине

‘I feel like going out and hanging myself on the first aspen I run into’ [a memorable line of one of Chekhov’s characters turned into a proverbial expression]

There is an array of generic expressions applicable to various trees. Speakers tend to use them in a way that would conform with the idiomatic

profile of each tree. One is more likely to say that aspens “creaked ominously (or pitifully) in the wind,” or “stood all wet,” than that they “basked in the rays of the rising sun”; in the latter case, one would be hard pressed to find a motivation for such an unexpected usage (the motivation may well be irony, or a deliberate defiance of the stereotype). If one refers to a piece of furniture as an “aspen-imitation” piece (отделана под осину), one certainly intends to be sarcastic, implying that the object in question looks cheap and despicable.

In any English-Russian or Russian-English dictionary *aspen* and *osina* stand as equivalents. This is how their meanings appear when stripped from their respective speech backgrounds; this is how the words look to a person who is not proficient in either of the languages. When it comes to their signification, however, a speaker of English could hardly recognize an *aspen* in the integral meaning of its Russian counterpart. An *aspen*’s leaves flutter in the wind, as the leaves of an *osina* do; but this does not evoke unpleasant or somber associations: it is about ‘fluttering,’ not ‘shivering.’ A phrase about aspens brightly lit by the morning sun would not carry the potentially subversive subtext it would be sure to evoke in a reference to *osinas*. The referential identity of *aspen* and *osina* aside, its signification turns out to be substantially different for speakers of English and of Russian.

In extreme cases, signification of a word as derived from its usage may completely overstep its referential content. Speakers may develop a certain degree of facility in dealing with a word while forming an outright wrong idea about the phenomenon it refers to. In the 1920s, a sociolinguistic study among Russian peasants showed that they grossly misconstrued the meanings of some words of foreign provenance that were suddenly showered on them by the Soviet media. One particularly fanciful response concerned the word *invalid*. According to one respondent, *invalid* meant “people selling kerosene in a village shop” (которые в лавке керосином торгуют). What our respondents might hear, and be saying themselves, was an array of expressions to the effect that “invalid NN” has received a fresh supply of goods in his shop, or that one’s stock of kerosene is nearly gone, so one must go buy some “at the invalid NN’s,” and so forth. Out of this experience the word *invalid* emerged as the shopkeeper’s title, one of the many new inscrutable job designations that mushroomed under the new order. It was a wrong signification, of course, but it functioned as signification nevertheless.<sup>169</sup>

The situation described here looks like a logical paradox: the meaning of a word as a primary sign (that is, an arbitrary sign whose signification is based on convention rather than on referential content) crystallizes from its inclusion in stationary expressions that in their turn function as primary signs. This paradox reveals that the primary vocabulary of signs speakers possess is in fact a *double vocabulary*. It consists of two classes of primary signs, of different order, which are interdependent, i.e., cannot function one without the other. CFs are made from words; but a word becomes a word, i.e., a signified unit of speech, only when it is seen participating in CFs.

The coexistence of two distinct yet tightly interconnected vocabularies of primary signs is an essential condition that makes creative use of language possible. The existence of words as distinct signs, alongside the expressions from which they have derived their signification, allows the speaker to *tamper* with familiar expressions in his repertory: to substitute a word within a CF with another, to conflate different CFs whose verbal content overlap, or to restructure a CF after the pattern of another CF with a similar verbal content. These operations become possible only because CFs consist of words that are perceived as semantic units in their own right.<sup>170</sup> They open infinite possibilities for creating a new meaning by tampering with the one already established. Multiple connections, by which any unit of one layer of the vocabulary is tied to a number of units in the other layer, work as channels through which the entrenched primary material of language becomes available for the infinite varieties of its creative use.

#### **4.4. Further attributes of the integral meaning: uniqueness and simultaneity**

The most important consequence of the integral nature of the meaning of CFs is the *idiosyncratic uniqueness* of the meaning of each conventional expression.

From a purely formal point of view, different CFs often stand in proportional relations to each other that appear deceptively simple. In many cases, the distinction between different CFs rests on a single grammatical morpheme – for instance, the singular vs. plural form (of the same noun), 1st vs. 3rd person, past vs. present tense, etc. Looking at such phrasal “minimal pairs,” it seems natural to presume that the difference in their content amounts to the difference in their sole distinguishing feature. This is indeed the case if we deduce the meaning of each phrase from its inner structure.

When, however, we move from the deduced meaning to the full signification, the difference between the members of a “minimal pair” loses its proportional, easily calculable character and turns into an idiosyncratic disparity.<sup>171</sup>

In Mussorgsky’s *Khovanshchina*, there is a scene in which the title character, Andrey Khovansky, relentlessly pursues a Lutheran girl, Emma; Andrey’s passionate words addressed to Emma are overheard by his lover, Marfa, who thus learns about his betrayal. Unseen as yet by Andrey, Marfa sarcastically echoes his remarks:

- |                        |                          |
|------------------------|--------------------------|
| (4.6) A. Otdaisia mne! | A. Give yourself to me!  |
| M. Otdaisia emu!       | M. Give yourself to him! |
| A. Liubi menia!        | A. Make love to me!      |
| M. Liubi ego!          | M. Make love to him!     |

If the differences within these neatly proportioned propositions amounted only to the switch between the “shifters” *me* and *him*,<sup>172</sup> Marfa’s remarks would mean simply the reiteration of Andrei’s amorous pleas by another speaker, rather than their sarcastic repudiation. The fact is, however, that while *Give yourself to me!* is frantically passionate, *Give yourself to him!* is ugly, or strange, or both. The implied narratives evoked by the two expressions are radically different in content and style. The perception of roles, intentions and attitudes evoked by each expression are so strikingly different that their juxtaposition unfailingly produces a confrontational, bitterly sarcastic effect.

Common as this phenomenon is, we rarely pay attention to it. In their speech practice, speakers use every known expression in its own way, in an environment to which it is fitting, without noticing the disparity in usage of minimally differing expressions. It is precisely because of the integral character of the meaning that even small changes in the composition of a CF trigger the restructuring of the whole semantic world it evokes. For instance, the difference between the expressions *N’s opinion* and *N’s opinions*, or *N was reading a newspaper* and *N was reading newspapers* goes far beyond the distinction between the singular and the plural in the noun. It involves a different nature of the “opinions,” or different manner and purpose of “reading”; it also suggests a different character of N., and a different field of potential narratives in which we expect these expressions to appear. This difference stems from our ability to recognize each expression



separately as an established and whole linguistic artifact entrenched in memory.

Every conventional expression exists within its own domain of usage – so much so that when the speaker uses one, he ignores the others. It takes a deliberate effort to overstep the habitual landscape of memory a given CF belongs to, and connect it with other CFs – for instance, for the purpose of sarcastic subversion (as in 4.6), or for creating a pun. However, once formally related CFs are extracted from their routine speech habitat, nothing is easier than to summon them into a neat paradigm that obfuscates their original disparities.

Yet another universal attribute of integral meaning is *simultaneity*. As we have seen, integral meaning appears not in successive portions, each related to a distinct component, but in an instant holistic perception. It emerges out of the *conflation* of its components, not their addition. This makes the way meaning arises and evolves fundamentally different from the condition of spatial successiveness under which segments of linguistic form exist and have to be used.

Temporal continuity is the fundamental condition of speech. Words, phrases, and utterances have to follow one another in a sequence. Of course, the structural order by which the elements of a sentence are related to each other may deviate greatly from their linear arrangement in speech.<sup>173</sup> As for the physical aspect of speech, it always goes along with the time flow. The situation is paradoxical: while speech emerges in piecemeal fashion, its meaning emerges out of the conflation of the meanings of its successive components, a process that defies linearity.<sup>174</sup>

Accepting a familiar expression as the principal carrier of the integrated meaning allows an interpretative strategy that exposes the open and evolving nature of meaning, while following segments of speech in which and through which the meaning arises. An expression's integral meaning always potentially locates it within a larger narrative. Any instance of the integral meaning is holistic and unaccomplished at the same time, in the sense that it always contains hints at what might have preceded and may follow it. When the continuation is forthcoming, it emerges not on its own but as something that either confirms, qualifies, corrects, or thwarts previously formed expectations. Any of these outcomes results in a *retroactive reinterpretation* of the preceding speech material. The scope of such reinterpretations may range from a slight adjustment to a radical semantic coup. As the speech proceeds, the meanings of successive expressions undergo a never-ceasing process of integration into larger semantic wholes. At each

stage, the already achieved integration hints at a yet more extensive integral frame into which it is expected to fit.

Speech as physical reality proceeds step by step; yet the meaning of speech, while connected to and evoked by the reality of speaking, evolves not by addition but by *reconfiguration*. The world of meaning that emerges from speech does not arise like an edifice, block by block, but emerges as a new whole with every new step, only to be reconfigured into yet another whole at the next step.<sup>175</sup>

In his influential paper, Davidson ([1967] 1990) argued that the basic meaning of an event as programmed by its predicate can grow piece by piece by adding to it circumstances signifying various attributes: “Mary ate + the soup + with a spoon + in the kitchen + at 3:00 PM.” The reverse process of one-by-one subtractions, each presumably reducing the meaning exactly by the portion allotted to the subtracted component, is shown in (Ernst 2000): “Carol ate the fish in the kitchen hungrily --> Carol ate the fish in the kitchen // Carol ate the fish hungrily --> Carol ate the fish.” The neat logical picture of semantic additions and subtractions distracts attention from the manifest absurdity of these sentences considered as facts of speech. As a matter of fact, it is not very often that an actual utterance come out as a simple reduction or expansion of its precedent. And when this does happen, the semantic results may turn out to be very far from a simple subtraction or addition, if the utterances in question are minimally plausible, speech-wise. Consider, for example, the following chain of gradually expanding utterances related to the situation of “eating”:

(4.7) He was eating chicken soup.

He was eating chicken soup with a golden spoon studded with diamonds.

He was eating chicken soup with a golden spoon studded with diamonds, the one he had stolen from the Dumbarton Oaks museum.

He saw himself in a dream eating chicken soup with a golden spoon studded with diamonds, the one he had stolen from the Dumbarton Oaks museum.

He told his shrink about his dream, in which he saw himself eating chicken soup with a golden spoon studded with diamonds, the one he had stolen from the Dumbarton Oaks museum.

He told his friends how he fed his shrink the story about a dream of his in which he saw himself eating chicken soup with a golden spoon studded with diamonds, the one he had stolen from the Dumbarton Oaks museum.

These sentences are composed almost entirely from well-established CFs. Familiar expressions emerge one after another in neat succession, without much tampering; each sentence augments the previous one by simply adding another phrase or another clause, all of them transparently conventional. However, the linear simplicity of the procedure highlights the non-linear character of the semantic process. With every new step, our perception of the whole situation changes in a comprehensive way. The character of “him,” the meaning of “eating chicken soup,” the reaction expected from the addressee, the genre of the story and its possible continuation – all these ramifications of the meaning are reconfigured with every new move. The subject “he,” the action of “eating,” the object of “chicken soup,” etc. are not established once and for all. As the utterance progresses, the segments already passed are reconfigured in retrospect by being conflated with the following segments.<sup>176</sup> The process knows no end, since every new integrating operation opens new prospects for a continuation, and together with it, for a reinterpretation of the whole.<sup>177</sup>

While linearity governs the physical production and reception of speech, simultaneity stands as the universal condition of speech comprehension – including comprehension by the speaker himself, as he is constantly checking the results of speech production against his intentions. The assembly line on which a manufactured object is garnished with one component at a time, according to a general blueprint, until it emerges at the line’s end point – that ultimate emblem of the twentieth-century industrial world – does not describe this process even as an approximation. Being a non-physical phenomenon, the meaning of an utterance refuses to comply with mechanical laws and means of production. The process of its “manufacturing” is more reminiscent of the reconfiguration of clouds in the sky, whose every movement yields a different overall picture moment by moment.

#### **4.5. Meaning and the image: the role of visualization in comprehension**

That some words occasionally evoke visual responses is an experience probably familiar to everyone. However, to determine what part these fleeting impressions might play that could be relevant for the meaning of linguistic signs has proven to be a difficult task.

In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, many linguists and philosophers of language appealed to the “image” as standing at the heart of the meaning of words. According to the approach first offered by Humboldt

(1836-1839) and later elaborated by Hermann Steinthal (1855) and Aleksandr Potebnia ([1862] 1976 and [1894] 1976), the emergence of a new word, or a new meaning of an existing word, takes place when the nascent meaning is captured in an integral image. Originally, the meaning of a word emerges in speakers' perception as a vivid image – a phenomenon Humboldt called the word's "inner form." After repeated usage of a word, however, the image gradually fades, giving way to a more schematic, "imageless" comprehension of the word based solely on convention. The presence of the imagery (*Verbildlichung*) as an integral component of cognition was taken as an axiom in Husserl's phenomenology (Husserl 1980).

Nineteenth-century theories of the image exemplified Romantic nostalgia for the primordial golden age when generalized meaning went hand in hand with a tangible image. With the notion of the verbal image thriving, there was no shortage of florid descriptions of the pictures words presumably evoked. Although some of such depictions contain interesting insights, they leave a modern reader with an aftertaste of free-flowing impressionism. Consequently, this Romantic approach has been refuted by modern linguistics, which tends to treat the semantic "values" of signs as a phenomenon arising primarily from their intrasystemic relations. The notion of linguistic imagery has been disparaged as something befitting children and poets but irrelevant for how the grown-up world is thinking and speaking. A rare point of coincidence between intellectual antipodes – structurally oriented linguists and analytical philosophers, on the one hand, and post-structural theoreticians of meaning, on the other – consists in the studious avoidance by both of any mention of the image. What used to be an axiom for Goethe and his century – that "word and image are correlates that are ever seeking each other. . . . Whenever speech or singing is received by the ear, it simultaneously challenges the eye"<sup>178</sup> – has become a non-issue since the early days of modernism.

Linguistic semantics went so far in its rejection of the imagery of language that it treated metaphors as nothing more than superficial ornaments over a system of "core" meanings. The fact that the mapping of different semantic domains (from which metaphors arise) constitutes the very heart of the phenomenon of linguistic meaning – an axiom for nineteenth-century philosophers and linguists – had to be rehabilitated and elucidated within the framework of modern linguistics by Lakoff and his co-authors. Characteristically, these authors also avoided the dubious notion of the "image," at least at the early stage of the theory. A kindred semantic concept of "mental spaces" was more closely tied to visual representation, since it employed a

special scheme to describe how components of an expression are being mapped one onto the other. However, the proponents of this approach emphasize the schematic nature of the mapping, thus avoiding any potentially compromising reference to its “pictorial” aspect. Visual representations of Langacker’s spatial schemes and Fauconnier’s mental spaces rely on hieroglyphic or geometrical drawings divorced from features of a palpable image.

Meanwhile, much has been done during the last two decades to put the study of imagery in general, and linguistic imagery in particular, on more solid ground. The path was opened by works in cognitive psychology exploring the factor of exemplars in categorization (Rosch 1975; Rosch 1978; Rosch, Mervis, Gray, Johnson and Boyes-Braen 1976). Recognizing the importance of exemplars led to a more broad exploration of tangible representations, including visual ones, through which meaning is grasped. According to Haan (2001), “almost everything in our lives is visual-oriented”; Haan cites examples from many languages for the evidential aspect of meaning being an extension of the visual, while McNeill (2005: 2) asserts that “language is inseparable from imagery.”

Interesting if somewhat controversial experimental work on the subject has been done by Kosslyn and his associates. In marked contradistinction to the rhapsodic treatment of the subject in the previous century, Kosslyn demonstrated that images are “amenable to systematic study” (Kosslyn 1978: 254). In a series of experiments, he has shown that people are able to “scan” an image in their minds as they would a real picture. The greater the distance between two points in an imagined picture, the more time is needed to move from one point to another by mental scanning. Also, the mental “screen” on which inner pictures appear turns out to have a definite size and shape; perceived objects of different size are scaled to fit into the standard space of the mental screen, just as images in a film fit a movie or TV screen. Thus, in a mental picture showing a rabbit alongside an elephant, the rabbit appears very small, with only a few details of its image discernible to the respondent’s inner eye, while in a mental picture of a rabbit in the company of a fly the image of the rabbit comes out very large and, as a consequence, much more detailed (Kosslyn 1980).

Another area of active exploration concerned the non-visual, and in particular, kinetic imagery. This led to a vivid interest in the role played by facial expression (Sarles 1986) and gestures in communication. Cienki (2005) found a direct connection between kinetic-based cognitive schemata and gestures, while McNeill (2005) suggested a connection between ges-

tures and inner visual images.<sup>179</sup> As Özyürek (2002) showed experimentally, changes in the number and location of addressees led to changes in the speaker's gestures – a finding confirming the communicative role of gestures and the kinetic imagery they embody.

The new prominence of imagery has had a noticeable impact on cognitive linguistics, especially in the last ten years. In his more recent works Langacker, while still emphasizing that linguistic images are schemes and not “sensory images *à la* Kosslyn” (Langacker 2002: 5), occasionally appeals to full-scale mental “pictures” – as for instance when he speaks about “hybrid” images looming behind certain metaphorical expressions (“he is a tiger” evoking an imagined man-tiger shape, etc.: Langacker 2000: 42).<sup>180</sup> Particularly palpable was the impact on more recent works of Lakoff and his associates. Beginning in the late-1980s, the emphasis in works of that group has gradually shifted from the idea of the “conceptual metaphor” to that of the “image scheme” (Lakoff 1987), to that of the “embodiment” of meaning. The latter in its turn led to highlighting the role of physicality in processing and receiving meaning – particularly, of “kinetic and motor imagery” (Gibbs 2006: 124), but also auditory and olfactory perceptions (Lakoff 1987: 444).

All these studies, however, were focused either on purely cognitive reactions or on cognitive processes as they evolve in speech in general, without establishing direct connections between images and linguistic signs.<sup>181</sup> As to the studies of visual responses to verbal stimuli, they have not been numerous and have remained relatively isolated so far. The pioneering role in this field belonged to A. Paivio. As a broad range of experiments initiated by Paivio has shown, visual responses to at least some areas of vocabulary proved to be remarkably stable and consistent. On the basis of his findings, Paivio formulated the “double codification” hypothesis, according to which a linguistic sign undergoes a double codification: one based on logical components of the meaning and the other on its visual representation (Paivio 1991: 107); he strongly criticized the “verbal bias” (i.e., ignoring imagery) in psycholinguistic studies of memory (Paivio 1991: 46).

Despite these findings, reintroducing the image into the discussion of linguistic meaning faces several serious obstacles.

The first, and most serious, liability of even the clearest pictorial responses consists in their subjective character. The manifest subjectivity of an imagined picture makes any attempt to adopt it into a meaning shared by all speakers immediately suspect as “romantic” fantasizing.<sup>182</sup> This objection seems to hold even in view of recent findings concerning the objective

nature of the mental “screens” on which images appear. In the final analysis, the images appearing on those mental screens prove to be different for each individual. Typically, they are drawn from personal memories related to one’s life experience: situations remembered, movies and paintings seen, phenomena heard or read about. Considering the nebulousness of the inner pictorial world of each individual, it is hard to determine how it can serve to transmit meaning between speakers.

Second, although speakers feel confident connecting images to words representing concrete objects or spatial/kinetic gestures, their visual response becomes uncertain or vanishes altogether when they are presented with words that have an abstract meaning. It is easy to envision pictorial projections of such words as “red,” “grass,” “to run,” “above”; but how about “exponential,” “ratio,” “to comprehend,” or “concerning”?<sup>183</sup> When it comes to words of the latter type, speakers’ responses lose any consistency. Interestingly, they often claim even in such cases to see “something,” but if asked to describe this “something,” either remain vague or let their imagination run wild (Petrenko and Nistratov 1981). It has also been shown that visual responses to words in a foreign language are weaker and less consistent, even when the respondents understand their meaning, compared to the respective words in their native language (Zalevskaia 1990).

Finally, many propositions, even those including words with clear physical dimensions, involve certain parameters of categorization that defy pictorial representation. Supposedly, one can visualize the situation expressed by the phrase *He took a cab*; but how about *He did not take a cab*? How can one represent visually a question, an order, conditional statements, propositions in the future tense, propositions with an emphasis, referred speech? Kosslyn (1980) expresses a justified skepticism towards attempts to find direct visual correlates to these phenomena – to claim, for instance, that in the case of negation we envision a “positive” picture somewhat darkened or blurred, etc. As a result, he comes to the conclusion that images can play only a superficial role in communication.

I believe that some of these problems can be at least alleviated by shifting attention from the meaning of single words to that of CFs. To begin with, much of the difficulty in finding a plausible visual representation for words with an abstract meaning disappears as soon as we consider these words within the CFs to which they belong. As part of a CF, a word with an abstract meaning is included in a whole situation that has some connection to a visually perceivable world; even if a word cannot be convincingly visualized, the CF to which it belongs can.

Let us consider, for example, the meaning of “[to be] afraid.” At best, one can try to visualize it through hieroglyphic images of postures or facial features that could be taken as physical symptoms of the mental state of “being afraid.” Since the range of such symptoms is broad, and some of them could be interpreted with equal success as representations of pain, ecstasy, or rage (Danto 2003), the connection between the word’s meaning and its hieroglyphic representation remains unreliably impressionistic. The situation changes when we consider a number of CFs containing the word *afraid*:

- (4.8) (Mary) is afraid of frogs  
 They were afraid to leave the room  
 (He is) afraid of his own shadow  
 Everybody is afraid of (Joe)’s fists  
 People are not afraid anymore  
 (She is) too afraid to testify  
 (His chances do not look good,) I am afraid  
 Are you afraid?  
 Don’t be afraid!

Each expression projects a tangible situation, or an observable range of plausible situations; it also radiates features of a communicative environment in which it might appear. The adumbration of the situation, its participants, and the broader narrative induced by a CF make some visual response not only possible but perhaps inevitable. This principle holds for all utterances in (4.8), regardless of whether they contain easily visualized words, such as *frogs*, *fists*, *shadow*, or not. In fact, *frogs* as such play only a marginal role in the mental picture evoked by the phrase *Mary is afraid of frogs*; after all, Mary continues to be afraid of frogs even if frogs are nowhere to be seen. More important is our perception of what kind of a person Mary is, who might say this about her, why, and in what circumstances. This is why even a CF devoid of visually perceivable components still suggests a perceivable situation.

Any CF, no matter how remote from the realm of the visual, represents a piece of recognizable human experience. As such, it possesses a tangible texture; this means that it evokes a comprehensive setting comprising a number of details. This may be what respondents had in mind when they claimed that they still saw “something” in response to abstract words, although they could not say what that something was. If such a setting has physical dimensions, real or imagined, it usually includes many concrete



details of its ambience: profiles of the participants of the situation, their arrangement in space vis à vis each other, their body language, and so forth. If the matter is purely intellectual, its setting conveys an intellectual ambience: a number of details belonging to the field or fields of knowledge which are referred to, the general character and goal of the argument, an emerging profile of the author and potential audience. A phrase of the type: *As our experiment has shown, the time needed for the response is contingent on [...]* gives to its receiver, provided he is competent in this domain of language experience, as tangible a perception of the participants, circumstances, and situational backgrounds as the phrase *May we come in?* does.

We can now say that there is a grain of truth in the old conviction that the sound of a word gives rise to an image which emerges in the mind. However, it is actually “the sound of speech” – that is, of the fragments of speech that appeal directly to the speaker’s memory – rather than “the sound of a word” that evokes the image.<sup>184</sup>

All of this does not mean, however, that imagery could be simply reintroduced in full force into the study of meaning. Even with the elaborations suggested here the concept still carries serious liabilities. To try to capture the volatile, ever-evolving environment of intertextual allusions, through which meaning is evoked by speech, as a straightforward “picture” – something one can claim to “see” directly – would unavoidably reopen the door to the pursuit of impressionistic “visions.” I agree with those who warn against too direct a connection between the imagery and the meaning of linguistic signs.<sup>185</sup> Still, it can be argued that by dismissing this problem altogether we are losing a relevant dimension of speakers’ relationship with language, a dimension whose vital importance had been taken for granted by virtually every thinker prior to the mid-20th century who addressed questions of language, signs, and memory – from Plato and St. Augustine, to Herder, Humboldt, and Goethe, to Potebnia, William James, and Husserl.

To address this dilemma, one must dispel the claim that the image as such constitutes meaning – that what we may have “seen,” however fleetingly, in a moment of speech, is what we comprehend as the meaning of that segment of speech. Meaning is interpersonal; it arises through the constant exchange between speakers and as the result of their mutual checking of their speech production against the communicative reactions of others. The images in one’s mind are unabashedly personal; as such, they are not subject to interpersonal exchange or correction. Speakers seem to be aware of this distinction; they stick to individual mental pictures without worrying

about their idiosyncratic character. One can consistently picture a table from one's childhood in response to the word *table*, or to some CFs with this word, without feeling any need to externalize this inner picture for other speakers in order to be understood.

If images do not contribute to meaning directly, what makes them persist as a background to our practice of speech? A possible answer is the importance of mental imagery in creating *simultaneity* of meaning, which, as we have discussed above, is one of its essential characteristics.

Simultaneity is a quality that is difficult to attain under the mode of speech production, which is contingent on time flow. The very richness of the devices with which "temporal" arts – literature, cinema, and music – strove to overcome the linearity of their narratives attests to the severity of the problem. In contrast, non-temporal, spatially bound modes of expression, to which all visual arts belong, are inherently simultaneous. The old classification of arts as "temporal" and "non-temporal" reflected the recognition of the fundamental significance of this division.

This is where images, with their inherent spatiality, may have a role to play.<sup>186</sup> The visual component, however fleeting and idiosyncratic, is vital as a catalyst for the comprehension of speech. It superimposes over the temporally arranged flow of speech visual perceptions that are exempt from the time flow. Without these simultaneous flashes of vision, a holistic comprehension of continually evolving speech could not be achieved.<sup>187</sup> The way a segment of speech, while evolving in time, translates itself into a simultaneous integral comprehension goes along with the fundamental nature of visual perception. The formation of integral meaning alongside the temporally evolving stream of speech receives some assistance from visualized images. Evoking a visual response makes speech more easily captured by the mind in an integral setting.

Another important function of images in speech may lie in the distinction between the two types of remembering – a clearly targeted "recollection" and a more nebulous sense of "familiarity" or "recognition." It was suggested in some studies that the phenomenon of familiarity reflects a more sensory-oriented aspect of the perceptual process (Yonelinas 2002: 479). As has been discussed earlier, while most words are recollected by speakers, the retrieval and manipulation of CFs often relies more on recognition than strict recollection. This may indicate a particularly important role for images as catalysts of speakers' ability to actualize memories (true or half-fictitious) of fragments of past speech experience.

We can now qualify the earlier thesis that visual images do not amount to the meaning of linguistic expressions by saying that they serve as *prompts* and *catalysts* of the process of signification. It is not so important in what concrete way one or another speaker may “picture” a certain expression in his or her mind. It may be idiosyncratically personal, non-translatable into a commonly identifiable description; it may be so fleeting and vague that one could not give an account of its content even to oneself. Yet for all the precariousness of attempts to describe what we are “seeing” in our minds while dealing with language, it is fundamentally important that we are seeing “something.” These visions, however vague and transient, are conducive to comprehension proper insofar as they help the constant reconstitution of the semantic whole, which is the essence of speech comprehension.

Plato described the nature of human experience through the image of prisoners chained in a dark cave, with their faces up against its back wall; seeing only vague shadows appearing on that wall, they strive to form ideas about the phenomena outside the cave that might have cast those shadows. The vague but persistent succession of flickering visual shapes that underlies speakers’ efforts to comprehend the meaning of speech can be viewed in the light of Plato’s famous metaphor. However tenuous the relation of that “something” we discern on our mental screens to the meaning we strive to grasp, those vague glimpses caught by an inner eye make the very process of arriving at comprehension possible. Visualization serves as a signpost on the road to grasping integral meaning as it continually emerges in speech.

**Part II**  
**From the vocabulary to utterances**

The two previous chapters were dedicated to defining and describing stationary expressions as regular linguistic signs that exist alongside words, forming their own peculiar vocabulary. Chapter 3 addressed various features of their shape, whose main peculiarity consists in its volatile, associatively fluid character, while Chapter 4 discussed holistic meaning as their main semantic property. If a model of language rejects the idea that the chief source of novelty in speech performance is the infinite recombining of the same stationary elements; if it highlights the speakers' command of ready-made pieces of speech as a crucial aspect of linguistic creativity – then it becomes incumbent on that model to show how a new meaning can arise in speech from those “ready-made” pieces. How can the familiar turn into something new without losing its familiarity, i.e., without ceasing to be a relevant unit of the second (CF's) vocabulary? How in general can a new meaning be created otherwise than by combination?

Here is where the difference between the volatile signs (CFs) and stationary signs (words) comes to the foreground. Chapter 5 addresses the consequences this difference has for linguistic meaning.

## Chapter 5

### The axis of selection: From the familiar to the new

H a m l e t. Do you see yonder cloud that's  
almost in shape of a camel?  
P o l o n i u s. By th'mass, and 'tis like a  
camel indeed.  
H a m l e t. Methinks it is like a weasel.  
P o l o n i u s. It is backed like a weasel.  
H a m l e t. Or like a whale.  
P o l o n i u s. Very like a whale.  
Shakespeare, *Hamlet*

#### 5.1. How is a new meaning possible

In 1915, in the midst of the war, a reader in Russia could come across one of the copies of an odd hand-made booklet called *Hair Lotion (Pomada)*. If he ventured to open its grayish pages covered with careless handwriting and bungled drawings, he might read, among other things, the following piece of poetry:

(5.1) Дыр бул щыл      Dyr bul shchyl  
убешчур              ubeshchur

The handwriting belonged to Aleksei Kruchenykh, a prominent Futurist poet, and the drawings were done by Mikhail Larionov, one of the foremost avant-garde artists. The poem eventually became renowned as an emblem of abstract “transrational” poetry. Whether readers felt delight or embarrassment by this artifact – and there was no shortage of either – its extraordinary novelty was undeniable. Not only did its crude-sounding “words” not belong to any standard Russian vocabulary, but they could not be taken even as neologisms derived from any particular words. The abandonment of Russian vocabulary was matched with an abandonment of grammar: the poem contained no formal means to determine the syntactic relations between its “words,” or the grammatical classes to which they might belong. If by the creative character of speech one means phenomena that have

never been uttered before, this poem could serve as the ultimate example of how unprecedented and non-formulaic speech can be.

Ironically, it was readers who did *not* accept the poem, i.e., refused to take it as a communicative event, who had the luxury of seeing it as something entirely new. Readers who were inclined to accept this artifact as a message created by a Russian poet, rather than to dismiss it as sheer nonsense, had to relate it somehow to their experience of dealing with the Russian language in general, and Russian poetry in particular. If this conjunction of letters is an artifact of speech, it has to mean something, and “to mean something” means to be somehow related to what speakers know, recognize, and understand.

And indeed, the poem, inscrutable as it looked, did offer some allusional clues indicative of its meaning. Its “words,” although nonexistent as stationary signs, bore some vague resemblances to existing vocabulary: *ubeshchur* could recall either *yashcher* ‘gigantic reptile’ or *yashchur* ‘cattle disease (of Siberian origin),’ *dyr* sounded a little like *dyra* ‘hole’ (it is actually homonymous with gen.pl. *dyr* ‘of holes’), and *bul* might suggest Ukrainian, or South Russian dialectal, pronunciation of *byl* ‘was’ (Kruchenykh’s Ukrainian background was well-known; other leading proponents of Russian Futurism, such as Khlebnikov and Mayakovsky, also paraded scraps of non-standard language as signs of their “provincial” origin). Of course, one could in no way be sure of such associations, and they did not add up to a coherent meaning anyway. Yet together they projected an image of something rough, crude, visceral, provincial, emblematically “non-Western.” The aura of primordial / provincial crudeness was reinforced by the appearance of the page, which seemed to defy all the accomplishments of the typographic era. The heavily pounding monosyllables of the first line suggested a menacing, aggressive stampede.

Entangled in a web of these and similar allusions, Kruchenykh’s poem conveyed the image of a crudely vigorous, menacing elemental force. Arising from the Eurasian depths of provincial Russia, awakened by the war, this primordial force was shown on its ponderous march, ready to trample down the “civilized world” with all its accomplishments, from typographical and painterly finesse to the finesse of language. The poem’s very inarticulateness, its clusters of rough sounds spat out in lieu of conventional words, could be seen as a linguistic means suited to its message. Alternatively, one could see in its crudeness the clumsy effusions of a provincial, a Southerner, whose funny vocabulary and incomprehensible pronunciation just make people laugh. This conflation of the esoteric and the primitive,

the aggressive and the inept, of menace and buffoonery, fit well into the frame of early avant-garde discourse; it reverberated in readers' minds with numerous "scandalous" happenings in Russian and Western European literature and art of the time. Within this framework, the poem's message was indeed quite comprehensible, germane to both political and aesthetic contexts of the mid-1910s.

How can we understand the meaning of something that we don't already know? Linguists who take the novelty of every speech act for granted are not in the habit of asking this question. Meanwhile, this is the fundamental problem of cognition. The challenge it poses was fully recognized by Kant when he asked: how are non-analytical propositions possible? In an analytical proposition, the predicate is a simple paraphrase of the subject: A is A'. In other words, our judgment of a proposition stands on firm ground so far as it is tautological. In a synthetic proposition, however, the subject is connected to a predicate that is independent of it, i.e., does not belong to the subject inherently: A is B. How can we make a judgment about a connection of ideas that is not merely a reiteration? It is out of Kant's efforts to answer this formidable question that his three critiques arose. First, he established the universal categories of pure reason as the framework within which cognition stands on firm ground. But then he had to deal with practical reason, whereby people make judgments outside categorical bounds *as if* they dealt with orderly logical propositions, and yet they somehow are able to proceed with those judgments successfully in their lives.<sup>188</sup> Kant's inquiry was crowned with the critique of judgment (the famous "third critique"), in which Kant appealed to what he called "genius," i.e., creative fantasy. Without being capable of the unlimited and unconstrained leaps produced by fantasy and imagination, people would have been lost in an environment that challenges them to establish connections between an infinite variety of objects and ideas – the environment they live in and deal with. By setting free the category of "genius," Kant opened the way for Friedrich Schlegel's famous definition of Romantic poetry as a symbiosis of "poetry" (that ultimate embodiment of the Kantian "genius") and "philosophy" (i.e., reflection, whose foundations were laid out by the Kantian critique of pure reason).<sup>189</sup> It was Schlegel's vision of an "impure reason," whose grid of formal categories is invaded by the unstoppable and uncontrollable flow of fantasy, that stood at the foundation of Romantic and post-Romantic philosophy of language, from Humboldt to Benjamin, Bakhtin, and Wittgenstein.



This little philosophical detour seemed necessary in view of the widespread blithe attitude among linguists toward the problem of new meaning, which reminds me more than anything of small children's belief that in order to get as much money as one wants, one has only to insert a piece of plastic into a slot in the wall and push the right buttons. In a recent survey of problems of meaning, made by vocal opponents of the holistic approach, the principle of constructing meaning simply by combining elements is stated as something self-evident:

We do not learn sentences individually: we learn elements plus the procedures for constructing sentences out of elements. If you understand "Semiotics is fashionable" and you understand "punk," then you understand "Punk is fashionable." (Devitt and Sterelny 1995: 17)

To recall Kant once again, the authors seem oblivious to the complications involved in leaping from "X is A" to "Y is A." We may well understand *semiotics is fashionable* and *punk is fashionable* (although what it is that we "understand" here deserves some additional comment), but how about *traffic is fashionable*, or *meaning is fashionable*? Signification of such procedurally "correct" combinations, while not absolutely impossible (there is nothing absolutely impossible so far as the creation of meaning is concerned, exactly because the process involves the Kantian "genius" whose very essence is unbounded freedom), is far from self-evident. What actually happens when we substitute, ostensibly at random, one subject we "understand" with another equally comprehensible one, is not as simple as the authors seem to believe.

To begin with, both expressions offered by Devitt and Sterelny are anything but arbitrarily constructed novel combinations of words. They are in fact well-established, one can even say well-worn, speech formulas. The authors' speech memory played a trick on them: it delivered expressions that seemed opportune as a random example of how phrases are constructed rather than recalled, while in fact it was the conventional character of those phrases that made them so readily available. What was really "novel" in the offered example was not the phrases themselves but their juxtaposition: usually, one does not automatically think of "punk" when talking about "semiotics," and vice versa. By forcing the two phrases, each fairly conventional in its own way, to confront each other, Devitt and Sterelny have subverted the disparity between their respective thematic and stylistic spheres of habitual usage.

What I understand from this creative tour de force – and what the authors obviously *want* me to understand – is their contemptuous attitude towards “semiotics” as a kind of intellectual “punk,” an attitude which they count on to elicit either applause or rage among the implied readership. What was presented as a random example of pure linguistic combinatorics turns out to be an intentionally created artifact.

Both the radical futurist creation (5.1) and the artifact created by Devitt and Sterelny highlight the general principle according to which nothing can happen in speech – whenever speakers agree to treat a certain phenomenon as speech – that is not referred, one way or another, to something that already happened in speech before. In a way, the new is possible because it has “always already” been there (to use Derrida’s famous maxim). The new always emerges as an alteration of the “old” – an alteration that can range from barely noticeable to strikingly inventive, paradoxical, or baffling.

What makes a newly created product of speech comprehensible and interpretable is the fact that it is never a phenomenon in its own right; it is superimposed over existing and remembered facts of speech. Taking familiar turns of speech as a point of departure, speakers can generate a variety of new expressions by altering them and merging them<sup>190</sup> (Van Lancker 2001: 350), without losing their recognizability completely. The result is a new fact of speech that as such never figured in speakers’ previous experience, yet remains recognizable to that experience. The very novelty of a new speech phenomenon is owing to the fact that speakers can recognize and appreciate its departure from something familiar.<sup>191</sup>

## **5.2. Familiarization of the unfamiliar: speech artifacts (SA) and speech prototypes (SP)**

The following is the title of one of James Baker’s pieces in *The New York Times*:

### **(5.2) THINGS TO AVOID.**

(5.2) as such can hardly be considered a ready-made expression stored in speakers’ memory. Yet whether an individual speaker would claim or deny direct familiarity with (5.2), it is easily understandable to everyone possessing a reasonably good knowledge of English.

Constructing the meaning of (5.2) “out of elements,” i.e., putting together the listed meanings of “things,” “to,” and “avoid,” would result in its deduction but not its signification. The interpretation we arrive at by way of deduction – that the phrase indicates the existence of a list of phenomena one is not recommended to come in contact with – turns out to be rather impoverished compared to what we actually perceive upon encountering this utterance; in fact, such an interpretation would be widely off the mark with regard to the utterance’s actual message. Deduction cannot capture much of what any implied reader of the column instantly comprehends: a tinge of irony, a premonition of what those “things” might be, and the feeling of a slightly self-deprecating but ultimately benign solidarity between the speaker and his audience.

So, how could such a holistic meaning emerge from an expression that in all probability is not a primary sign directly known to speakers? A plausible answer to this question lies in the fact that speakers do recognize (5.2) as something familiar to them, because it can be perceived as an alteration of an expression or expressions that already possess primary signification.

- (5.3) things to remember  
       things to buy  
       (things) not to miss // not to be missed  
       avoiding traps // traps to avoid  
       how to avoid [...]

The signification of (5.2) arises from the signification of familiar expressions like (5.3) that linger in its background. It would be futile to try to determine which of those or other similar expressions might occur to a particular speaker in connection with creating or interpreting (5.2). What remains invariable is the very fact that (5.2) recalls “something.” By projecting a newly emerging phrase (5.2) onto CFs already existing in their repertory, speakers arrive at an interpretation of (5.2) whose scope exceeds its deduced content. Taken in the allusional environment created by its potential speech prototypes, the phrase reads as a travesty of the lists one makes in order not to forget things one needs to do: shopping, errands, home or office chores. Here, sarcastically, one is advised to make a list of things one should try *not* to do. The mildly ironic, slightly self-deprecating aura of the message stands out due to this allusional connection. We can instantly picture the subject of this joking advice as a person overwhelmed with quotidian chores and obligations, trying to cope with them by compulsively making all kinds of lists. The genre indicator, provided by the fact

that this is a humor piece in *The New York Times*, allows the reader to anticipate the potential range of undesirable phenomena and strategies for their avoidance as related to the (humorously portrayed) everyday experiences of a New Yorker. The impression of irony is reinforced by an allusion to travel guidebooks for remote and exotic places in which travelers are advised to “avoid” certain things in order to escape the natives’ snares.

(5.2) is deliberately constructed as a distortion of a quotidian speech formula. Arriving at a new signification by manifestly and deliberately subverting an existing one is a device widely employed in a variety of styles and genres of speech. Yet speakers’ verbal behavior does not need to be subversive in order to be creative. Very often, alteration of a familiar formula leads to nothing more than a slight elaboration or readjustment of the meaning. Let us consider a segment from a sentence whose intertextual texture we observed in Chapter 1:

(5.4) (East Asian countries are considering) measures to reinvigorate their economies.

In all probability, readers do not have pre-knowledge of (5.4) as a whole. Yet there are some similar phrases that must be familiar to them. It is hard to imagine any potential addressee of this message who would be oblivious of at least some of the expressions listed below:

(5.5) to revive the economy / their economies  
 to revitalize the economy / their economies  
 to (re)energize the economy / their economies

Alteration of the unquestionably familiar, the way it happened here, occurred as a barely perceptible “slip” than a distinct step; speakers may well not even notice that they have created, or accepted, a turn of speech that had not been directly present in their repertory of conventional expressions.

What *dyr bul shchyl*; *things to avoid*; and *to invigorate the economy* all have in common is that they are all *speech artifacts (SAs)*. They are created rather than drawn directly from the repertory of available expressions. As a result, they all emerge as new *wholes* rather than merely new combinations of listed elementary particles.<sup>192</sup> The general strategy by which all these expressions were created consisted in departing, one way or another, from already established facts of speech that served as their *speech prototypes (SPs)*.

There is a wide variety of ways by which prototypes can be related to an SA. In the cases of (5.2) and (5.4), the SAs emerged as a result of the substitution of a verbal component in a known formula. In Devitt and Sterelny's example, the implied new artifact came as a result of the forced juxtaposition of two CFs: "semiotics is fashionable" and "punk is fashionable." Finally, in the case of Kruchenykh the prototypical background was left deliberately vague, suggestive more of certain semantic and stylistic domains (substandard Russian, mixed Russian-Ukrainian provincialisms, violence, lack of cultivation) than of concrete pieces of language matter.

Although every novel turn of speech is always anchored in familiar facts of speech as a matter of principle, its perception does not require the explicit evocation of any particular and definite prototype. What makes (5.2) or (5.4) recognizable to speakers is the very fact of their familiarity with a plurality of expressions like those cited in (5.3) and (5.5), respectively. This collective knowledge does not need to be called up explicitly; the very fact of its presence on the background of speakers' linguistic consciousness<sup>193</sup> facilitates identification of a new artifact and as a result, its interpretation.

Speakers' ability to construe the prototypical background of a new artifact is facilitated by the fact that in their previous experience they would have encountered *precedents*, i.e., similar prototypical relations between a known formula and its transformation that yielded similar significative effects. For instance, the significative shift that occurs when *things to avoid* emerges as a departure from *things to remember* represents a large field of similar cases every speaker could cite from his own experience.

Little is common between Baker and Balzac; yet one can easily find in Balzac examples very similar to (5.2) in the way they relate an expression to its prototype:

(5.6) *Monsieur du Châtelet possédait toutes les incapacités exigées par sa place.* –

'Mr. du Châtelet had all the inabilities required by his position' (*Lost Illusions*)

The substitution of *inabilities required* by *abilities required* by proceeds by essentially the same recipe as the substitution of *things to remember* by *things to avoid*: an established formula is altered by substituting one of its verbal components in a way that subverts its conventional meaning.

The device employed by Devitt and Sterelny has also been used before. Precedents for it can be found in the most quotidian as well as the most hallowed speech quarters; to cite only one:

- (5.7) In Seville was he born, a pleasant city,  
Famous for oranges and women. (Byron, *Don Juan*)

A place *famous for (its) oranges* and *famous for (its) women*: both expressions are conventional, yet they originally belong to disparate domains of potential use. Forcing them together leads to an effect not dissimilar to that of confronting *semiotics is fashionable* with *punk is fashionable*. Even in the case of Kruchenykh's poem, a qualified reader is not left entirely without guidance in the search for prototypes; his task is facilitated if he has experience with the way new artifacts are being created in Futurist "transrational" poems by Kruchenykh, Khlebnikov, and the young Roman Jakobson.<sup>194</sup>

The prototype theory, according to which identification of a phenomenon stems from projecting it onto a clearly recognizable prototype,<sup>195</sup> has proven to be extremely productive in cognitive semantics. It signified a radical paradigm shift away from the approach to meaning (sometimes referred to in works on cognitive semantics as the "standard" or "classical" theory<sup>196</sup>) based on distinctions, which reigned supreme until the last quarter of the twentieth century. The theory of prototypes shifted the focus from what distinguishes one sign from another to what links a sign to its prototype. This shift was made manifest in the new approach to describing colors (Berlin and Kay [1969] 1999), the domain of meaning that had always served as one of the core examples for structurally oriented semantics. As massive questioning of informants showed, "category boundary" proved an unreliable criterion in distinguishing colors, while respondents showed certainty in determining "category focus" (Berlin and Kay 1999: 13).

In (Berlin and Kay 1999) and similar studies,<sup>197</sup> meaning is treated as a holistic phenomenon. The identification of a sign comes "from within" – from a prototype or prototypes that perfuse it, as it were, and not "from outside," i.e., from its contrast to other signs. To look at a new SA as an extension of its SP means to interpret it holistically, the same way the meaning of the SP, in its capacity of an established sign, is interpreted. This means that a new artifact derived from that sign cannot be seen merely as a prototype plus (or "minus") a single feature. Its meaning has to be interpreted as a whole, by being recognized in its relation to the integral meaning of the prototype or (more typically), a collective of prototypes.

The principle of prototypical recognition is not limited to people's experience with the material world; it applies to language experience as well.

Possession of a rich and varied background of speech prototypes, in the shape of memorized expressions, allows speakers to perceive the meaning of a new speech phenomenon with the same immediacy and holistic richness as if it were directly known to them. This process of pseudo-recognition, according to which novel speech phenomena are treated as if they were recognized, can be called *familiarization*.<sup>198</sup>

An interesting case of familiarization is discussed in (Eco 1999: 128ff.). Eco speaks of the Aztecs' reaction (documented in their reports from the battlefield) to horses, which they had never seen before. They conveyed their experience by describing horses as "an animal . . . that appears like a deer but isn't," or "a deer as high as roofs of houses." Both the creative effort of familiarization and the recognition of its departure from the familiar are present here in a rather dramatic way.

Familiarization works via intertextual associations with the familiar. The shift from the known to the new occurs in such a way that the latter, no matter how "strange," would never emerge as completely unrecognizable.

Early in the twentieth century, Viktor Shklovsky formulated his famous concept of "defamiliarization" as the most fundamental principle of art (Shklovsky [1917] 1990). According to Shklovsky, language becomes "automatized" in everyday usage: the more a certain expression is repeated, the less speakers pay attention to it. As a result, its meaning is eroded further and further, until it turns into a semantic void: something so habitual that no one pauses to think of its meaning. It is incumbent on art to disturb this routine with innovations that draw the addressee's attention. Art makes a habitual phenomenon "unfamiliar," as if it were seen for the first time, and by doing so, returns to us the ability to perceive it afresh, in all the fullness of its meaning. From this perspective, the only way to induce meaning is negative; meaning always stands in opposition to what is accepted.

Shklovsky's theory evoked numerous resonances in aesthetics, philosophy, and linguistics in the first half of the century, from Bertolt Brecht's idea of *Verfremdung* (Brecht [1935] 1964) to Trubetzkoy's and Jakobson's idea of the foundational role of distinction for phonology, and eventually, for every aspect of the structure of language.<sup>199</sup> While post-modern critique exposed the narrowness of modernist ideology, and post-modern art has overcome the fear of producing anything less than absolutely unheard of, theoretical linguistics still shows tangible residues of early modernist mentality. The "avant-garde bias" can be seen in the way some linguists understand the "new" in speech as something that has no precedent in the history

of the universe. From this perspective, formulaic speech behavior appears as something opposite to linguistic creativity – an inevitable toll that has to be paid to human inertia.

The approach advanced in this book strives to overcome the division between hallowed “art” (specifically, verbal art – literature and poetry) and quotidian (linguistic) “life,” and by the same token, between creativity and repetition – the divider that was erected by the culture of modernism. The concept of familiarization works by referring to the “old” rather than striving to escape from it. It recognizes the potential for creating something new by a partial reshaping of the familiar as the most fundamental principle of language creativity. It is the connection of any speech artifact to recognizable speech material that makes its integral signification – and not just a skeletal deduction – possible. Although an SA as such is not an established sign, it is treated by speakers as if it were, due to its superimposition over established facts of speech. It is produced and interpreted as a whole, just as ready-made expressions are. Speakers do not assemble an SA from elements; instead, they arrive at an SA by imposing a certain variation on a prefabricated SP. The same principle applies to its meaning: it is derived as an integral whole from the integral meaning of an SP, as a modification of the latter. By alluding to the domain of language use to which its intertextual relatives belong, the SA emerges as a holistic, communicatively targeted fact of speech, attuned to a certain addressee and enveloped in a rich environment of situational implications and presuppositions. This is the universal principle that the most pedestrian instances of speech creativity share with the most daring poetic and semiotic experiments.

### **5.3. Creative freedom and contingency of meaning: the role of the motivation**

According to the general principle outlined in the previous section, a new speech artifact emerges as a departure from an established fact of speech. Such a departure must be noticeable enough that its result would be recognized as a new speech product requiring a new signification; at the same time, it should not alter the prototype beyond recognition. This poses the question of recognizability: by what means and to what extent can a prototype be altered and still remain recognizable as a basis for familiarization?

No straightforward answer to this question is possible. It would be futile to try to compile a list of “legitimate” alterations that would be necessary



and sufficient for making a prototypical connection. The ways one concept can be transformed into or mapped on another can be neither prescribed nor exhaustively described. It is an open-ended process; its very essence is creative freedom, unchecked by universal patterns and rules.

Trubetzkoy once suggested that the inkpot and free will cannot form an opposition, because they have nothing in common. As it turns out, what divides these two concepts is just a few degrees of separation. All that is needed to perceive the inkpot and free will as “related” to each other is to find an appropriate “family” within which they could become connected via a few intermediaries. For instance, one can connect the situation of writing in privacy, exemplified by the inkpot, with personal freedom, in contradistinction to the commercial or political constraints that underlie the world of publishing. As a matter of fact, it is not difficult to find actual examples in which this connection has been exploited. Pushkin’s poem “To My Inkpot” speaks of the free flight of poetic fantasy the poet enjoys in solitude with his inkpot as his sole companion. In the age of *samizdat* in the Soviet Union, a similar relational pattern employed the privately owned typewriter – that natural successor of the inkpot – in contradistinction to the printing press owned by the state. The relation between the inkpot and free will took a dramatic turn in Mayakovsky’s poem on the occasion of Sergey Esenin’s suicide in 1926. According to legend, Esenin, having found the inkpot in his room in a posh Leningrad hotel empty, slit his wrist and wrote his farewell poem in his own blood. Refusing to recognize the parallel between the dried out inkpot and stifled freedom of expression, created by Esenin’s suicide, Mayakovsky (who himself would commit suicide four years later) defiantly exhorts, instead of killing oneself, to push for an increase in the production of ink.

The example of the inkpot and free will highlights the principle that prototypes for an SA are never given or pre-set. Any set of phenomena, however remote in their apparent meaning, can be related to each other in some way, by a certain creative effort. By the same token, phenomena whose similarity seems apparent may remain dissociated under typical speech conditions; to establish a connection between them would, once again, require a creative effort:

- (5.8) L’élève. La neige tombe l’hiver. L’hiver, c’est une des quatre saisons. Les trois autres sont... euh... le prin...  
 Le Professeur. Oui?  
 E. ...temps, et puis l’été... et... euh...  
 P. Ça commence comme “automobile,” mademoiselle.

E. Ah, oui, l'automne...

P. C'est bien cela, mademoiselle, très bien répondu, c'est parfait.

(Eugène Ionesco, *La leçon*)

Speakers may have used expressions containing either *automne* or *automobile* on numerous occasions without seeing any connection between them, until they encounter this discourse. In (5.9), *automobile* unexpectedly enters into the domain of familiar phrases related to “the four seasons,” in the capacity of a provisional substitute for *automne*. The extensive phonological resemblance between the two words does not explain by itself this apparently nonsensical juxtaposition;<sup>200</sup> one needs to understand the circumstances under which it could happen. What alerts the reader to this prototypical connection is a recognizable situational background: a well-known pedagogical ploy, particularly popular at the elementary educational level, of prompting a hesitant student with a paronomastic suggestion, which is carried in the play to the degree of absurdity (the Student in question is ostensibly preparing for a doctoral degree and is highly praised by the Professor for her accomplishments).

We can now say that any connection between an SA and an SP does not belong to that SA inherently. An analogy or analogies leading to a prototypical projection of an SA emerge in an ad hoc fashion.<sup>201</sup> No such projection is automatic; a deliberate effort, however modest, is always required of the speaker in order to construe a certain prototypical background for the given SA, necessary for achieving its integral signification.

References to a contextual frame, real or imagined,<sup>202</sup> are common in works in cognitive linguistics. What the distinction between established fact of speech (CFs) and new speech artifacts means is that a general notion of context must be specified in regard to the two principle types of speech creativity: that working by recognition and by alteration.

Both the established CFs and the new artifacts of speech integrate their meaning into a holistic frame. The difference is that in the case of an established CF, this contextual environment is given in the CF's itself. A CF is a given fact of language; it belongs to the speaker's primary vocabulary. Speech routine does not need any reason for its existence – it simply exists.<sup>203</sup> Whether the speaker likes it or not, he cannot avoid becoming instantly aware of its contextual frame that is imprinted in its texture. But for every speech creation that represents a leap into the new, however modest, its contextual frame, leading to an integral meaning, must be deliberately sought.<sup>204</sup>

But SAs do not arise automatically from speakers' collective memory. Their secondary, contingent character makes it necessary for each SA to have a certain *motivation* for its appearance, in order to be accepted and interpreted as a signified phenomenon. Whenever a new artifact emerges in speech, an implied question always arises: what is the reason for this particular departure from a certain familiar pattern to occur? It puts on both the creator and the receiver of an artifact the responsibility for finding its *raison d'être*, in order to be able to treat it as a fact of speech in its full right.<sup>205</sup>

Signification of a CF proceeds as an act of simple recognition, out of which the whole integral frame emerges as if by itself. Signification of an SA is a two-tier process: first, the *raison d'être* for the deviation from the routine has to be sought. After it is found, one is able to connect the given artifact to one or more known facts of speech; to make such a connection means to become aware of how this familiar background has been altered, and for what reason.

Motivation of and by itself does not produce the meaning of a speech artifact. Rather, it creates a condition under which the signification of the artifact can arise. Motivation produces a particular perspective under which the given artifact, within the given situation of its usage, becomes "recognizable," that is, connected to some familiar facts of speech.

Creation of a new artifact out of some familiar speech material is never a purely formal task, even though it typically (but not always, as we will see) involves some tampering with the linguistic form. But neither is it a purely cognitive task. A creative cognitive act becomes a fact of speech practice only when it finds support in the existing speech practice. The concept of motivation emphasizes the connection between the cognitive and experiential aspects of meaning.

Some works in cognitive linguistics tend to emphasize creative abilities of the human mind by freeing the cognitive process from the constraints of language matter. The stifling consequences of the formal approach to linguistic creativity seem to justify this attitude. Hence, for example, Fauconnier's repeated assertions that it is conceptual blending and not language itself that is responsible for the enormous variety of semantic effects seen in speech,<sup>206</sup> or Lakoff and Johnson's insistence on the fundamentally cognitive nature of metaphors. Ironically, this separation of cognitive processes from established facts of speech inevitably results in limiting their freedom. Cognitive "pure reason" has to follow certain general categorical guidelines in order not to degenerate into chaos. Relying on cognitive structures alone makes it difficult to embrace the full scope of creative freedom

– the fact that there exist no limitations whatsoever to the diversity of ways by which meaning can be created and interpreted by speakers.

The principle of unconstrained freedom of semantic creativity has been readily embraced by semiotics, for which, after Derrida's critique of Lévi-Strauss and Saussure (Derrida [1967] 1976), it has become all but an axiom.<sup>207</sup> But semioticians do this by absolving themselves from the task of a systematic description of linguistic data. Facing the full range of the data makes the principle of absolute freedom difficult to adopt, even by linguists who emphasize the creative aspect of language usage. Hence all the attempts to place the process under at least some control – by appealing to schemata (Langacker), universal conceptual metaphors,<sup>208</sup> the universal human ability to link domains (Fauconnier and Sweetser 1996: 3), prototypical universals (Berlin and Kay 1999) – and cautiousness in facing the versatility of the process.<sup>209</sup>

Contrary to Fauconnier and Turner's (2002) assertion that language serves at best as a "prompt" for what is being created by the mind, I suggest that it is the cognitive process of motivation that serves as a prompt that elicits the tangible material of language without which signification is impossible. The enormous variety of available language material gives any motivation, however complex and tenuous, a chance to succeed, i.e., to find some support in the ocean of speech material.

Total freedom in seeking motivation does not undermine meaning, since the process is constrained by the availability of recognizable speech phenomena to which any motivation must point. There are no restrictions as to where and how those traces can be sought, but they have to be sought somehow, somewhere, in order to arrive at a signification.

The usage oriented linguistic model describes meaning as a process involving three principal components: source, target, and schema (Langacker 2000: 41-42). In the context of this book, Langacker's formula can be partially modified, to the effect that meaning involves an artifact, its prototypical background (these two notions being close analogies to the target and source), and motivation. A new expression is legitimized not in the sense that it represents a certain established schema or conceptual structure<sup>210</sup> but because there is a motive of one kind or another for its appearance.

Motivation is a phenomenon of choice. A speaker is free to employ whatever motivation he chooses for making a departure from the familiar. He can also merge different motivations, use several conflicting motivations simultaneously, employ a certain motivation and then subvert it. The process has no limits either to the number of alternative paths of signification.

tion caused by alternative motivations, or to the extent to which each of those paths can be pursued, thwarted, or tangled with some others.

One curious consequence of the infinite versatility and volatility of motivations is that there can actually be no such thing as an absolutely “unacceptable” speech artifact. By saying about some utterance “this is total gibberish,” the speaker implies that someone tried to convey something through speech but failed. A failed speech is still a speech. Deeming a fact of speech “foolish,” “ugly,” “bizarre,” “incomprehensible” – or, for that matter, “ungrammatical” – means an effort to give this fact a motivation that would make it interpretable, even if only in negative terms.<sup>211</sup> Pronouncements of this kind – whether they are made by linguists or by “lay” speakers – are nothing but various devices of motivation that allow speakers to account, one way or another, for a phenomenon they encounter in their speech experience.<sup>212</sup>

#### **5.4. Familiarization and meaning: semantic induction**

Whenever a CF is altered, yielding a new SA, the alteration is always partial; it changes some aspects of the CF’s appearance and/or meaning while leaving some other aspects intact; otherwise, there would be no connection between this CF and an SA derived from it. Yet despite the fact that alteration of the prototype is always partial, its impact is total. The meaning of a new speech artifact always presents a new whole whose difference in meaning always extends beyond the SA’s formal divergence from its prototypes.

No expression enters speech alone. A familiar expression exists in speakers’ memory in its unique *associative environment* – a host of related expressions that either compete with it as possible alternatives or offer themselves as the means for potential expansion. A CF has its established web of associative synapses in which its signification is anchored. With every change, however modest, introduced to its habitual appearance, this web is torn. New allusional synapses emerge, brought in by new components. The effect is truly intertextual: a distinct new element, once it enters an expression, brings into it, by the power of allusion, something that is larger than itself – namely, the whole field of associative connections from which it has come. The higher the degree of entrenchment of the original speech object, the more radical and total is the effect of disruption caused by its alteration.

Both English and Russian possess well-entrenched, nearly formulaic expressions referring to a very common quotidian situation:

(5.9) To wash (one's) hair

МЫТЬ ГОЛОВУ

As items in the repertory of CFs, the two expressions are nearly equivalent. Both are prefabricated segments of speech referring, in equal richness of detail, to essentially the same comprehensive situation. On the level of the verbal vocabulary, however, they are different: the English CF employs the word *hair*, while the Russian one features *golova* (accus. *golovu*) 'head.' So far as we deal with the expressions as CFs, this difference in their inner composition has no impact on their integral meaning: after all, the situation they describe involves, as a matter of fact, washing both one's "hair" and the surface of one's "head."

Let us now stir these expressions by swapping their verbal components. Since, as we have noted, both "hair" and "head" are relevant for the situation, its physical dimensions as such should not be affected by this substitution. Let us observe, however, what happens in terms of the integral meaning of each expression:

(5.10) To wash (one's) head

МЫТЬ ВОЛОСЫ

My distinct impression of the English version of (5.11) is of a head, totally hairless, which one holds in hand as a separate object, applying to it soap and water – the way one expects the head of a mannequin to be washed. As to the Russian version – I picture someone reclining in an extremely awkward posture over a water basin, his / her long hair hanging down into the water. Visual details of these mental pictures may vary among different individuals, but the tenor of these semantic transmutations must be common.

How and why has such whimsical transmutation occurred? When the CFs (5.9) remain in their habitual state, their meaning exists unconditionally, as a given fact. They do not need any motivation in order to be comprehended – one does not ask, for instance, how much "hair" is there to be washed in the case of one individual or another. The alteration, by disrupting this habitual mental landscape, makes the speaker look for clues that could help him to recreate the disrupted mental picture into a new whole. A fairly obvious clue that offers itself is the close proximity of (5.10) to a

large pool of entrenched expressions referring to various situations of “washing”: washing dishes, a car, a child, a pet, etc. Despite their formal similarity, these expressions never served as prototypes for (5.9); they existed as separate facts in their own right. But the stirred expressions (5.10) need prototypical support. A plausible motivation that includes the new artifact into a family of known expressions consists in a larger than usual degree of separation between the subject of washing and the object he or she washes. Hence the mental pictures of the separated or nearly separated “head” or “hair” induced by the English and Russian versions of (5.10), respectively. Similarly, one speaks about “washing (one’s) hands” without giving a second thought to what exactly is being washed. But the moment this CF is stirred – if one says, for example, *He washed his fingers* – the same effect of physical “alienation” from the washed object immediately arises.

To produce the effect of stirring, the alteration does not need to be as radical or as manifest as in the case of (5.10). Let us return to the expression *to reinvigorate their economies* – a modestly innovative SA that emerged from such prototypes as *to revive / revitalize their economies* [ex. (5.4) and (5.5)]. The step away from the prototypes taken here is small. In the midst of speech activity, speakers may well overlook that *to reinvigorate* is a shade less habitual than *to revitalize*. Their possible unawareness of this distinction does not mean, however, that they do not grasp the subtle but comprehensive change of the semantic environment brought by the alteration.

The following expressions belong to the associative environment of *to revitalize the economy*:

- (5.11) (the economy shows) new vitality
  - new signs of vitality [...] in the economy
  - (one can sense) a lack of vitality in [...]
  - the economy (is / continues to be) anemic

The emergence of *to reinvigorate the economy* stirs this environment by introducing some different associations:

- (5.12) (the economy) shows new vigor
  - a vigorous recovery
  - (the economy) is growing at a vigorous rate

The change in meaning involved in this case is not simply about supplanting a single word, *to revitalize* or *to revive*, with its closely related lexical peer, *to reinvigorate*. It is about the change of the associative environment of the new phrase that leads to manifold and not fully calculable changes in its overall meaning. Together with its associational companions, (5.4) projects an attitude that is more active, optimistic – a convalescence whose physical signs are more manifest. Specifically in the context of an American newspaper discussing the state of East Asian economies in the midst of the 1998 crisis, the phrase conveys, by the power of allusion, a hint at the transient and, perhaps, accidental (non-constitutional) nature of the malaise. Its underlying message of cheering optimism partially offsets the somewhat alarming fact that in order to reinvigorate their economies, the governments take “highly risky” measures. If those measures were aimed at “reviving,” they would have looked more like a dangerous gambling with the economy’s health. By intuitively (without thinking it through analytically) creating a new SA, the writer arrives at a better balance between uncertainty and optimism than what he could have achieved with any of the more habitual expressions at his disposal.

Saussure famously compared language with the game of chess; as with many of his pronouncements, its interpretation allows different degrees of sophistication. The trivially obvious base for the comparison consists in the compulsory (i.e., arbitrary) character of the rules players must follow in order to produce an adequate “speech” of a chess match. This is how the game looks to those who have just learned how to move figures on the board: all you know is how each figure can and cannot be moved. For a seasoned player, however, a single move is never just a single move; even the slightest alteration of the physical disposition of pieces on the board brings forth an altogether new cognitive world of possibilities, expectations, recollections, intellectual and emotional reactions. Such a player does not think in terms of single figures and their possible movements; what he has in mind are positions as signified wholes, in all the richness of their narrative potentials, intellectual associations, and emotional coloring. (Perhaps Saussure meant exactly that when he said that a player, after a move has been made, faces an altogether new “state” of the game).

The process of creating new significations by “stirring” known expressions, which forces a total reconstitution of their meaning, can be called *semantic induction*. Any new signification is not “built” in an orderly and fully predictable way but “induced” by disturbing unconditionally accepted phenomena, thus triggering the search for conditions under which the new



fact would be acceptable. It is a process that is not fully predictable and prescribable. The different factors at play in the composition of an SA bring in different allusional potentials; they interact, clash with, or subvert each other in a variety of ways that are difficult if not impossible to foresee and control. In fact, speakers do not have full control over the consequences of a certain stirring of language material that took place in speech.

Occasionally, miscalculations about induction are so gross that they threaten to thwart completely the intended meaning of the speaker's message. When allusional clashes, created by the stirring, are less dramatic, they may not undermine the message altogether but make it appear "awkward" or not sharply focused.<sup>213</sup> All the speaker can hope for is to induce the process in an optimal direction – to see their intentions realized as closely as possible, with as few negative side effects as possible thrown into the bargain.

A rather comic example of the side effects that can arise out the process of induction beyond the speaker's control or intention, is a sign I once saw on a small South Asian restaurant in Brooklyn:

(5.13) Cambodian kosher food. No pigs!

Even though one understands what was actually meant here, one cannot help reacting to this speech artifact by envisioning a comic situation: pigs roaming around and being chased away from the restaurant, or perhaps customers coming with their pet pigs and being denied seating. The reason for this spontaneous reaction is that the phrase *No pigs!* evokes a distinct associative environment whose impact skews the message far from the intended meaning:

(5.14) No pets

No [pets / animals / dogs] allowed

(They) do not allow [pets / animals / dogs / cats] in the restaurant

The power of the allusion is spontaneous. To overcome its impact, one has to find a motivation for the artifact's appearance that would thwart the undesirable associations. Such a motivation is, of course, not difficult to find: it presents (5.13) as an example of the sometimes erratic language produced by inexperienced English speakers. Under this motivational perspective, the association with *No pigs!* fades away, or recedes into the background, giving way to another: *No pork*; this is what this sign would have said had it been written by a fully competent speaker.

Although inexperienced speakers of a language have more chances to fall unwittingly into the semiotic traps caused by semantic induction, well qualified speakers are not exempt. The following sentence from the *International Herald Tribune* may serve as an illustration:

(5.15) The Palestinian Legislative Council is relatively impotent.

An expression describing a governing body as “impotent” brings in a family of closely related associations:

(5.16) impotent / weak / weakened / powerless [presidency / government / judiciary]

Most of the expressions (5.21) are established in an augmented version as well, which includes a qualifier:

(5.17) relatively weak / considerably weakened / essentially powerless [presidency / government / judiciary]

So closely are the sets of expressions (5.16) and (5.17) interconnected, so often they function as easily interchangeable, that it involves only a small slip of attention to overlook that their interchangeability is not total. It was such a slip of which the expression *the Legislative Council is relatively impotent* emerged. It created a disruption of a habitual texture that triggered the spontaneous process of semantic induction.

Within the settled phrase like (5.16), the word *impotent* is accepted unconditionally; its meaning is dissolved in the integral meaning of the phrase. Once the settled texture is stirred, however, each of its components brings in its own associative environment. It is the clash between those environments that produces a comic side effect, the one that undermines the intended meaning of (5.16). The reader is provoked into musing, humorously, about the state of sexual affairs of the Council’s predominantly (if not exclusively) male members.

Semantic induction ever poses challenges to speakers; yet by the same token, it opens to them a wealth of opportunities. Rich and intricate significations can be created out of merged associative fields imported into the message by its deviation from the habitual. The more complex the relationship between diverse allusional environments involved in a speech artifact, the richer is the result of the induction, provided the speaker manages to bring together these diverse backgrounds without resultant chaos. In most

outstanding cases, a single utterance may acquire a degree of semiotic complexity that calls for a full-scale hermeneutic interpretation.

In the early 1990s, soon after unification, Germany experienced a wave of violent acts against immigrants. The German public responded with massive expressions of solidarity with the victims. The solidarity meeting in Berlin in the summer of 1992, in which many celebrated public and cultural figures took part, proceeded under the motto:

(5.18) *Ich bin ein Ausländer!*  
'I am a foreigner!'

This was an utterance that sounded slightly unconventional. Its fully conventional prototype would be:

(5.19) *Ich bin Ausländer.*

The motivation for this modification of the conventional phrase (5.19) might be construed as twofold. On the one hand, it added an emotional emphasis to the entrenched prototype, making (5.18) signify along the lines of "Yes, I *am* a foreigner"; on the other, it evoked, in a way of its allusional environment, samples of speech produced by a non-native speaker, one familiar with the general guidelines but not the fine print about the use of articles. However, since (5.19) was obviously produced by fully qualified speakers of German, the motivation as "an utterance by a non-native speaker" (similar to that needed for interpreting *No pigs!*) does not apply. A more suitable motivation was provided by the context of the meeting itself. In this context, the emphatic and slightly unconventional texture of (5.18) could be successfully interpreted as a gesture of linguistic solidarity with foreigners, its message "I *am* a foreigner (too)!" symbolically reinforced by being pronounced with a slight "foreign accent," as it were.

If (5.19) had no other recognizable precedents in common speech experience, one could say that it was quite a successful artifact of speech, one that exploited its deliberate slight awkwardness to a positive significative effect. What further enriched, and powerfully reinforced, the sentence's meaning was the existence of another, very special allusional background that (5.18) could not fail to evoke:

(5.20) *Ich bin ein Berliner!*

That was, of course, the phrase from President Kennedy's "Berlin wall speech" in 1962. Kennedy's aphoristic speech artifact, together with its context and implied narrative, is etched in people's minds as an emblem of solidarity – at that time, with the West Berliners threatened by the Soviets. In terms of pure "grammaticality," the expression was slightly – perhaps deliberately – awkward. True, there exists the possibility of adding the article to the conventional version as a means of emphasis. In Carl Zuckmayer's comedy *The Captain from Köpenick*, one of the characters uses exactly the same phrase (pronounced with a heavy Berlin accent) for expressing extreme surprise and fascination:

- (5.21) ... *also ick bin 'n Berliner, aber det is' noch nie dajewesen.*  
 'So, I'm a Berliner, but such a thing has never happened here yet.'

The nature of the emphasis and the stylistic color brought by the added article here do not quite agree, however, with what was expressed in Kennedy's speech. The potential awkwardness of (5.20) is aggravated by the expression *ein Berliner*; the latter typically means a particular kind of doughnut – the meaning that surfaces in formulaic phrases:

- (5.22) *Ein Berliner, bitte!*  
*Ich habe ein Berliner.*  
 'A doughnut, please!  
 I have one doughnut.'

Together, (5.20) and (5.22) pose as two distinct "mental spaces" that can be mapped on each other, a process out of which various metaphoric expressions and puns could emerge:

- (5.23) *Ich bin kein Berliner, ich kann mich nicht verknoten.*  
 'I am not a [doughnut / Berlin person], I can't twist myself into a knot.'

The success of *Ich bin ein Berliner!*, despite these potential threats to its semiotic well-being, is owing to the fact that the motivational perspective under which it is typically considered and interpreted is far from that of impartial scrutiny. Its awkwardness emerges as an attribute of oratorical emphasis – what a Russian poet famously called the "sublime stuttering" of prophetic discourse. Its perceivable Anglicization bestowed on it an aura of international (and most importantly, American) solidarity.

By way of intertextual allusion, the motto *Ich bin ein Ausländer!* of the 1992 demonstration imported *Ich bin ein Berliner!*, with its manifold allusional, stylistic and narrative potentials, into its signification. Now it was the turn of the people of Berlin to show solidarity by identifying themselves with the foreigners, similarly to how the American President had identified himself with them. Merged with the allusional environment of Kennedy's Berlin Wall speech, the artifact *Ich bin ein Ausländer!* absorbed in itself the idea of coming to the rescue of those weak and threatened, together with a reminder of how the world (the "foreigners") stood for Berliners when they had been in a similar position.

Semantic induction allows a new SA to attain an integral meaning, similar to that of ready-made, conventionally used signs. It is always a plunge from one integral semiotic world into another. Transformation of a known expression, however overtly straightforward, is never guaranteed success. One cannot automatically obtain a successfully interpretable new SA simply by imposing a certain modification on the available expression, even if that modification as such seems to pose no problems. However, if an acceptable SA does emerge from a modification, its interpretation is never identical with, and often strikingly divergent from what one might anticipate based on the means that were used in its creation.

### 5.5. Devices of semantic induction

As a matter of principle, the variety of cases, in which an SA can be derived from an SP under a certain motivation, is infinite. Nevertheless, there are typical patterns, repeatedly employed by speakers, according to which a familiar formula is transformed into a derivative expression. Awareness of such typical devices facilitates familiarization and consequently, signification of an infinite variety of new artifacts emerging in speech.<sup>214</sup> It is true that no repertory of reusable devices guarantees the success of this process. There is always a possibility that the chosen device would not work in some particular cases, for a variety of reasons – to say nothing of speakers' ability to challenge or subvert any typical pattern at will. Still, the linguistic proficiency of a speaker is greatly enhanced by his ability to recognize and employ typical patterns of speech creation, a facility he acquires as an integral part of his speech experience.

## 5.5.1. Substitution

Let us consider a small assortment of examples, some of which have been presented before:

- (5.24) a. Things to avoid.
- b. Virtually yours. (The conclusion of an email letter)
- c. *La nuit tous les redacteurs sont gris.*  
     ‘At night all the editors are grey’ (Balzac, *Lost Illusions*)
- d. (He is) a male chauvinist piglet.
- e. Mistakes were made.

The common feature in all these cases is that each of them departs from an established formula by the substitution of one of its components. In (5.29a-c), the substitution involves a single lexeme; in (5.29d), a derivational marker; finally, (5.29e) rearranges the morphosyntactic pattern of the prototype. We can say that substitution of a single lexical, derivational,<sup>215</sup> morphological, or syntactic component in an established expression is a very productive and popular way of making new speech artifacts.

It should be emphasized once again that the new meaning that emerges as the result of a substitution is by no means commensurable with the formal simplicity of the device. While the derivational path leading from the SP to the SA is straightforward in all these cases, the semantic shift that emerges as the result is not that of a transparent derivation but of a more complicated, not fully accountable for semantic induction. Its result is a new linguistic artifact that possesses an integral meaning of its own. The speaker strives to take this leap into an unknown semantic domain under control, to make it land (more or less) on target. He finds support for his efforts in speech precedents, i.e., similar operations he performed or witnessed before, whose pattern he would try to follow. The richer the pool of such precedents, the greater the speaker’s ability to predict the results of the process, and the keener his awareness of possible pitfalls.<sup>216</sup> A pool of precedents points to a motivation for the new SA, thus opening the way for its successful interpretation. In cases that are more isolated or even unique the motivation has to be sought anew; typically, in these cases speakers search for clues in properties of a relevant speech genre (“this is an absurdist play”; “this is political oratory,” etc.) and the contextual environment into which the new artifact emerges.

Finding the motivation for (5.24a) is easy: making a travesty of an established formula by substituting one of its components with an alternative

that has an opposite or drastically different meaning, to a humorously subversive effect, is a device widely employed in different speech genres, from fiction to nonsense poetry, advertisement, or simply friendly bantering. (5.24b) might appear baffling without a more specific indication of the speech genre; however, once the speaker is aware that this alteration of an epistolary formula applies specifically to an electronic letter, the motivation, and the ensuing semantic induction (including a humorous touch and a whiff of informality typical for electronic communication), are forthcoming without a hitch. An accumulation of similar artifacts emerging from electronic communications can make substitutions involving the words *virtual* or *electronic* an established pattern; cf. the SA *electronically dead* – meaning “disconnected from a web discussion group” – in Salman Rushdie’s *Fury*, a clear derivation from *clinically dead* and *legally dead* inscribed in the situation of electronic communication.

The strategy of interpreting an SA by simple subtraction and addition of the substituted elements would fail completely in the case (5.29c). If, following (Devitt and Sterelny 1995), we say that since we understand “all cats are grey at night” and we understand “editors,” we must also understand “all editors are grey at night,” we would arrive at a result that is manifestly absurd. Even the awareness of the whole idiomatic expression does not help: an explanation is still needed how cats’ nocturnal grayness could be transferred to editors. This case highlights the fact that the effect of a substitution by itself is not sufficient for understanding the semantic result the substitution has triggered. Since there is no clear precedent in sight that would suggest a motivation behind this particular new artifact, it has to be sought with the help of the context. As it turns out, the expression in question appears in a conversation between journalists who fraternize at night, forgetting the fierce critical battles they launch against each other in their respective magazines. In the morning, their pens are at the service of the editors who employ them; but in the evening, the editors’ ideological “color,” which they represent in their diurnal hostilities, becomes irrelevant. The resulting artifact paradoxically transfers the meaning of the proverb to a radically different sphere; at the same time, it jocularly plays with its prototype by implicitly juxtaposing cats and journalists as two species fond of noisy night parties.

*Mistakes were made* is by now a well established speech formula. However, one can still remember the moment when it was introduced as an artifact whose meaning emerged as a pointed departure from the habitual [*I / we / the administration*] *made a mistake*. It occurred in President Reagan’s

speech in 1986 in which he admitted, in this impersonalized fashion, the government's responsibility for the Iran-Contra affair. Since then, (5.24e) has become a habitual formula of political discourse. In becoming a formulaic expression in its own right, it has lost, or reduced, the sharply paradoxical effect it exuded originally, when its signification arose out of a pointed deviation from the personal construction. In its new capacity as an acknowledged CF, (5.24e) can in its turn become an object of manipulative shifts that would trigger new semantic effects. When, for instance, one says *Mistakes were made* while observing one's failed test, one sarcastically subverts the known formula, exposing afresh its character of a rhetorical ploy.

A curious case of substitution can be seen in so-called "folk etymology," when people substitute an unfamiliar word with a familiar paronomastic alternative in order to make the expression understandable. The signification (however erratic) of a hitherto obscure fact of speech comes from an alteration that binds it to a recognizable prototype.

In the early nineteenth century, a small community of Englishmen living in St. Petersburg made a tiny and totally barren island in the mouth of the Neva their favorite spot for Sunday excursions; apparently, the word *holiday* repeatedly surfaced in their speech when they talked about the place. People made this overheard piece of foreign speech their own by naming the place *ostrov Golodai* 'the island Be Hungry.' By substituting *holiday* with *golodai* they created an artifact whose motivation (the place's barrenness) could be perceived, and as the result, the meaning grasped. This whimsical artifact has eventually become entrenched as the name of the hitherto unnamed island.

The phenomenon of folk etymology is known to all languages. It exemplifies the persistence and inventiveness with which people search for a plausible signification of artifacts they encounter in speech.

### 5.5.2. Mapping: conceptual metaphors or speech prototypes?

Yet another highly productive way of creating new artifacts is by mapping an established speech phenomenon on a conceptual space outside its original conceptual domain. The cognitive mechanisms of such operations have been widely explored in the foundational works on metaphor (Lakoff and Johnson 1980) and mental spaces (Fauconnier 1985/1994), followed by numerous studies.<sup>217</sup> The principal difference between substitution and



mapping is that the former is a one-time operation resulting in one particular artifact, while the latter produces an open number of new speech configurations. Substitution means a change instituted in a single speech prototype, or an observable collective of prototypes; mapping one domain onto another, on the other hand, involves a plurality of features in either domain that can be related to each other. For instance, the now famous tropogenic concept, *An argument is war*, opens ways for producing expressions in which various aspects of the situation of an “argument” can be mapped onto various details and facets of the situation of “war.” One can speak of the critical trench war, of guerrilla war in academia, of intellectual assaults and lines of defense, blitzkriegs, polemical weapons of mass destruction, taking no prisoners or taking hostages in critical warfare, and so on. In a similar vein, various particular operations of mapping following the conceptual pattern *The economy is a living organism* produce a host of potential derivative expressions in which various features concerning the state of the economy are mapped onto various details pertaining to the state of an organism. One can speak about the economy being alive, dead, healthy, sick, ailing, recuperating, growing, aging; suggest its medical treatment, either surgical or therapeutic; discuss medicines to be taken, their cost, possible side effects (perhaps worse than the disease itself), suggest pills to be swallowed, and debate whether those pills have to be bitter or sweetened, or sugar-coated.

The process of semantic induction goes on like a chain reaction. Each particular act of mapping highlights certain features in the umbrella concept that invite further exploration. A highlighted aspect of the general conceptual domain can itself serve as a subdomain – an intermediary conceptual platform from which new semantic configurations can be derived. If, for instance, one speaks of the economy having fallen into a coma, one can continue exploring this particular subdomain of the “organism” metaphor by bringing in the life-support machine, the fight between those wanting to remove it and those determined to keep it attached, alongside the costs and the ethics of either decision. If the economy has been pronounced “dead,” this opens the way to bringing in funeral parlors, obituaries, orphans, the inheritance and the fight over it, the quarrels erupting while the grave is still fresh, or perhaps the one the gravediggers have not even finished digging; the latter turn opens a potential path of semantic creativity that would involve Hamlet holding Yorick’s skull. If, on the other hand, the economy is “resurrected,” it may opportunely be compared to the phoenix (with the idea of purification by fire as a collateral), or a butterfly breaking away

from its cocoon, or otherwise one could talk about the guards who had diligently watched (the economy's) grave yet overlooked the moment it rose from the dead, or explore the motifs of the unbelieving Thomases and the Magdalenas pronouncing the good news.

A truly classical example of how a tropogenic concept can be exploited for creating speech artifacts is the famous Homeric device of extended similes. For instance, numerous expressions in *The Iliad* are built around a conceptual pattern that can be formulated as *A battle is hunting*. Most often, this line of similes involves a lion either in hunt for domestic animals or himself being hunted. An instance in a battle can be depicted via a long figurative detour in which a lion is shown snatching the best cow from the herd; he breaks her neck with his strong teeth, gulps avidly the hot blood and the innards, while dogs and herdsman raise a terrible tumult around, not daring to approach him, overtaken by pale fear (XVII:61-67). In another instance, it is valiant dogs and peasants who chase the lion away from their oxen, not allowing him to tear fat from them; they keep an overnight vigil, while he, craving his food, thrusts forward ferociously yet in vain; for he is met with a shower of javelins and torches, and has eventually, as the dawn comes, to retreat with sadness and anger in his heart (XI:548-55) – all of this in reference to a hero facing a crowd of adversaries.

The ability of the tropogenic process to arrive, through intermediary steps, at stages that have no direct connection to the original conceptual metaphor has been noted in a few studies. This phenomenon is sometimes called “hyper-metaphor” and “hyper-metonymy” (Riemer 2001), or “compound metaphors” (Grady, Taub and Morgan 1996).<sup>218</sup>

An important question to be asked is how such tropogenic concepts arise in speakers' minds. I would rather not touch the purely psychological dimensions of the problem – for instance, whether such concepts are cognitive universals, or culturally and socially bound conventions, or a mixture of both. What I mean is the way speakers act in their capacity as speakers. Viewed from this perspective, various patterns of mapping seem always to be bound to existing facts of collective speech memory. They never arise as pure concepts, virginal in regard to existing speech practices, waiting to be embodied in figurative expressions.

What comes first ontogenetically – conceptual patterns that manifest themselves in appropriate expressions, or expressions that suggest certain conceptual patterns – is in effect a chicken or egg question. As to the given conditions in which we exist as speakers, for every conceivable conceptual pattern there are “always already” some established expressions at hand

from which this pattern could be inferred. Conceptual patterns are never totally independent of known facts of speech; to realize such patterns in plausible speech artifacts, one would need some support in existing speech practices. A new figurative expression can be produced only if there is already a tropical expression or expressions that can be perceived as its precedents – a platform from which a new artifact arises.

If we were equipped with the concept *The economy is a living organism* as a concept only, it would be difficult to comprehend a phrase like the following:

(5.25) Perhaps a few years from now an economics professor will say pensively: “Poor Yorick!”

This utterance becomes signifiable due to the existence of intermediary steps that link it to the umbrella concept: the economy is an organism → it can die → death involves the grave and grave digging → a salient image associated with grave digging in collective memory is that of Hamlet picking Yorick’s skull from a freshly dug grave. The overall tropogenic concept hovers over all these transmutations as a conceptual umbrella; although it ultimately accommodates all of them, it is not directly responsible for each emerging figuration in particular. What makes extended chains of successive conceptual steps possible is the existence of established expressions that support every intermediary step, no matter how far it departs from its original source. That the economy may “die” and “be buried” cannot be inferred from the basic conceptual metaphor of the economy as an organism on a purely logical ground. This figuration becomes the reality of speech behavior because it rests on certain established facts of speech – expressions like *Their economy is (as good as) dead // dead and buried*, etc. That various accessories of the burial can be mapped onto the idea of the economy being dead, is also not a purely conceptual link but one based on certain speech precedents; it finds support in a number of common currency expressions referring to certain attributes of the economy’s death: *obituaries* the dead economy has received, its *grave* that has been already dug, perhaps prematurely, and its *gravediggers*. At each step, a new speech artifact, while pursuing a certain conceptual subdomain, stands on the shoulders of previously known facts of speech in which this subdomain has already been explored. (5.25) would not be possible as a plausible artifact without established phrases that serve as signposts all along the road of conceptual inferences that lies between the starting idea of the economy as

an organism and the image of Hamlet's meditating, Yorick's skull in hand, on the transience of human affairs.

Presenting figurative expressions as being derived directly from conceptual structures faces one pertinent difficulty – namely, that there would be no end to the various concepts one would need in order to account for the infinite variety of artifacts arising in speech. An argument is war – but it is also trade (one can buy or not buy it), court proceedings (which involve prosecutorial postures, critical verdicts, etc.), love-making (an argument passionately embraced), stock market (leading to raising or falling of the author's stock), and many more: revolution, journey, sport, art, living organism, a building, chemistry, mineralogy, gardening, astronomy, astrology, religion, voodoo, fashion, jewelry, gastronomy, mathematics, taxation, medicine, poison, food, fire, a theater, a circus, a zoo; it can be solid, liquid, gaseous, have a sound, a smell, a price tag – what else? It is more difficult to find what an argument *cannot* be than what it can, metaphorically. If one would persist in trying to sort out all these tropogenic ideas into a consistent matrix of conceptual patterns, one would eventually find oneself in a maze of overlapping concepts and intersecting derivational paths.<sup>219</sup> If the speakers were guided by concepts as such, they would never have been able to find their way in this labyrinth. The theory itself, to find a way amidst overlapping conceptual patterns, has to resort either to compiling extensive lists of “image schemes” (Cienki 1997) – a task that can never be accomplished – or to an unsupportable claim of the universality of conceptual structures.<sup>220</sup>

The problem can be resolved if we acknowledge that each utilized conceptual pattern has tangible speech representations in the shape of a few already established phrases. We can say that mapping of one concept onto another becomes practicable only when it involves a manipulative speech act – a superimposition of one known expression onto another.

A spectacular example of how the mind is able to compartmentalize different conceptual metaphors, exploring each of them opportunely, as suggested by fitting speech precedents, can be found, once again, in Homeric similes. As we have seen, his warrior confronting the adversaries can be a lion; but alternatively, he can be a donkey. The “conceptual metaphor” *A warrior is a donkey* is extensively explored in the picture of a slowly-moving donkey wandering into a field, munching the crop without paying any attention to a crowd of children who try to chase him away by beating him with sticks – their strikes are too weak, all their painful efforts succeed only when the donkey has got all the food he wanted (XI:558-62). This

simile appears right after the one cited above, in which the same hero, and the same situation, was mapped onto the image of a lion who failed in his hunt. Speaking logically, one might think that comparing a hero with a hungry lion contradicts comparing him with a donkey, yet this logical inconsistency is irrelevant. What allows both similes to evolve is an array of available expressions describing either situation in details that could be mapped onto events on the battlefield.

In a phenomenon of such an extraordinary complexity as language, a truly operational knowledge simply cannot be systemic. The answer to the enormous challenges that a language poses to its speakers is not a coherent system but pockets of experiential knowledge, chaotically dispersed yet capable of connecting with each other at any moment, in an ad hoc fashion.<sup>221</sup> Once a speaker has in his repertory a few concrete phrases like *the seminal criticism* or *fruitless argument*, he can proceed with further expressions motivated by the idea *An argument is procreation*, bringing along such features as fertility and infertility, miscarriage, abortion, artificial insemination, and so forth. The speaker need not care how this chain of artifacts is related to some other motivations at his disposal, such as *An argument is lovemaking*, or *An argument is war*. He can merge these concepts opportunely, for instance, by creating an SA that would bring together the lack of passion, impotence, and barrenness, or otherwise, war sexual crimes and children of war, and so on. It is the versatility of speech precedents and prototypical patterns that makes the speakers able to move in the labyrinth of conceptual domains and “mental spaces” with such ease.

Formation of meaning is, of course, a cognitive process. However, we have to take into account the material of language that takes part in this process. Creativity in speech becomes possible because speakers are able to form conceptual domains (Lakoff), to manipulate mental spaces (Fauconnier), and to follow various schemata by which signs can be put together (Langacker). But creative speech as such, as a physically tangible and socially acceptable fact, becomes possible, in the last count, so far as it can find supporting precedents in the pool of previous speech experiences.

Recognition of cognitive structures and mental operations with them, on the one hand, and recognition of familiar expressions and the ways they are manipulated in speech, on the other, are two sides of the same phenomenon. The two approaches, “from meaning to speech” and “from speech to meaning,” are complementary; they show the process by which new meanings emerge from opposite ends. Creative speech would be impossible without the cognitive operations it embodies. On the other hand, it is the

various manipulative operations with ready-made pieces of speech that produce conditions under which it becomes possible to construe meaning cognitively; new, and yet familiarizable, artifacts of speech are cognitive challenges that can and have to be interpreted, evaluated, responded to, or rejected.

### 5.5.3. Cross-pollination

In most cases, speakers do not need a clear identification of a single prototype in order to perceive an SA as a departure from established language material. With the exception of sharply etched speech formulas, proverbial expressions, or widely known quotations, which are perceived individually, SAs allude to a collective background of related known expressions. In the simplest case, all these prototypical alternative together, and each of them in particular, point to the same motivation. In a more complex situation, the signification of an SA requires cooperation between different prototypes, which are needed simultaneously as contributors to the emergent meaning. In such cases, diverse prototypes undergo mutual transformations, out of which a new meaning arises that could not be drawn from any of them separately. Multiple allusional backgrounds become integrated into a new whole.

Cases of this type are typical for literary intertextuality. In Chapter 2, we saw how the image of “one colossal turkey” that “feeds all” in Philip Roth’s novel arose out of merging strikingly diverse backgrounds – everyday speech formulas, religious allusions, commercial language. However, more pedestrian speech genres, in particular, newspaper discourse and advertising, are not alien to such more advanced semantic effects either. One such example can be found among the entries in the list of “things to avoid” in Baker’s column:

(5.26) Indonesians bearing gifts.

At first glance, this artifact looks like a simple substitution in the prototypical formula:

(5.27) (Beware of) Greeks bearing gifts.

Originally taken from Virgil’s *Aeneid*, where it referred to the Trojan horse (“Timeo Danaos, et dona ferentes”), the formula has become a com-

mon proverbial expression. One can easily imagine all kinds of SAs that could be derived from it by substituting the obscure reference to “Greeks” with something closer to home: *Beware of [salesmen / telephone companies / politicians] bearing gifts*. But why “Indonesians”? To understand the motivation behind this departure from the formula, one needs contextual support. It comes, most obviously, from a political issue that was topical in late 1996, shortly before the column’s appearance: a scandal caused by the disclosure that some foreign businesses – Indonesian ones among them – made hefty contributions to the 1996 election campaign of the Democratic party. References to “Indonesians,” “Indonesian business,” “Indonesian entrepreneurs” and their “contributions” or “gifts” abounded in the news media of the time. Still, this background does not seem to provide a fully satisfactory motivation. It does not account for the phrase’s specific reference to “Indonesians,” of all possible East Asian sources – for instance, why “Indonesians” and not “Chinese” who were as conspicuously involved in the scandal? This aspect of the signification is fully clarified when yet another, completely different prototypical background of the artifact is found:

(5.28) An Indian giver.

The expression refers to someone who offers a gift only in expectation of getting something in return, and will claim it back if the giver is not happy with what his “gift” has yielded for him.<sup>222</sup> The choice of “Indonesians” receives now a more specific motivation due to its paronomastic-etymological connection with “Indians.” At the same time, the whole signification is considerably changed. It now contains, together with a humorous modernization of the proverbial formula and an allusion to a well-known political scandal concerning campaign contributions, a particularly biting suggestion as to the character and possible motives behind those contributions.

Bringing together two or more different prototypical domains transforms both of them as they become projected on each other. The process can be described as the *cross-pollination* of involved prototypical phenomena.<sup>223</sup> Their meanings, originally pointing in different, often paradoxically diverse directions, permeate each other as if by a semantic osmosis. The interpretation proceeds in shuttle-like fashion, following multiple echoes between its diverse semantic domains as they are being drawn into the artifact’s signification.

#### 5.5.4. Reframing

On some occasions, a new speech artifact can be created from a prototype without any changes in the shape of the latter. Physically, it remains the “same expression”; the stirring factor consists in dislocating the expression from its habitual setting in speech. Confronted with the need for a motivation that could account for such dislocation, the expression ceases to be an established fact of speech and becomes a new artifact that induces a new signification.

The Indonesian dictator Sukharto had a parrot that was trained to greet him every morning with the words: “Good morning, Mister President.” When Sukharto was deposed, newspapers pointed out with relish that the parrot remained the only one among the dictator’s former subjects who still called him “President.” The parrot was, of course, quite innocent as to the new effect its utterance produced; it was journalists who spotted and employed the effect of contextual dislocation in a trite formula.<sup>224</sup>

The simplest cases of reframing are widely used in everyday speech. In fact, reframing occurs every time we use or receive an expression in quotation marks. When put in quotation marks, real or implied, a familiar expression shows a shift in its meaning; at the very least, this device relativizes its content by attributing it to a source other than the speaker. When a newspaper article uses “*the war on terror*” in quotation marks, it reattributes this, by now well established, CF to an implied source, causing a shift in meaning that may range from a deliberate distancing to mockery. A newspaper cliché used in an informal conversation, a colloquialism inserted into a highly formalized discourse, an elaborate old-fashioned formula of courtesy used jokingly between friends or family members: in all these cases a new speech product emerges as a result of putting a familiar speech phenomenon within a situational frame that patently deviates from its habitual sphere of use.

A reframing of gigantic proportions is described in Jorge Luis Borges’ *Pierre Menard, author of Don Quixote*. The story’s title character, a French literary scholar, embarks on the project of producing *Don Quixote* exactly as Cervantes wrote it – not by copying the existing text but by spontaneously generating it anew. It required the hero to tune his mental process in such a way that it would come into full unison with the mind of the novel’s original creator. After many years of labor, the hero – not even a native speaker of Spanish – has managed to produce spontaneously one chapter



that replicated Cervantes's original word for word. The reader of the story is invited to contemplate the striking novelty of Pierre Menard's creation:

(5.29) *El texto de Cervantes y el de Menard son verbalmente idénticos, pero el segund es casi infinitamente más rico.*

'Cervantes' text and that of Menard are verbally identical, but the latter is perhaps infinitely richer.'

Indeed, it is a *Don Quixote* created by a twentieth-century writer, a work whose author and implied readers are aware of an infinite number of things that the original author and his readers could not know. Cervantes might write a phrase like *truth whose mother is history* casually; but when Menard produces the same phrase, it sounds like a striking proposition, since it defies one of the fundamental beliefs shared by the age of reason and the age of positivism – i.e., by the two centuries that stood between Menard's and Cervantes' novels – that truth is objective, and therefore timeless. Menard's sentence relativizes the concept of truth anew, in the context of the modernist (neo-Kantian, phenomenological) critique of positivism and Cartesian rationalism. The grandiose shift of meaning Pierre Menard was able to institute without changing anything in the text (in fact, precisely because he has changed nothing) stands as the ultimate example of reframing. To some extent, a similar shift occurs each time reframing, however modest, is performed in speech.

## Chapter 6

### The axis of contiguity: Shaping an utterance

The best introduction to astronomy is to think of the nightly heavens as a little lot of stars belonging to one's own homestead.

George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda*

The axes of paradigmatic and syntagmatic relation (later recast by Jakobson as the axis of selection and the axis of contiguity, respectively<sup>225</sup>) have served as principal coordinates of theoretical linguistic models since they were introduced by Saussure a century ago. Various linguistic models have shown all basic units of language – phonemes, morphemes, words and word forms, and since the introduction of the principle of transformation (Harris [1957] 1970; Chomsky 1957; Tesnière 1959), also sentences – organized according to these two major principles. The claim of the present model that CFs represent yet another basic unit of language makes it incumbent on it to show the way CFs function according to the two major relational principles.

Chapter 5 dealt with the question of CFs' "paradigmatics," i.e., how mechanisms of modification and selection of CFs allow to create choices for the speaker out of which he builds his utterance. Due to peculiar features of CFs – their volatility and power of association – their paradigmatic relations work in a way that is different from what works for words and other stationary linguistic units. Paradigmatics of CFs is based not on oppositions but on superimpositions. The distinctions between separate CFs are weakened, the distinguishing borders between them eroded due to the power of associative attraction that draws them into volatile conglomerates. As a result, CFs tend to merge with and transform into each other, rather than pose as distinct alternatives to be selected from.

The following chapter addresses the other aspect of structural relations between CFs – their syntagmatics, i.e., the way they behave in contiguity. While the main goal of CFs' paradigmatics was to show how a novel expression, carrying a new and unique meaning – a speech artifact – can be created out of ready-made memorized pieces of speech, the principal goal

of CFs' syntagmatics is to show how those pieces, most of which are fragmentary in their shape, can be put together to produce a continual act of speech. Together, Chapters 5 and 6 are charged with the task of outlining how speech can be created out of the stock of memory about previous instances of speaking experience.

## 6.1. CFs and utterances

In Jane Austen's *Emma*, Harriet Smith, Emma's protégée, receives a marriage proposal from Mr. Martin, a young man of modest social position. Emma, however, has a loftier scheme in mind for her friend; she suggests emphatically that the proposal must be rejected. Harriet, thoroughly flustered, responds in the following way:

(6.1) 'I do not think he is conceited either, in general,' said Harriet, her conscience opposing such censure; 'at least he is very good natured, and I shall always feel much obliged to him, and have a great regard for – but that is quite a different thing from – and you know, though he may like me, it does not follow that I should – and certainly I must confess that since my visiting here I have seen people –'

Even in a state of utter embarrassment, Harriet does not lose her command of CFs. She produces them in her speech, one after another, in all their fragmental wholeness. What failed her in the moment was only the ability to manipulate these ready pieces in such a way as to package them into coherent segments of speech. Harriet's stammered speech performance is by no means unique; it is, rather, an extreme example, due to extreme circumstances, of what happens fairly often in improvised oral speech. We have seen another typical representation of this in Chapter 1:

(6.2/2.6) Len: Oh there was a scathing analysis of – oh was just dreadful

Rafe: His – it just tore the – y'know – from one end to the other so –

Some people resort to such makeshift stringing together of CFs more liberally than others. (Mikhail Gorbachev, the first Soviet leader in post-War times to venture into improvised oration, was notorious for such accumulating discontinuities, which could last for hours; Castro, on the other hand, could spend hours turning out crisp syntactic junctures). The less immediate the contact with the addressee, the less satisfactory are the re-

sults obtained by this technique, or rather, the lack thereof. Each segment by itself has a clear meaning yet the shift from one to another is too abrupt, particularly when contextual support is lacking. The accumulative effect of unpredictable shifts and frustrated expectations may result in an overall impression of incoherence.

For a successful speech performance, speakers need a compromise between the creative freedom in manipulating CFs and their associative environments, on the one hand, and a sufficient degree of recognizability of speech material, on the other. Each CF activates a throng of expressions related to it in one way or another. Together, they offer a multitude of potential ways by which speech, taking the initial CF as a starting point, can be expanded in different possible directions. When the speaker follows these associative impulses too readily, the result is a fractured speech, such as in (6.2). It puts considerable pressure on the addressee, who must forge the speaker's fragmented performance into a perceived whole – a task that in an informal oral communication is facilitated by the immediacy of the contact between the interlocutors.

In a better organized speech, speakers solve this problem by packaging the volatile, chaotically expanding supply of conventional turns of speech into utterances whose whole shape itself reflects certain conventions. Each utterance presents itself as a distinct unit of speech, a recognizable overall syntactic frame that helps to keep in check the ad hoc growth of speech material prompted by a host of associatively intertwined CFs. The way speakers use such a frame is not unlike how jazz musicians use a musical “frame” as a general mold into which they fit their improvisational play with the available musical material.

## **6.2. Communicative contour (CC): a prefabricated sketch of the utterance**

Each conventional utterance, to be perceived as such, has to follow a recognizable overall pattern. When it does, it can be instantly grasped by speakers in its wholeness, no matter how complex or heterogeneous is the packaged material.<sup>226</sup>

The conventional way to describe the structural shape of a sentence is that of a syntactic tree. Needless to say, different versions of the syntactic tree<sup>227</sup> have proven extremely useful as analytical tools. As a model of speech production, however, they are too abstract to be effective. The fact

that a given sentence can be analyzed as a set of hierarchically organized syntactic relations does not mean necessarily that speakers follow these hierarchies while producing or interpreting that sentence. The constructive principles of the syntactic tree are always the same, regardless of the genre, communicative tasks, and concrete speech material of the given utterance. Such uniformity can be advantageous for analytical purposes, yet counter-productive for accommodating the diversity of concrete speech tasks. The rules for building a syntactic tree look perfectly logical when applied to an utterance that already exists as a given fact of language, i.e., one that was already composed for certain purposes and under certain concrete circumstances. However, the moment one tries to proceed in the reverse order and compose an utterance out of a given tree by filling all its nodes with words drawn from the dictionary, it proves rather difficult to achieve a result that would plausibly resemble what speakers might produce in speech, i.e., would look neither bizarre nor pathetically primitive. One needs “intuition” to create plausible word combinations that fit into the structural scheme. The claim that syntactic trees constitute a blueprint according to which sentences are produced in speech obfuscates their true purpose – that of an analytical tool that works effectively only when applied to speech products *after the fact* of them being produced and interpreted by speakers.

As more sophisticated studies of syntactic patterns have shown, there is a strong correlation between the type of syntactic structure and the nature of the verbal material used in it (Fillmore 1988; Fillmore, Kay and O'Connor 1988; Kay 1997b).<sup>228</sup> The “construction grammar” that emerged from this approach takes as its subject semi-concrete expressions – such as Fillmore’s famous example of utterances with *let alone*, or the formula “WXDY?” (*what’s X doing Y?*) (Kay 1997b) – in which a structural pattern and a fitting lexicon intertwine.<sup>229</sup> Taylor (2002: 568ff.) calls a similar phenomenon (as in *Him write a novel?*) “constructional idioms.”

My contention is that such semi-concrete syntactic shapes are not merely syntactic “idioms,” isolated if widespread phenomena; rather, they represent a principle that is absolutely universal. Building and interpreting an utterance, of whatever shape and stylistic provenance, is never a purely constructional task. It always involves concrete or semi-concrete samples, which speakers retrieve directly from memory and which listeners recognize directly. As many recent works on language acquisition have shown, the way children build syntactical patterns bears out this principle. According to Tomasello (2000: 61), “the primary acquisition unit of a child is the utterance, which has as its foundation the expression and understanding of

communicative intensions”; children tend to reproduce not single words used by adults but whole utterances (Tomasello 1992). Children of 15 to 24 months build constructions “around individual verbs” (Dabrowska and Lieven 2005: 438); 60% of utterances produced by children of 20 to 32 months could be accounted for by those initial lexically based patterns, while another 31% were “frozen phrases” (Lieven, Pine and Baldwin 1997).<sup>230</sup> Similar processes involve the development of patterns for compound sentences; when children develop sentences with complement clauses, they initially take a concrete main sentence, based on a few verbs, as prompts leading to a complement clause (Holger and Tomasello 2000).

I have already mentioned a widespread tendency to perceive certain ways of dealing with language and meaning as exclusively or primarily characteristic of early childhood, while neglecting or marginalizing their relevance for an adult world. Our “pride and prejudice” in seeing ourselves as rational beings whose life is founded on patterns of reason does not allow us to acknowledge the full extent of our proximity to the less-than-mature world of infants, poets and musical improvisators. Speaking specifically about the case under discussion, the fact that children master syntactic shapes as templates based on a few lexically specific examples, gradually expanding them alongside the expansion of their vocabulary, is by no means irrelevant to the speech behavior of adults.<sup>231</sup> True, the repertory of various syntactic templates and the diversity of the available lexicon with which they can be filled are dramatically larger in the latter case. Yet this does not negate the general principle that the technique for packaging speech material into conventionally shaped utterances should not be indifferent to conditions of speech itself, i.e., its associative volatility, improvisational character, and adaptability to ever-changing demands of the moment.

This requirement can be satisfied if we presume that speakers take, as the starting point for building utterances, not an abstract scheme but a semi-concrete, half-made template of the intended utterance whose shape already suggests a full, communicatively relevant speech product. The structural information featured in such a semi-concrete design is already partially incarnated in pieces of speech material that mark its adumbration. We will call such semi-concrete templates or adumbrations that serve as utterance designs *communicative contours* (CCs).

A CC is indeed more of a “contour” than a “schema”; it offers a sketch of an utterance rather than its blueprint. A CC always contains some pre-fabricated pieces of speech already in place, alongside suggestions of how

the lacunae between those pieces can be filled. As a semi-accomplished draft of an utterance, the CC has a tangible communicative profile; it points to a potential speech product that belongs to a particular genre and represents a particular kind of intellectual content. Like CFs, CCs arise from speech; they are sketches of distinct units of communication, which speakers can recall and recognize, rather than operational manuals. Each CC presents itself to competent speakers as a palpable shape suggestive of something they can relate to in their previous speech experience.

There is much in common in the nature of communicative fragments and communicative contours. Similarly to a CF, speakers perceive and recognize a CC comprehensively, as something they have direct knowledge of. Like CFs, CCs bear the imprint of a generic situation or situations from which they arose and in which they can be used again. The difference between the two concerns the character of their shape. A CF is indifferent to structural coherence; a segment of speech of any shape may become a CF, provided that speakers retrieve it directly from memory. In fact, CFs even favor incomplete, fragmentary pieces of speech material. A CC, on the other hand, has to be structurally complete. Its primary function is to mark a distinct utterance, to make it stand apart from other utterances that precede and follow it in discourse. While a CF has a well established core, its borders are often vague; because of this, it can be easily contracted, expanded, or fused with other CFs in speech without losing its core identity. In contradistinction to this, a CC has a sharply outlined frame. Its flexibility comes from within, stemming from lacunae in the sketch, which have to be filled in order to make the CC into an accomplished utterance.<sup>232</sup> The inner space of a CC can be easily contracted, expanded, or altered in the areas of lacunae that lie between the structural and intonational signposts outlining its frame; the frame itself meanwhile remains firmly in place, leaving the identity of the given CC intact.

The completeness of the design of a CC has at best only an indirect relation to the notion of grammaticality. True, many utterance templates, when filled with all needed material, result in "grammatical" sentences. But there exist CCs that are complete as viable utterance templates, whose structure is manifestly "ungrammatical," that is, violates the order requirements imposed by a syntactic tree. Speakers treat utterances grounded in such templates as recognizable facts of speech, without caring about their analyzability in terms of a structural scheme.

To cite just one example, an exceedingly popular template in spoken Russian features a pattern that, from a purely grammatical point of view,

looks like a fusion of two distinct sentences via a common lexical component:

- (6.3) На юге рано темнеет солнце садится.<sup>233</sup>  
 'In the South it is early getting dark the sun sets.'

What we have here is the superimposition of two propositions: *In the South, it is getting dark early* and *In the South, the sun sets early* (in the summer). One can analyse this structural monster by reconstructing the two "original" sentences and presenting them in two separate, structurally correct syntactic trees. Such an operation would be convenient for a linguist or language teacher; yet its relevance for speakers, who have no difficulty recognizing such a shape as a whole, is to be doubted. Whatever its presumable "transformational history," (6.3) can be grasped as a realization of a single template. Following the contours of this template and filling it with CFs at their disposal, speakers can create an open number of concrete utterances, all in the same communicative mode of informal, addressee-friendly, easy-going assertiveness:

- (6.4) Весной у нас студентов в класс не загонишь погода чудесная.  
 'In the springtime [it is] impossible to drag the students to a classroom wonderful weather.'

Этот учебник читать скучно написан для дураков.  
 'This textbook is boring to read written for idiots.'

В городе дышать стало нечем кругом машины.  
 'In the city [is] impossible to breathe anymore the autos all around.'

The structural coherence of utterances like (6.3) and (6.4) is supported by their prosodic template, according to which the two pseudo-clauses are pronounced as a single segment, without any pause or intonational shift.

The template for (6.3) and (6.4) is stylistically specific: it works only within the domain of spoken speech. Even more specifically, within this domain sentences of this mold suggest an easy-going conversation: the speaker offers a statement that is generalized yet non-emphatic, while the addressee is not expected to come out with any objection or demand for more information. An utterance produced according to this template outside of such a communicative environment would be perceived either as deficient or as a deliberate (perhaps sarcastic) tour de force.



By the same token, there exist sentences that are formally grammatical yet do not correspond to any recognizable template. While a linguist may be perfectly comfortable in drawing a tree for such a sentence, speakers may have trouble making sense of something which they cannot identify with any familiar design. Such seems to be the case for a sentence from (Kac 1992) which we observed in Chapter 2:

(6.5/2.13) If if I'm Napoleon then you're Karl Marx then she's Queen Victoria.

A double embedded construction seems to be structurally possible as a matter of principle, whereby (6.5) must be deemed a grammatical sentence. And yet, it is doubtful that any template exists in the experience of speakers of English that would allow them to identify this utterance as a whole without an intermediate analytical procedure. In fact, numerous examples are known of speakers' confusion when dealing with excessively complex embedded structures. Cf. an example from spoken speech in (Halliday [1978] 1994: 58): *That's the noise which when you say it to a horse the horse goes faster*. The speaker preferred to proceed according to a familiar template, which from an abstract grammatical view should be deemed deficient, rather than to follow a patently grammatical but actually inscrutable pattern of double embedding by which his thought might be expressed.<sup>234</sup>

Speaking in general, a considerable discrepancy exists between "naive" speakers and linguists in regard to what they assess as "grammatical" sentences.<sup>235</sup> The possibility of tension between the speech intuition and a syntactic pattern was foregrounded in the famous example in (Chomsky 1957):

(6.6) Colorless green ideas sleep furiously.

A large scholarly literature grew out of the problem of whether (6.6), while certainly grammatical, is acceptable as a sentence,<sup>236</sup> and if it is not, how its deficiency could be captured by semantic analysis. The problem acquires a different dimension if we consider (6.6) as a realization of a template that has not only an established structural frame but tangible semantic features. Consider the following sentences created according to the same template:

(6.7) Old bad habits die slowly.

Young urban professionals live miserably.

All natural disasters strike unexpectedly.

Genuinely thoughtful criticism appears rarely.  
 Cheap glossy paperbacks sell fast.

The template (6.7) is flexible enough to produce an open number of utterances, yet it is more concrete, and lies closer to the realities of speech, than a general syntactic scheme that involves NP with two adjectival modifiers connected to a VP, which consists of an intransitive verb modified by an adverb. The scheme is indifferent to the noun's number and the verb's tense, while the template definitely requires present tense, and greatly favors plural for the noun (although a collective or exemplifying singular is occasionally possible). A characteristic feature of the meaning of this particular template is its "aphoristic" character. A certain state attributed to the subject is presented as a universal and undisputed truth. At the same time, an aphorism made according to this recipe often features concrete, even pedestrian subjects, which makes its solemnity somewhat suspicious. As a result, this template often sounds ironic or paradoxical.

Viewed through the lens of a general syntactic scheme, (6.6) appears to be an abstract, purely experimental example of a clash that may occur when a structurally correct syntactic construction is filled randomly with whimsical lexical material. However, when examined against the more concrete, stylistically and semantically specific template in which this sentence is in fact grounded, it ceases to be abstract. The sentence's baffling effect itself agrees with the communicative mode of its template, which is aphoristically lucid and provocative at the same time. The public's long-lasting fascination with (6.6) is due to the fact that it is neither as arbitrary nor nonsensical as it claims. Its meaning, however obscure in referential terms, possesses a suggestive power that is bestowed on it by the CC template it follows. To a speaker familiar with the template the utterance comes out as a mock-solemn pseudo-aphorism, whose deliberate randomness agrees with its typically subversive mode.

Speakers keep in memory a large number of CCs of diverse shape, length, and stylistic provenance.<sup>237</sup> Similar to the vocabulary of CFs, the vocabulary of CCs at speakers' disposal does not form any coherent system. On the contrary, it is a shapeless agglomeration of palpable templates in speakers' memory – or rather, an agglomeration that consists of innumerable diverse components. Different CCs, pertaining to different communicative situations, represent different facets of speech experience, each activated in a speaker's mind opportunely. They present pockets of know-

ledge whose relation to each other, and to a presumable overall system, is simply irrelevant to speakers.<sup>238</sup>

A CC's recognizability is grounded in its three principal constituents: 1) a *lexical-structural template* of an utterance, which is established primarily by means of *lexical signposts*, i.e., concrete lexical items in key structural positions; 2) a *prosodic template*, which consists of an intonational contour, pauses, and some other components of an utterance's sound texture; and 3) *lacunae* between the lexical signposts, charged with suggestions as to the kind of speech material with which they may be filled.

To analyze each of these aspects of the CC in more detail, we will use the following three sentences – of diverse shape, genre, and content – as the primary examples:

(6.8) Actually I'm surprised he dared to read a word. (Martin Amis, *London-Fields*)

(6.9) The media interest, which was never great, evaporated almost immediately after the plan was announced in the President's State of the Union message. (*The New Yorker*)

(6.10) By the time, then, that Heinrich von Kleist, writing in 1810, formulated his famous figure of the great-circle route back to paradise, he merely epitomized what had become one of the most familiar philosophical commonplaces. (M. H. Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism*)

### 6.2.1. Lexical-structural templates

Each CC contains key lexical material – word combinations, single words, sometimes single morphemes – in pivotal positions. They serve as signposts by which the CC can be instantly grasped as a whole, even before the utterance is completed. Lexical signposts provide the speaker with a template that has to be fleshed out to result in an accomplished fact of speech. This template has a *lexical-structural* rather than purely structural character; the structural information it provides is suggested primarily by items of vocabulary in key positions.

This is, once again, the way children operate, according to recent works on language acquisition. For instance, they learn argument structure through lexical templates based on specific verbs, by gradually expanding the repertory and applicability of those templates (Hovav and Levin 1998); “children stick closely to the forms they have heard used with particular

verbs” (Goldberg, Casenhiser and Sethuraman 2004: 291). Tomasello and his co-authors call this strategy “verb-centered conservatism” (Akhtar and Tomasello 1997; Tomasello, Akhtar, Dodson and Rekau 1997). Children build grammatical patterns as “constructional islands” organized around individual verbs (Holger and Tomasello 2001).

Yet a similar strategy can be seen behind utterances built by adult speakers – with the stipulation that the number of diverse “islands” of such particularized knowledge is in this case much larger, and the possible ways of manipulating them more wide-ranging. A version of the notion of the lexical-structural template is described by construction grammar. So far, works on construction grammar have described in detail only a few examples of such constructions. It should be emphasized that the presence of CCs in utterances is universal; every utterance is built according to a CC, which includes a lexical-structural template as one of its principle components.

Every speaker of English has experienced many times, in the sphere of an informal colloquial communication, utterances similar to (6.8):

1st segment	2nd segment	3rd segment	4th segment
<i>Actually I'm</i>	[surprised]	you/he/she/they/John	[VP].
	[amazed]		
	[glad]		
	[so glad]		
	[so happy]		

The template – according to which a multitude of utterances, closely related in style and content, can be built – consists of several segments acting as its lexical signposts. The most unequivocal among them, the one that gives momentum to the whole design, is the opening expression: *Actually I'm* [...]. The segment that immediately follows is less definitive, yet it is not fully abstract either; it offers a limited number of semantically related expressions as workable alternatives.

The third segment is semi-concrete. At first glance, any noun or personal pronoun could fit into this position. This is not quite the case, however. As we have already seen, different word forms are rarely, if ever, fully interchangeable; each suggests its own communicative ambiance. A transpositional shift to a word form less characteristic of the given ambiance is possible, but it usually creates a “stir” that induces a peculiar semantic effect. Speaking of (6.8), it seems that the most fitting expressions

for its third segment are represented by pronouns *you / he / she / they*, and the proper name of a person:

- (6.11) Actually I'm amazed he [...]  
           Actually I'm surprised they [...]  
           Actually I'm so happy John [...]

An ordinary noun is possible, but what is normally expected in this case is some indication of a direct connection between the subordinate subject, and the speaker and / or the implied addressee:

- (6.12) Actually I'm so glad your daughter [...]  
           Actually I'm surprised our neighbors [...]

The more abstract the third segment becomes, the more strain it puts on justifying the impulsive beginning of the utterance. The phrase:

- (6.13) Actually I'm happy an average American worker's earnings are much above the minimal wage.

– produces a “stirring” effect, most probably indicating sarcasm. On the other hand, putting *we*, and especially *I*, into the third segment position also creates an imbalance between the casual posture suggested by the initial phrase and a deeper involvement implied by those forms. An utterance such as *Actually I'm glad / amazed we did it* suggests more complex feelings behind it than a fully conventional *Actually I'm glad / amazed he / she did it*. To summarize, the third segment of the utterance's design gives the speaker different choices, each of which, however, has an impact on the turn the utterance can take.

The last segment is the most abstract. It contains a verbal phrase whose length and shape, as well as possible topical content, allows a broad range of possibilities. It stands as a lacuna in the design not filled yet with concrete (or even suggested) verbal material.

The template for (6.9), as indicated by its verbal signposts, can be presented in the following way:

1st segment	2nd segment	3rd segment	4th segment
		[great]	[deteriorate]
[The] [...],	<i>which</i> [was] <i>never</i> [strong],	[disappear]- <i>ed</i>	[before]
[his/her/their]	[seemed] [very attractive]	[decline]	[after] [...].
			[when]

Again, one can easily imagine a host of concrete utterances made in accord with this template, which one has either experienced before or can improvise out of semi-prefabricated material:

(6.14) The idea, which never seemed very attractive, was completely abandoned after [...]

Public support, which was never wholehearted, vanished completely as soon as [...]

His health, which was never strong, deteriorated completely before (he reached his fiftieth)

(6.10) is considerably more lengthy and structurally complex than the two previous examples. Yet it is as graspable in its entirety as a manifestation of a template of a certain stylistic and topical provenance as the other two. Again, its identification as a template is primarily based on key expressions that serve as its signposts:

(6.15) *By the time (that)* [X] [achieve]  
 [reach]  
 [finish] -*ed* [his/her/their] [NP], (he/she/they) [VP]  
 [began]  
 [formulate]

Once retrieved from memory or encountered in speech, a CC works as an inductive machine that turns the speaker's linguistic memory in a certain direction. Possibilities for filling the design come to mind, attracted by the associative potentials of its signposts. The speaker never designs an utterance as an abstract structure, completed before he embarks on the actual production of the sentence.<sup>239</sup> He takes as his starting point a template, filling it incrementally and opportunely, as the utterance progresses, with material that is activated in the process.<sup>240</sup> The template that was invoked at the utterance's inception works as a prompt suggesting a host of available speech segments that could be fitted into it.

An error in an issue of *The New York Times* allows us a glimpse at how phrases are being composed by speakers according to template-type designs. The sentence in question appeared as follows:

(6.16) Ms. McLaren, is a former postal worker from Fort Worth, Tex., surrendered after an emotional appeal here from two of her daughters.

The “ungrammatical” character of the sentence is quite obvious. It should seem baffling, from the point of view of grammaticality as an abstract and universal quality: how could the presumable inner language machine of a competent speaker produce such an erroneous result? Yet if the process of producing (6.16) is viewed as that of selecting and filling up semi-concrete templates, the mechanics of the error becomes evident. It is an instance of the interference between two different templates that the author must have contemplated as two potential drafts for the utterance:

(6.17) [X], (*who*) *is a* [...] *from* [...], *-ed after* [...].

(6.18) [X], *a* [...] *from* [...], *-ed after* [...].

It was not a grammatical error but interference coming from an initially contemplated and rejected alternative template, and the failure to get rid of all traces of it in compliance with the demands of written speech, that led to the emergence of (6.16). To speakers who are familiar with both templates (6.17) and (6.18) and aware of their close interrelatedness, (6.16) appears a minor human oversight rather than a grammatical monster.

### 6.2.2. Vocalization: prosodic templates

Every CC is characterized by a comprehensive sound shape. Activating a CC, whether for the purpose of creating or interpreting an utterance, involves, alongside its lexical-structural carcass, a sketch of how this utterance is supposed to be vocalized.

The notion of the *vocalization* of an utterance is not identical with its actual pronunciation. For one thing, it applies both to written and spoken utterances: all written sentences follow a certain pattern of vocalization. In short, vocalization is a matter of inner perception rather than physical realization of the sound shape of the utterance. It presents an utterance in the inner perception of speakers – those producing speech and receiving it alike

– as an integral sound shape, the way one perceives a familiar musical phrase.

The vocalization of an utterance constitutes its *prosodic template*. Grasping the structural frame of an utterance, no matter how extensive and complex, is facilitated by speakers' ability to follow its prosodic "rhythm" – of rising and falling pitches, accelerating and slowing down tempos – according to its integral prosodic template. Inner vocalization apporions even the most complex sentences into compact prosodic segments, each easily graspable in itself and at the same time suggestive of possible ways to continue in accordance with the whole design.<sup>241</sup>

Various templates are stored in speakers' "mental lexicon" (Lindfield, Wingfield and Goodglass 1999; Vanlancker-Sidtis 2003) as markers of distinct types of utterances.<sup>242</sup> Speakers are able to recognize the distinct template of an utterance even before that utterance is completed.<sup>243</sup> The templates have a semi-concrete shape that remains identifiable even under certain variations.<sup>244</sup> Speakers possess a large repertory of such semi-concrete prosodic shapes connected to specific genres and situations of speech. In speakers' memory, they constitute a "family" or families of tangible phenomena whose features and meaning may resemble and overlap each other in many ways (Taylor 1989: 163-167; Turner 1996, Ch. 9; Halliday and Greaves, 2006).

The prosodic draft of an utterance has several interrelated aspects. The most obvious among them is a *pitch curve* – a semi-concrete outline of the intonational curve of the utterance as a whole.<sup>245</sup> The intonational outline incorporates highlighted key points at which shifts of the intonational pitch occur. Segments of speech of different length can be accommodated between those intonational signposts. The pitch curve shows a high degree of flexibility in following these fluctuations; it can be either "compressed" or "extenuated" without losing the overall design.

Another important aspect of a prosodic template is *rhythmical texture*. It involves, first of all, *pauses* between segments, often combined with a pitch shift. A more subtle but no less relevant feature of rhythm is produced by shifts in the *tempo*, and respectively, by different degrees of clarity with which different segments are supposed to be articulated. If a sentence design is long and complex enough, it usually features changes of tempo in the course of its vocalization; some segments are more prosodically highlighted, while others are vocalized less distinctly. Such tempo shifts are usually coordinated with the development of the pitch curve: the segments that are rhythmically more pronounced tend to have a pitch that is relatively



high and dynamic, while those that are rhythmically compressed usually presuppose a lower pitch and a monotone. The rhythmical values of different segments of an utterance are relative, of course: their absolute value is contingent on the general tempo of speech. Yet differences in length between different segments of an utterance remain relevant regardless personal or situational variations of the speech manner.

Yet another aspect of the prosodic template includes *accents* of different strength that highlight certain points in the utterance. Typically, they are accompanied by a rising or falling pitch and a shift in the rhythmical flow.<sup>246</sup> Finally, sometimes there are distinct characteristics of the *timbre* of voice that are fitting for a particular CC, or a certain segment therein.<sup>247</sup> For instance, templates whose communicative domain is that of irony or sarcasm, are usually marked with a specific timbre of the voice that produces a “mocking” effect. Templates that are typical as expressions of either positive or negative feelings also have distinct voice timbres as an integral part of their design. Cf., for example, the role of timbre in the vocalization of *What a ...!* in utterances like *What a marvel!* and *What a nuisance!*; or the vocalization of the template *If only (he) could [...]* in cases when it implies the possibility or impossibility of a certain positive development (*If only he could overcome his shyness* in the sense of “he should make an effort to do it” or “he will never be able to do it,” respectively).<sup>248</sup>

These features do not exist separately and independently of each other; they come together in an integral prosodic template. Together they work as *prosodic signposts*, suggesting not only the vocalization of the future utterance but also syntactic patterns and even items of vocabulary that would fit into this particular intonational template.

To show how a sound template works, let us observe the examples cited at the beginning of the chapter. The sound image of (6.8) includes two points at which intonation is rising. One, relatively weak, occurs at the initial syllable of the utterance: *ac-tually*. The other, at the second component of the CC: *sur-pris-ed*, presents the pitch climax of the whole prosodic design; it is followed by a steady fall of intonation till the end of the utterance. The utterance has a characteristic rhythmic contour. Its initial segment *Actually I'm* is vocalized fast and without interruption. The second segment *surprised* is vocalized more slowly and distinctly; it also bears the strongest word stress, and is followed by a distinct pause. Further details of this prosodic template depend on the length of the fourth segment. If it is compact – in a phrase like *Actually I'm surprised he left* – it is pronounced as a single intonational unit whose pitch level is considerably lower than

those of the two previous segments; if, on the other hand, the last segment is more developed – as is the case of (6.8) – it can be divided into two or more intonational subsegments, each characterized by a slight rise of tone on its last stressed syllable, followed by a short pause. In (6.8), such a subdivision comes after *he dared*; it is marked by a slight intonational and stress emphasis on *dár-* and a short pause after *dared*.

Finally, one can perceive the general manner of pronunciation that is associated with this type of an utterance: abrupt, even somewhat muted, as befitting a message addressed to a party in close proximity (both in terms of physical distance and communicative contact) to the speaker.

The above description can be summarized in the following scheme:

actually I'm *prised* |||

he *dàred* | to read a word

(The horizontal levels on which the different segments are placed indicate schematically their relative pitch; the different sizes of the font indicate the relative tempo of vocalization; segments punctuated by strong accents are rendered in italic; vertical lines indicate pauses of different length; ' indicates a stronger stress, ` a weaker stress).

(6.9) and (6.10) belong to various domains of written discourse, yet each shows a distinct pattern of vocalization. For instance, in (6.9) the initial segment *the media interest* features clear stresses on both words accompanied by a rise of the tone; its tempo and dynamic are fairly distinct. It is followed by a pause, after which the next segment *which was never great* is vocalized in a faster tempo and with a rather low and flat pitch, except a slight rise on the word *never*. Another pause, either equal to or longer than the first one, follows, after which the next segment, *evaporated almost immediately*, is rendered with a considerable rise of the tone on the last word; the stress syllable of *immediately* constitutes another pitch climax of the utterance, approximately on a par with that on the stress syllable of *interest*. The rest of the phrase is pronounced slightly faster than the third segment. Because of its considerable length, it can be divided into several intonational subsegments – from two to four, depending on the degree of emphasis given to this utterance in the discourse as a whole. Finally, there is a fall of the tone to an even lower level on the last word:

*interest* || *immédiately* ||  
the média evaporated almost  
after-the  
*néver*  
which was *gréat* |||  
.....  
*plán* *Úion* |  
after-the was announced | in the Président's Státe-of-the message

### 6.2.3. The lacunae: allusional areas in an utterance's design

The third constitutive component of the CC consists of phenomena that are *not* explicitly present in its overall design. These are the spaces between the lexical and prosodic signposts that are not yet filled with concrete verbal material. To move from the sketch offered by a CC to its full realization in an utterance means to fill in these spaces in a way that fits into the structural frame and prosodic design of the CC.

The role of the missing parts in shaping the whole design is as important as that of the lexical-structural signposts and the vocalization template. They are not merely vacant slots that might be filled with any structurally compatible material but *lacunae*, i.e., integral parts of the general draft that are less definitive but not inconsequential for the design as a whole.<sup>249</sup> One perceives the design of an utterance as a contour in which certain areas are somewhat eroded or dimmed yet palpable with alluded potentials. The lacunae are to be “fulfilled” rather than “filled”: each lacuna in a draft carries with it implicit suggestions as to the character of speech material with which it needs to be completed.<sup>250</sup> Having grasped the overall design of a CC, the speaker / addressee anticipates its full lexical incarnation, the same way one anticipates the picture in a sketch. The character of the material for the lacunae is suggested, first of all, by the lexical signposts, which always allude to what can be used as their extensions; second, by the rhythmic and intonational contour of the utterance that often imposes clear limits to the length of the material to be employed; and finally, by the general communicative profile of the CC, i.e., the speech genre, communicative situation, and thematic range it represents.

Everyone who has studied a foreign language has experienced situations when, although not familiar with certain words in an utterance, one yet

comprehended the utterance as a whole. Actually, such situations occur in one's native language as well, perhaps more often than most speakers realize. There is always a chance of encountering a word whose meaning is understood only vaguely, in generic terms. Yet in most cases we glide through these perceptual gaps effortlessly, often without even noticing that we missed something;<sup>251</sup> in fact, it requires special concentration to detect every instance in a given text for which one lacks understanding in a proper sense.<sup>252</sup> By virtue of identifying the overall design of an utterance, the speaker receives strong allusional clues about its content in general; the highlighted components of the recognized design cast light on the dimmed spots in the utterance, making them if not fully comprehensible, at least less-than-opaque.

Mayakovsky's essay *How to Make Verses* is a rare example of a poet's creative process being described by himself in many insightful details. According to Mayakovsky, a line initially appears in his mind as a rhythmical-syntactic proto-image – in his words, “Initially, the line was just a mooing” (Сначала стих только мычался). It was a mute vocalizing contour by which the line first started to take shape. The next step was that of key words emerging in the line's pivotal positions, making clear its overall design as a poetic utterance. The poets' creative efforts were then focused on choosing the remaining material to fill the lacunae in the emerging skeleton of the line. At this stage, he had in mind the line's integral image, which included not only its rhythmical and syntactic shape but, even more important, its general tone and thematic content; the line's composition involved the search for concrete expressions that would fit precisely into the profile of the emerging design.

In everyday speech, even in relatively elaborate genres, the process of selecting material suited to fill lacunae rarely becomes as extensive and as exacting as in poetry. Yet the principle guidelines of the process seem to be the same. The very selection of a CC gives the speaker a clue as to particular reservoirs of speech material from which he must draw in order to complete the utterance. The process goes on as a series of trials – more or less intense, depending on the level of elaborateness of the discourse – aimed at fitting some of the potentially usable material into the given CC.

### 6.3. Grafting

The moment a CC is evoked as the draft for an utterance, the speaker's memory activates a plurality of prefabricated expressions that, by virtue of being associated with this particular CC stylistically and thematically, offer themselves as potential speech material for filling the lacunae in the utterance's design. The speaker's further task is to select some of those expressions, modifying them, if necessary, to fit them to the structural signposts and to each other.

This is not a trivial task, since every expression constitutes a world of its own, complete with its prefabricated shape, integral meaning, and communicative texture. As we have seen, the integral meaning of a CF, or an expression derived from a CF, is always richer than the semantic sum total of words and grammatical forms it features. By the same token, the meaning of an utterance as a whole is richer than the semantic sum total of the segments out of which it is composed. It is no accident that artificially constructed examples are often baffling and at the same time banal if we try to take them seriously, i.e., as genuine speech artifacts produced in a real-life situation and for actual communicative purposes (other than illustrating the author's theoretical point). Simply putting words together according to syntactic rules does not suffice for producing a successful utterance.

What is needed is a procedure that would ensure cooperation between conventional turns of speech when they are put together in an utterance. To be included into a larger communicative whole, a CF needs to dissolve in that whole, so that it shakes off its separateness without losing its recognizability.

The process can be illustrated by the following simple sentence:

(6.19) Open the door to the west veranda.

The structural scheme of the sentence is subject to an analytical procedure that could describe how it is deduced but does not determine its integral meaning as an utterance. It does not provide any means to account for how the sentence's components, whatever they are, become integrated, rather than just added up, into a new whole. We learn from words employed in this message that it contains a request to open a door that leads to a veranda – apparently, one of several in that house, namely, the one looking westward. What we do *not* learn this way are a number of details alluded to by this utterance, which together amount to an integral semantic ambiance: the

character of the house (it is apparently fairly spacious, probably rather old-fashioned and idiosyncratically laid out), its ambiance (probably in the countryside or having a large garden), the roles of the speaker and the addressee (this well may be a request addressed by the mistress of the house to a servant), and potential thematic areas to which this utterance may direct the discourse at large (the heat of day subsiding at evening? some fresh air needed, because there is a big house party at a late stage? the family having decided to have tea outdoors?).

How do these or similar semantic overtones arise? Their primary sources, of course, are CFs that can be discerned in the utterance's fabric:

- (6.20) open the door  
       the door to the veranda  
       the [...] veranda

How did a new integral picture emerge out of these disparate pieces of prefabricated material? It happened because these pieces were not merely put together but *superimposed* upon each other:

- (6.21) open the door  
       *the door* to  
       *the door to* the veranda  
           *the west veranda*

This is, in fact, a situation that happens very often in speech. Rather than appearing in an utterance separately, each in its full shape, distinct CFs tend to be merged. Such a technique of joining prefabricated expressions by superimposing them one onto another can be called *grafting*.

The syntactic scheme of a phrase shows it as a conjunction of distinct elements – words or morphemes. If we consider a phrase *ABCD* that consists of four words – *A*, *B*, *C*, and *D* – its structural scheme presents it as a succession of these words grouped according to their structural relations:

- (6.22) {*A* [*B* (*C* *D*)]} or  
       [*(A* *B)* (*C* *D*)] or  
       {[*A* (*B* *C*)] *D*} etc.

The picture changes if we consider the same phrase *ABCD* in terms of CFs rather than words or morphemes. In all probability, we would be able to discern a few prefabricated expressions woven into its fabric – such as,

for instance, *AB*, *BC*, and *CD*; or *ABC* and *CDE*; or *BCD(E)* and *AD*, etc. Each of the CFs out of which the phrase *ABCD* is composed makes in the fabric of that phrase only a partial appearance, due to being “grafted,” i.e., superimposed upon or interwoven with other constituents of the composition:

$$\begin{array}{lcl}
 (6.23) & AB & \\
 & BC & \\
 & CD & \text{or} \\
 & ABC & \\
 & CD[E] & \text{or} \\
 & A \dots D & \\
 & BCD[E] & \text{etc.}
 \end{array}$$

The resulting whole is “larger” than just the four words that surfaced in its final shape. It comprises larger units of speech, each of which is, ultimately, only partially represented on the phrase’s surface; yet each maintains its allusional presence, contributing its integral semantic potential to the whole. The phrase’s semantic scope exceeds the set of words that are directly represented in it, because it attracts the allusional environment of expressions that are present in its fabric in a partial, half-dissolved state. At the same time, the resulting whole is different from what its grafted components could offer each on its own, precisely because they are not on their own anymore. The utterance presents a new integral phenomenon whose meaning has “grown” out of its ingredients the way a new fruit comes into being when one plant is grafted onto another.

Let us return to (6.19), to observe more closely how its meaning grows with every step of grafting. *Open the door* as a separate unit of signification alludes most explicitly to a situation when someone or something needs to be let in; only in its background, as a second-tier possibility, is there another allusion loitering in which the need arises from the space within, for instance, a need for fresh air. The situation is not specific as to the character of the living space to which the door belongs: it may be in a house or a room, an exit leading outside, or a connection between interior spaces. The abruptness of the request raises the need for a motivation: it may indicate either the casual easy-going character of the situation and the parties involved in it, or, on the contrary, confrontation. (Needless to say, the vocalizations for those two cases would be quite different; what we have in fact

are two different CCs, distinguishable solely by means of their respective templates of vocalization).

*The door to the veranda*, as of itself, suggests a relatively large and complex living space – a house (of any size) or a spacious apartment – and the presence of some “rustic” environment: if not a garden or open countryside, then at least an enclosed courtyard. After the two CFs are grafted, the meaning of the situation of “opening the door” is refocused. *Open the door to the veranda* is a request aimed, most probably, at getting more fresh air inside or moving outdoors, rather than, for example, admitting a bulky piece of furniture just delivered (although the latter scenario is not excluded if qualified with more specific details).

Finally, *the west veranda* suggests a large, old, haphazardly built house in the countryside. It also alludes to a rather grand, perhaps idiosyncratic and old-fashioned, lifestyle; a social frame that easily accommodates the idea of parties that find themselves in dire need of fresh air as the evening progresses; and house servants to whom such an abrupt request would be directed. To recapitulate: grafting each component onto others yields semantic results that none of them could fully account for by themselves.

Grafting is often quite apparent in oral speech.<sup>253</sup> However, it is not limited to any particular type of discourse; on the contrary, grafting is a universal phenomenon. The key factor that makes grafting possible is the less-than-definitely fixed, somewhat eroded and volatile shape in which each separate CF exists in speakers’ memory. CFs are not “separate” units of speakers’ vocabulary in the strict sense. Their very mode of existence is collective; together, they constitute not a list but an agglomeration of more or less closely related speech segments. In speakers’ linguistic consciousness, they are associatively intertwined and superimposed upon each other in a non-systemic, opportunistically flexible fashion. The borders of each CF are constantly infiltrated by other CFs. CFs are not solid “bricks” but fluid entities; they are pliable phenomena capable of adapting to conditions of speech by partially changing their shapes. As a consequence, when two CFs are used together, they are more often conflated than simply juxtaposed.

The technique of grafting allows speech material to fill the lacunae in an utterance’s design by way of incremental expansion. The potential for expansion created by grafting is practically unlimited. Each conflation creates a new whole that in turn is open to further grafting operations.

The lacunae within which this continual process takes place do not have absolutely fixed shapes and lengths. Speech segments accommodated into a



given lacuna may be of different lengths, provided they fit within the signposts at its margins and into the overall intonational contour. The latter, while retaining its overall design, itself adapts to the different lengths of the segments it accommodates.

Let us suppose that we have a CC whose lexical-structural template is marked by two lexical signposts [X] ... [Y] separated by a lacuna. The vocalization template in such cases typically suggests a high pitch at the beginning of the utterance (i.e., on [X]), and a falling pitch at the end. If the lacuna is filled by a short segment – just a single CF consisting of 2-3 words – the basic intonational design remains intact:

(6.24) [X] ||  
                   [abc]  
                           [Y]

If, on the other hand, the lacuna is expanded by the grafting of two or more CFs, the resulting longer segment can be divided into intonational subsegments, each intonationally marked by a pitch rise and a short pause at the end. When the grafted segment, however long, reaches the final signpost [Y], the fall of the pitch occurs according to the utterance's overall design of vocalizing:

(6.25) [X] ||  
                   bc] |    de] |  
           [a            [c        [ef]  
   [Y]

Consider the following instantiation of this scheme:

(6.26) The reason behind this unusual and tremendously labor-intensive style of editing and compiling was both bold and simple. (Simon Winchester, *The Professor and the Madman*)

The overall CC of the utterance is punctuated by signposts:

(6.27) *The reason behind th...* [...] *was* [...].

This CC has also a distinct pattern of vocalization:

(6.28) The *raison* | ... || was ... behind this [...] [...].

In (6.26), the first lacuna is fulfilled by several CFs grafted upon each other:

(6.29) this unusual (and [...]) style  
    style of editing  
    editing and compiling  
                  [...] and     labor-intensive  
    tremendously                   labor-intensive

The positional lacuna has been expanded into a rather prolonged segment, consisting of quite a few grafted expressions, without altering the utterance's overall design.

The second lacuna in (6.27) is filled by two grafted CFs:

(6.30) bold and simple  
both [...] *and* [...]

The resulting whole is short enough to fit the overall intonational design without subdivisions; or otherwise it may be subdivided into two subsegments, with an intermittent rise of the tone on *bold* and a pause after; in both cases, the segment ends with the final lowering of the pitch, that makes it fit into the overall intonational contour:

(6.31) || wás  
                    both bòld and  
                                    símple.

Or:

(6.32) || wás bóld |  
both and  
simple.

## 6.4. Typical devices of grafting

### 6.4.1. Simple grafting: linear merging or embedding

The simplest case of grafting, which takes place fairly often, particularly in less elaborate speech genres, occurs when the end of the first CF turns out to be identical with the beginning of the second CF. Grafting proceeds then as a simple *linear merging*:  $AB + BC = ABC$ .<sup>254</sup> Since the majority of CFs are fragmentary, their borders, unstable though they are, cut across regular syntactic seams. These splintered shapes prove to be particularly expedient for the purpose of grafting. The structurally incomplete character of CFs invites their merging one with another:

- (6.33) What I found there was the [...]  
   *the scene of ...*  
   [...] *of total desolation.*

Sometimes the merger proceeds chain-like, yielding segments of considerable length. This is, for example, what happens in an utterance we observed earlier in the chapter:

- (6.35/6.10) The media interest . . . evaporated almost immediately after the plan was announced in the President's State of the Union message.

A considerable part of this utterance is composed by merging conventional fragments:

- (6.36) evaporated almost immediately  
   *immediately after*  
   *after the plan was announced*  
   *the plan was announced in*  
   *in the President's State of the Union*  
   [*in the President's [...]*      message]

In cases of linear merging, the grammaticality of the resulting whole is automatically guaranteed, since the integrity of each of the merged CFs remains intact. The conjunction  $ABC$  has to be grammatical, since both  $AB$  and  $BC$  are grammatical. At every junction of the phrase ... *evaporated almost immediately after the plan was announced* speakers see nothing but

familiar expressions. The rules of grammar are built into the prefabricated pieces of speech with which the speaker operates.

A slightly more complex version of grafting involves the *embedding* of one CF within another. We have observed this phenomenon in (6.30): “both [...] and [...]” + “bold and simple” = *both bold and simple*. In this case the integrity of each of the grafted components also remains intact, making the grammaticality of the resulting whole guaranteed.

#### 6.4.2. Grafting by adaptation

Linear merging and embedding are popular but by no means the only devices of grafting. Often speakers have to deal with two or more CFs whose shapes do not match as perfectly as is needed for simply merging them one with the other. In such cases, one or both of the expressions to be grafted have to be modified in order to adapt them to each other and/or to the position at which the grafting takes place.

There are several typical devices according to which CFs can be modified for the purpose of adaptation.

1. *Truncation*. In this case, one or more verbal component of a CF can be removed in order to make its junction with another CF possible. Suppose, we want to produce a phrase *ABC* out of two ready-made expressions *ABD* and *BC*; after the first CF is truncated to *AB[D]*, grafting of *AB* and *BC* can proceed by superimposition: *ABD and BC --> AB[D] and BC --> ABC*.

2. *Dispersion*. Sometimes one of the grafted CFs has to be divided in a way that allows the other CF to be embedded between its separated components. If we want to put together the two CFs *AD* and *BCD*, we have to modify the first one into *A ... D*, in order to graft *BCD* by embedding: *AD and BCD --> A ... D and BCD --> ABCD*.

3. *Grammatical transposition*. In this case, a CF is transposed into a related but less typical grammatical variation. This is what happened, for example, in (2.1):

(6.37/2.1) In a major shift of policy, an increasing number of East Asian countries are considering highly risky measures to reinvigorate their economies.

Let us take a closer look at the segment *highly risky measures*. Its fabric is woven out of two conventional expressions:

- (6.38) risky measures  
high risk

While their components *risky* and *risk* suggest a good potential for superimposition, they do not fit into each other in their original form. In order to make them match, one of the expressions has to be reconfigured: *high risk* → *highly risky*. After reconfiguration, the superimposition of the two CFs is straightforward.

How is this alteration possible? That is, how can the speaker be assured that the resulting modification, although departing from the original prefabricated form of the expression, will still be grammatical? The speaker's ability to determine this is aided by his speech repertory at large, which includes a number of related conventional expressions that are easily interchangeable, and in all probability have been interchanged in the speaker's previous experience:

- |                     |                       |
|---------------------|-----------------------|
| (6.39) extreme risk | : extremely risky     |
| exceeding risk      | : exceedingly risky   |
| unreasonable risk   | : unreasonably risky  |
| ...                 |                       |
| high risk           | : <i>highly risky</i> |

The closely related alternatives stand collectively as a precedent for the needed reconfiguration of the CF *high risk* into *highly risky*, although the latter in itself does not belong to the repertory of conventional expressions.

Grammatical transpositions always follow concrete precedents. Such precedents – consisting of a few expressions whose domain of usage overlap to a sufficient extent for speakers to consider them closely related – emerge as an ad hoc matrix that serves as the model for the transposition. Whenever a transposition is needed, speakers can refer to a small collective of available concrete analogies, without addressing the question of the universality of the ad hoc pattern suggested by those analogies. A pocket of knowledge, sufficient to trigger a compact, clearly observable analogy at a moment's notice, is necessary but also sufficient for making an opportune grammatical transposition of the given CF. Crucial for the success of this operation is the existence of closely related concrete cases in which the same relation is sanctioned by convention. A de facto matrix emerges op-

portunately, in a way that keeps it closely tied to the concrete speech material and the communicative situation at hand.

Direct superimposition, and superimpositions via various means of adaptation, are the most basic and most commonly employed devices of grafting. Individual cases of greater complexity can be handled by various combinations of these principal operations. What is common to all cases of grafting is that different CFs are merged with each other. They cease to be separate entities; their shape dissolves in the whole of the given speech segment.

## 6.5. Semantic responsibilities

The formal devices of grafting control the conventionality of the shape of the larger speech segments that result from the superimposition of prefabricated fragments. Given two conventional expressions that can be merged – whether directly or with the help of a modification that finds sufficient analogical support – the result of their fusion is all but guaranteed to be “grammatical,” that is, not to strike the eye of an experienced speaker as an error or deliberate distortion.

As for the semantic consequences of the fusion of two CFs, they are not as simply predictable. Any act of “stirring” a conventional expression – including that of grafting it onto another conventional expression – initiates the process of semantic induction whose communicative consequences have to be left to the speaker’s discretion.<sup>255</sup> As we have observed in Chapter 5, such interpretation involves two components: a) recognition of the prototypical expression(s), and b) the motivation behind its alteration.

Suppose we consider using the following CF:

(6.40) He bought a round-trip ticket to [...].

The simplest way to develop (6.42) into a complete utterance would be by grafting another conventional expression onto it in the shape of ... *to* [X]. Let us consider a few possibilities that may arise from following these technical guidelines:

- (6.41) a. He bought a round-trip ticket *to* Hartford.
- b. He bought a round-trip ticket *to* Hartford, CT.
- c. He bought a round-trip ticket *to* the eleventh-century.
- d. He bought a round-trip ticket *to* the kingdom of heaven.

- e. He bought a round-trip ticket *to* her heart.
- f. He bought a round-trip ticket *to* the milk can.

All the phrases beginning with *to* are recognizable pieces of speech. The presence of *to* as an intermediary between them and the initial segment (6.42) suggests that the formal aspect of grafting should not pose any problem. Indeed, all the resulting artifacts are grammatical in the same sense, namely, that the shapes of their ingredients, themselves grammatical, were never tampered with. If, on the other hand, we ask in what if any sense these artifacts are semantically plausible, the answers for individual cases turn out to be widely diverse.

The name of a place, particularly one that is known to have a railroad, bus station, or an airport, lies very close to the allusional environment of (6.40). It makes the motivation for their conflation easily forthcoming: if one is said to have bought a round-trip ticket, one's destination – the one that has a bus / railroad station or an airport – is naturally implied. At first glance, (6.41a) and (6.41b), both created according to this recipe, look all but identical in regard to semantic consequences of the performed grafting. Yet there is never complete equivalence between associative environments evoked by two distinct facts of speech. In this case, the two sentences, while close in their referential content, imply different types of narrative. In one, Hartford is intimately connected to the subject; it is perhaps his habitual itinerary; at any rate, it was probably mentioned earlier in the narrative. In the other, the name of the destination has no implied connection to the subject; consequently, the "story" of him buying a ticket needs a more elaborate explanation. The character of the subject, in his relation to his destination, and of a larger narrative that could emerge from him buying a ticket, is different in the case of (6.41a) from that of (6.41b). Even what seemed the most obvious variation in performing grafting yielded semantic effects that needed some special interpretative effort.

The next three artifacts emerge out of components whose associative environments do not fit into each other as easily as in the two previous cases. Consequently, in order to be interpreted as a whole, these utterances need a more intense search for their motivation; without such deliberate effort, they may well appear sheer nonsense.

The most probable motivation for (6.41c), unless another one is somehow specified, suggests a "time machine story" as a sub-genre of science fiction. Such a motivation opens avenues for further development of this utterance within a larger narrative – such, for instance, as the subject's wish

to participate in the Crusades, to find his ancestor or his own previous incarnation, to check on the data for a historical novel he is writing, etc. Any of these possibilities in turn activates a host of expressions that could be employed for its development.

The implied narrative of (6.41d) is harder to find. It may suggest the situation of hashish-smoking, or could be understood as a sarcastic reference to a sanctimonious subject who feels being in direct rapport with God – or indeed it could combine both frames, suggesting that a charismatic preacher is in fact a drug addict. As to (6.41e), the associative environment of the expression *her heart* makes its motivational focus gravitate toward a love-story whose male subject is shown as cynically planning his eventual retreat. Finally, a plausible motivation for (6.41f) may be forthcoming only within the frame of a certain genre – either a fairy tale, or surrealist narrative, or that most surrealist genre of all, a linguistic experiment.

Grafting always presents interpretative challenges, regardless of how straightforward is the formal technique employed. Even when the allusional environments of the grafted expressions are very close, conflating those expressions always brings some additional effects, however subtle, that could not be directly inferred from the meaning of either of the grafted components.<sup>256</sup> A motivation that would legitimize those effects always has to be found, even if it often lies so close at hand that one is not aware of searching for it. In more complex cases, involving higher degrees of semantic disparity between the grafted components, the semantic plausibility of the resulting artifact depends entirely on whether speakers are willing to embark on a search for its motivation, and whether they find the result of their search valid and appropriate to justify the artifact as an act of communication. It is always an ad hoc process, supported by prompts provided by the context and communicative situation, and contingent on the interpretative will and ability of the speaker.

The semantic possibilities and pitfalls involved in grafting are in principle the same as when an entire SA is being created from a prototypical background. In both cases, a motivation is needed to account for the “stirring” of the habitual fabric of speech; in both cases also, the result can be laden with side effects that threaten to obfuscate or even entirely thwart the intended meaning. The difference between creating an entire utterance from a prototype and performing grafting lies in the syntagmatic aspect of the latter process. Grafting is not performed in isolation: it occurs within an utterance’s design, as the means of filling a lacuna. The product of grafting does not stand alone: it is placed within lexical and prosodic signposts that



already suggest guidelines for its interpretation. Such signposts make the task of avoiding the semantic pitfalls less onerous than when an utterance stands alone as a complete new fact of speech.

Grafting in itself does not yield the ultimate speech product; it is a step on the way to that product, whose eventual result depends on its design as a whole. Speakers do not fully focus on every transient stage of the process out of which a new utterance emerges. They glide over these stages, as it were, glimpsing each of them only in passing. Consequently, the semantic effects arising from each particular operation of grafting are not highlighted as sharply as those that can be observed in the complete speech artifact; they can be glossed over as the utterance evolves incrementally, from one act of fusion to another.

The evolving nature of the process leaves room for compromises whose product is imperfect but sufficiently plausible. Such compromises – getting over a certain clumsiness of expression, closing one’s eyes to potential side effects – are common in informal spoken speech, when interlocutors have little time for either polishing or fully assessing their emerging speech artifacts; the immediacy of the context makes up for absent or ill-fitting details. However, such compromises take place even in the most exacting genres of linguistic expression. Relatively small awkwardness and a side effect carried along by grafting are not unusual even in a fairly elaborate discourse. In most cases, however, these imperfections can be ignored, or rather they are swept aside by the momentum of evolving speech. A close analytical look at a particular speech segment, viewed in isolation outside the discourse to which it contributed, reveals semantic “bumps” on the road of the discourse’s progress, which under normal speech conditions are passed over uneventfully.

Multiple problems and compromises that arise in the process of expanding speech by grafting can be briefly illustrated by one of the examples cited above:

(6.26) The reason behind this unusual and tremendously labor-intensive style of editing and compiling was both bold and simple.

The expression *the style of editing and compiling* emerges from the grafting of two conventional expressions: *the style of editing* + *editing and compiling*. The resulting artifact looks semantically lucid and conventionally plausible, particularly in the context of the whole utterance. However, a detailed scrutiny reveals cracks in its fabric. While *the style of editing* is

an established expression and as such has a directly accessible meaning, *the style of compiling*, if it had to stand on its own legs, would be less semantically convincing; one would be provoked into musing how “compiling” can have different “styles.” The point is that it does not stand on its own legs. Its meaning is not being examined separately but only within a fusion with the perfectly straightforward *the style of editing*, wherein its own unconventionality is half-dissolved. The awkwardness still exists, yet it is so small that it can be either overlooked, or if noticed, considered a fair price to pay for the inclusion of a desirable component. The fully conventional beginning of the segment gives *momentum* to the whole phrase, allowing the speaker and the addressee to pass over a lurking awkwardness without dwelling on it.

A compromise of another kind can be seen at work in the expression *highly risky measures* in (6.37). Despite the fact that this modification of the conventional *high risk* has, as we have seen, good analogous support from an ad hoc matrix (6.39), it remains a slight deviation that might catch the eye under a close scrutiny. In the sentence as a whole, however, the fact that the controversial component *highly risky* appears in the midst of an easily acceptable whole, facilitates its unobtrusive incorporation into that whole.

Such small dramas arise literally at every step in speech practice. Individual speakers may show different degrees of sensitivity or tolerance to such problems, and different degrees of prowess in solving them. The phenomenon is popularly known as someone having a good or not-so-good linguistic “ear” or “taste.” It is also evident that different types of discourse have different degrees of leeway for a localized imprecision of expression; what would seem awkward in one speech genre can pass without drawing any attention in another. On top of all this, there is always a possibility that awkward seams in the semantic fabric have been created intentionally – or that their less-than-perfect character could receive an a posteriori motivation.

## 6.6. Conclusion: speech production as an *ad hoc* process

The principal way of dealing with ready-made expressions in speech is that of their conflation and interspersion. It is a process in which the shapes of individual CFs often undergo modifications – sometimes slight, sometimes radical almost to a point of non-recognition. Ironically, when CFs are left

intact and allowed simply to follow one another, i.e., when they are used as “solid” ingredients of speech, the resulting speech product often appears disjointed, as if chunked into separate fragments. This is what typically happens in oral speech when speakers do not bother (or simply fail) to transform the CFs at their disposal into a (more or less) seamless continuity, just patching them together instead.

A coherent speech act is never simply the sum of speech particles used in its composition. Speech composition involves deformation of its primary ingredients. The resulting speech product is created not by addition but by *fusion* or *collage*. Rather than building his utterance according to a syntactic blueprint, the speaker makes it incrementally, “growing” it by performing a series of grafting operations within the frame provided by an utterance template. Within the signposts of that template, different pieces of language at the speaker’s disposal evolve as a continuum, as if flowing one into another.

In performing grafting, speakers are guided not by general rules regulating which members of a certain grammatical class can be combined with members of another grammatical class, but by tangible precedents provided by analogous cases from their speech practice. Grafting proceeds from the concrete to the concrete. Instead of drawing a master plan of a sentence and then realizing it sequentially by moving through the nodes of its syntactic tree, speakers work with speech material in an improvised manner, trying to “fit” various pieces of speech to each other while keeping in mind the overall design of the utterance. It often – particularly in more elaborate speech genres – requires multiple trials of various relevant pieces of language material, in a search for the most satisfactory compromise. It is a process in which particular and communicatively specific expressions are always being fused, grounded in ad hoc analogies, a process whose results can be neither fully predictable nor automatically guaranteed.

Yet despite its improvisational and incremental nature, or rather because of it, grafting allows a deeper transformation of the primary language material and a richer variety of achieved results than could have been attained by the recombination, however sophisticated, of fixed elements. Even after it has been dissolved in a larger segment of speech, a CF does not lose its individuality completely. As long as it remains recognizable, it carries with it its allusional potential. Ethereal, ever-changing configurations of momentarily activated analogies, realized and unrealized potentials, fulfilled and frustrated intentions surround each speech act, making it resound with innumerable semantic, stylistic, and emotional overtones.

The resulting communication appears to speakers “familiar” and “unique” at the same time. As a matter of principle, its components appeal directly to memory; yet the concrete shapes in which these components appear take new configurations with each new act of speech composition. A product of speech emerges as something that has never been experienced in its entirety before, yet at the same time, is recognizable, or at the very least, capable of alluding to something in the speaker’s experience.

Grafting plays an instrumental role in the process of transforming disjointed memorized speech pieces into a message that answers the particular conditions and goals of the given communication. The degree of success in communicating the speaker’s intention through language is determined to a large extent by how much prowess he has shown (and also, how much luck he has had) in forging a multitude of CFs, activated by his intention, into a satisfying whole. Moreover, the speaker’s intention itself never remains unchanging. The very act of modifying and grafting certain pieces of pre-fabricated material causes an incremental transformation of the intentions that triggered the creation of the utterance. Sometimes the resulting product turns out to be widely off-the-mark in regard to the speaker’s original intention, a discrepancy the speaker may or may not come to realize. Sometimes, efforts to fuse diverse expressions result in an awkwardness that makes the meaning of the whole opaque or ridden with subversive side effects.

Speakers find themselves unceasingly manoeuvring between precedents and prefabricated pieces of speech, on the one hand, and the unique challenges of each particular communicative situation, on the other. The result of this semi-improvisatory navigation is never absolutely perfect. There is no secure way of producing an absolutely “correct” communication, as there are no patent prescriptions for a failure. All that can be said of a particular communicative effort is that it was quite successful or acceptable, rich and beautiful or ponderous though comprehensible, striking or insipid, lucid or opaque, elegantly composed or inept. Different speakers, and the same speaker at different moments, achieve different degrees of success in expressing themselves and interpreting thoughts expressed by others. The whole process recalls the way one chooses one’s clothes for certain social occasions, or makes a driving manoeuvre in a certain situation on the road: the results vary from individual to individual and from one experience to another, depending on personal abilities and skills, degree of concentration, and also, sheer luck. If there is anything “invariable” in these experiences it is the fact that their results are never guaranteed. The process of ad hoc

manipulation of language never stops; it is as continual as speech experience itself.

## Chapter 7

### Categorization

*Es ist gleich tödlich für den Geist, ein System zu haben und keins zu haben. Er wird sich also wohl entschließen müssen, beides zu verbinden.*

‘It is equally deadly for the spirit to have a system and to have none. The spirit must be resolved, then, to get both polarities connected.’

Friedrich Schlegel, *Athenaeum Fragments*

#### 7.1. Case study: perfect in Old Church Slavonic

##### 7.1.1. The problem

Old Church Slavonic (OCS), the liturgical language of the Orthodox Slavs, was created in the ninth and polished in the tenth century, through translations, mostly from Greek, of sacral texts – the Gospels, the Psalter, sermons, hagiography, and books of prayers. By the mid-eleventh century, OCS diversified into regional versions: Bulgarian, Serbian, Old Russian, and up to the fifteenth century, also Czech and Croatian. These local off-spring of OCS, called “Church Slavonic” languages, are still used today as liturgical languages of the Slavic Orthodox nations.<sup>257</sup> The data on OCS proper that we possess consist of a substantial but limited corpus of texts from the late tenth and/or early eleventh century: four more or less complete Gospels, a nearly complete Psalter, a book of prayers, and not a small number of sermons and pieces of hagiography, alongside scores of small fragments. The whole corpus comprises, roughly, some 3000 manuscript pages.

This makes OCS a fascinating laboratory for linguistic studies, which can take into exhaustive account all the available material. The fact that much of the OCS data consists of parallel versions of the same text – first of all, four copies of the Gospels of different provenance, and also Psalms and prayers whose language contains many repetitions – gives ample opportunity to look into fine nuances of expression by which those texts diverge.

The creators of OCS used South Slavic vernacular as their primary material, shaping it into highly sophisticated written discourses by closely following derivational patterns, morphosyntactic constructions, and rhetorical devices of the Greek originals. Direct borrowings from the originals were remarkably few; for the most part, necessary means of expression were created as “calques,” i.e., by shaping the indigenous language material after the patterns of the original. A vast number of new words and idioms (mostly of an abstract and pious meaning) were created this way, alongside a rich repertory of morphosyntactic phrasal patterns and rhetorical figures.<sup>258</sup> In particular, the use of past tenses – which constitutes the backbone of narrative in any developed written language – largely followed the use of tenses in Greek. The opposition between the two forms of simple past, aorist and imperfect (the latter possibly created anew with the help of what might have been originally derivational suffixes with the iterative meaning<sup>259</sup>), allowed them to stratify foreground and background information in the narrative, largely in the same way as it is done in classical and modern literary languages.<sup>260</sup>

The situation concerning perfect was somewhat different. The OCS perfect, unlike the Greek one, was not a simple tense form. The reason for this divergence might be either that there was no fitting derivational material in the vernacular out of which a correspondence to Greek perfect could be coined, or that there already existed a compound form that was more or less fit to be appropriated for that purpose. In any event, the OCS perfect emerged as a compound form whose composition was similar to that used in most modern European languages. It consisted of the auxiliary verb *byti* ‘to be,’ plus a special participial form with the suffix *-lъ* (the so-called l-participle) that was used exclusively in the compound forms: *далъ кси* ‘I have given’ (cf. Gr. *δέδωκα*); *съхранилъ кстъ* ‘he has saved / preserved’ (Gr. *σέσωκε*). The auxiliary verb featured the conjugational paradigm (i.e., person and number), while the l-participle agreed with the subject in gender and number.

Perhaps because of this formal disparity, the OCS perfect significantly diverged from the Greek one in the way it was used. To be sure, both languages used perfect much less frequently than the two principal forms of the past – aorist and imperfect. However, those relatively rare “special occasions” when perfect appeared did not coincide in the two languages – a divergence the more notable in that it stood in sharp contrast with the high rate of coincidence in their use of aorist and imperfect. A parallel fragment

from the St. John Gospel (17:8) in an OCS Gospel,<sup>261</sup> the Greek New Testament, and the King James Bible gives a fair sample of the situation:

- (7.1) и гл҃ѣ ѡже дадѣ еси [P] дадѣ [A] и мѣ  
 ‘And [the] words that [you] have given, [I] gave them’  
 ῥήματα ἃ ἔδωκάς [A] μοι δέδωκα [P] αὐτοῖς  
 For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me

In this passage, the use of aorist and perfect in OCS is the inverse of both Greek and English.

The lack of correlation in the meaning of the OCS perfect not only with Greek but with modern languages as well, means it is of little use to describe its meaning as “perfective.” Meanwhile, this “automatic” definition of perfect as the tense that indicates an action in the past whose result is felt in the present prevails in general courses of OCS grammar,<sup>262</sup> although the more complicated nature of the problem has been pointed out in a few special works on this subject.<sup>263</sup> The correlation in OCS between the resultative meaning of a sentence and the use of perfect is weak. There are many sentences in OCS texts with a clearly resultative meaning that feature aorist instead; by the same token, there are sentences with perfect whose relation to the resultative meaning is extremely tenuous or nonexistent. Sometimes sentences that feature the same verb and appear in close succession or as parallel constructions, employ alternately aorist and perfect, with no apparent contrast in meaning.

This seems to be a good occasion to heed Wittgenstein’s advise:

Sag nicht: Es *muß* ihnen etwas gemeinsam sein, sonst hießen sie nicht ‘Spiele’ – sondern *schau*, ob ihnen allen etwas gemeinsam ist. – Denn, wenn du sie anschaut, wirst du zwar nicht etwas sehen, was *alles* gemeinsam wäre, aber du wirst Ähnlichkeiten, Verwandtschaften sehen, und zwar eine ganze Beite. Wie gesagt: denk nicht, sondern schau!<sup>264</sup>

Which in this particular case means casting off preconceptions of what perfect may or should signify “invariably” as a “grammatical category,” and observing patiently how this form was used in OCS in particular situations arising in particular texts. The limited and largely overlapping character of the available texts, as well as the scarcity of occasions on which perfect appears in them, makes such an investigation more compact, if not less challenging, than what linguists usually face when they follow a grammatical form through an open pool of language usage.



7.1.2. Metaphysical projection of meaning: *jenseits* vs. *dasein*

In the narrative genres represented in OCS – the Gospels, sermons, and hagiography – the backbone of the narrative is rendered by aorist. Verbs in aorist convey the chain of successive events – including those that have a clearly resultative, i.e., “perfective” meaning – that constitute the “story.” This narrative chain is punctuated by sentences or passages with imperfect, which introduce either background support for the story – commentary, explanatory digressions, narrative flashbacks – or moments in the progress of the story itself when it concerns recurring or habitual events.

What is the role of perfect in this division of narrative labors? In vain would one try to rationalize its relatively rare appearances in terms of the universal distinctive features by which the system of tenses at large can be characterized, such as past connected vs. not connected with the narrative time, close vs. remote, accomplished vs. non-accomplished, etc.<sup>265</sup> While clear narrative logic can be seen in the overwhelming majority of cases when aorist is supplanted by imperfect, no such logic seems to exist in the cases when perfect is used. Yet the use of perfect could not be purely accidental or capricious, since parallel textual versions, such as different copies of the Gospels, or parallel passages in sermons, show a remarkable consistency in regard to occasions on which this form appears.

An empirical observation of those instances shows that many of them refer to events and situations reflecting God’s will or intent, in contradistinction to earthly affairs, which are typically rendered by aorist. Consider, for example, the passage from St. Luke (1:58) describing how news of the immaculate conception was spreading among the people:

(7.2) и слышаша [А] окръсть живѣхшеи и рождѣние ея ꙗко възвеличилъ естъ  
[Р] гдѣ милость своѣхъ съ неѣхъ

‘And [those] living around heard her [giving] birth, that God has glorified [her] with his mercy on her’

In this particular case, the appearance of perfect could be explained as highlighting the resultative aspect of the meaning of *has glorified*. However, there may be another motivation as well. The fact that the people “heard” about the event belongs to the empirical world of human actions; but the event itself belongs to the transcendental domain of God’s acts. The two situations are contrasted with regard not so much to their empirical content or relation to the empirical present as by their metaphysical status:

one belongs to the empirical world of *dasein*, the other manifests the transcendental order of *jenseits*. Let us take this observation as the basis for a preliminary hypothesis: that the contrast in the metaphysical status of various situations in the narrative may be relevant to the tense forms in which these situations are rendered.

This contrast comes forth with remarkable lucidity in a sentence from “The Life of John of the Vow of Silence.” The saint’s enemies sent soldiers to the woods where he lived, with orders to kill him. When John was returning to his hut, he suddenly saw a fearsome lion who barred his way; the saint fled into the woods, which saved him from the assassins. Later his spiritual mentor explained to him the hidden meaning of what happened:

(7.3) се съхранилъ та кстъ [P] богъ отъ ратъничъска прихощения и извѣсти  
[A] ти видомъ ти стражъ посълавъ (Cod. Supr., 293)<sup>266</sup>

‘Thus God has saved you from the soldiers’ assault, and warned you, sending an apparition of a guard.’

To save the saint was God’s will, which as such was independent of the empirical state of affairs; however, the instrumental fulfillment of God’s will – that he sent the apparition of a lion as forewarning – was an empirical action. The lion served literally as a tangible “apparition” of God’s transcendental action. To express these two metaphysically contrastive situations, the aorist and perfect respectively were assigned.

We can now return to (7.1) – a passage from the Gospel of St. John describing Jesus’ prayer in the garden of Gethsemane. At this point, we need to observe a larger fragment from this passage:

(7.4) азъ прославихъ [A] та на земи · дѣло съвършихъ [A] еже далъ еси [P]  
миѣ . . . и глаголюще далъ еси [P] дахъ [A] имъ · и ти прииде [A] и раз-  
суждѣша [A] въ истинѣ . . . яко ты мя посъла [A] . . . да видятъ славѣ мою  
кже далъ еси [P] миѣ яко възбавляе еси [P] мя прѣжде съзложения мира (John  
17:4-26)

‘I glorified you on earth, accomplished the task that [you] have given me; . . . and the words which [you] have given me [I] gave them, and those received and understood [them] in truth . . . that you sent me . . . Let [them] see my glory which [you] have given me, that [you] have loved me before the creation of the world.’

The literal translation sounds clumsy, primarily because it defies any conceivable logic of using perfect vs. simple past in English. Indeed, this

same passage in the *New Revised Standard Version* shows a strikingly different pattern of using the tenses:

(7.5) I glorified you on earth by finishing the work that you gave me to do; . . . for the words that you gave me I have given to them, and they have received them and know in truth . . . that you sent me. . . . [Let them] see my glory, which you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.

The divergence in the use of perfect becomes explicable if we consider the metaphysical rather than empirical content of the passage. That Jesus perceived God, announced His glory, and gave His Word to his disciples, was his earthly mission; this earthly, instrumental side of God's mystical plan is rendered by aorist. The plan itself – the fact that God acknowledged Jesus as his “beloved son” and gave him the Word – remains, by means of using perfect, in the transcendental domain. The distinction between the two strata, one belonging to the world, the other exempt from it, is made explicit by the expressions *on earth* and *before the creation of the world* by which they are respectively distinguished. The fact that the two apparently identical expressions, *gave the Word*, would be rendered one in perfect, the other in aorist, becomes perfectly logical from the point of view of the metaphysical values that stand behind each expression: God's giving the Word to Jesus, mystically, is rendered by perfect, while Jesus giving the Word to his disciples, in the way of teaching, is expressed by aorist. Not every deed of God is rendered in perfect automatically, though: the fact that God “sent” Jesus to earth is treated as already belonging to the earthly fulfillment of his mystical plan, and therefore, receives the form of aorist.

The pattern of expressing this metaphysical distinction by using different tenses turns out to be particularly important for conveying the notion of the two hypostases of Christ – human and divine – whose distinct yet inseparable nature posed a problem that stood at the center of theological debates and turbulent heresies throughout the first millennium of Christianity.<sup>267</sup> OCS perfect offered a powerful instrument for expressing, by purely linguistic means, this intricate theological concept. Switching back and forth between aorist (or sometimes imperfect), on the one hand, and perfect, on the other, allows the expression of fine metaphysical and theological nuances of meaning; it makes it possible to maintain both the distinction and at the same time the close interconnection between the transcendental and the empirical aspects of Christ's mission. In a sermon by John

Chrysostom, a glance back at what Christ had accomplished on earth is rendered as the following:

(7.6) ТОЛИКОМЪ БЛАГОМЪ ДОСТОИННО СЪТВОРИЛЪ КСИ [P] И ДО ПОСЛѢДНАГО ВЕЧЕРА ТРЪПКАШЕ [Imp] И ОУЧАШЕ [Imp] И КАЗАШЕ [Imp] (Klots, 56)<sup>268</sup>

‘With such goodness has he accomplished [his task] honorably, and *up to the very last evening* [he] was enduring, and teaching, and saying’

Now, after Christ’s death, his mission can be seen in its transcendental wholeness, which justifies the appearance of perfect; but when particular instances of his dwelling on earth (“up to the very last evening”) are remembered, they are rendered by a simple past – in this case, by imperfect, because of the iterative character of the situations.

Even more dramatic is the transcendental leap performed in the sermon on Christ’s death and burial by Epiphanius of Cyprus. One passage in the sermon shows Christ on the cross at the very moment of his death; it is the moment that divides Christ’s earthly life and his leaving the world for eternity. The situation is presented as Christ’s own monologue in which he sums up his achievement by addressing Adam whose original sin has now been redeemed:

(7.7) ОУСНЖУЪ [A] НА КРЪСТЪ И КОПЬЕМЪ ПРОВОДЕНЪ БЫУЪ [A] . . . МОК РЕБРО ИЦѢЛИЛО КСТЪ [P] БОЛѢЗНЬ ТВОЕГО РЕБРА . . . МОК КОПИК ОУСТАВИЛО КСТЪ [P] ОБРАЩАЯШТЕЕ СЯ НА ТЯ КОПЬЕ (Cod. Supr., 101)

‘I [plunged into] sleep on the cross, and was pierced by the spear . . . my rib has cured the disease of your rib . . . my spear has averted the spear pointed at you’

That Christ died (“plunged to sleep”), and that his rib was pierced by the spear, are facts that belong to the earthly chain of events; they are rendered by aorist. When the discourse shifts to the mystical meaning of these events – namely, that Christ’s pierced rib cured the disease of “Adam’s rib” (i.e., exculpated the original sin), and the spear turned against Christ averted the menacing spear of the archangel that banished Adam from paradise – the narration turns to perfect. The narrative switches metaphysical gears, as it were, now showing Christ in the last moment of his worldly existence, now at the first moment that belongs to eternity.

The switch between the empirical and the trans-empirical is performed with remarkable subtlety in two pronouncements made by Jesus on apparently similar occasions. Once, he is invited to the house of a nobleman

whose young daughter is gravely ill. Upon seeing the girl who has evidently just died, Christ makes the following assertion:

(7.8) *нѣстъ оумръла [P] дѣвица нъ спитъ* (Luke 8:52)  
 ‘Has not died the girl, but sleeps’

This example is favored in descriptions of OCS perfect as a crystal-clear manifestation of its ostensible “perfective” meaning. Indeed, the impact on the present of the fact that the girl has not died could not be more dramatic. However, the Greek Gospel uses aorist in this position (οὐ γὰρ ἀπέθανεν), while both the King James and the New Revised Version use present tense (*is not dead*). Moreover, in the OCS Gospel aorist is used in an episode that constitutes a clear parallel to (7.8). There, Christ announces to his disciples the death of Lazarus; his words and meaning seem very close to (7.8), yet the narrative in this case features aorist:

(7.9) *и рече оученикомъ · си лазаръ дреуѣтъ нашъ оусъпе [A] · они же мнѡште  
 тако о сѣмъ всѣдоху къ рекошѡ ѡмоу ꙗко аште оусъпе [A] исцѣлѣху ·  
 рече имъ явѣ ꙗко лазаръ оумръ [A]* (Cod. Supr., 306)

‘He said to his disciples: Now our friend Lazarus fell asleep. They, thinking that he talks about a real [lit. ‘this’] sleep, said to him: If [he] fell asleep, [he] [will] be cured. Then Jesus said to them *clearly*: Lazarus died’

The resultative meaning of Christ’s announcement is as evident here as in (7.8), yet the message about Lazarus’ death, both metaphorical and “clear,” is rendered in aorist. While the empirical situation described in (7.8) and (7.9) is the same, their implied metaphysical meaning is opposite. Christ said that the girl “has not died,” while she was so obviously dead that his remark angered the grieving relatives; his statement defied physical reality by confronting it with metaphysical truth. In (7.9), on the contrary, Jesus conveys the news of Lazarus’ death as an empirical fact. In (7.8) Christ speaks of things nobody has seen yet, while in (7.9), he speaks “clearly,” i.e., about phenomena that are empirically apparent. Cf. the use of a similar qualifier *видомъ* ‘in appearance’ in (7.3) that described the instrumental nature of the lion’s apparition. The use of perfect and aorist in (7.8) and (7.9) allows the narrator to make a subtle rhetorical distinction between two situations nearly identical in their narrative content.

Yet another curious example of the metaphysical distinction rendered by tense forms occurs in the “Prayer for the banishment of crop-eating in-

sects.” The prayer proceeds as a set of magic orders aimed at convincing the insects to disperse and go away. One of the orders is phrased as follows:

(7.10) *ти отиди въ горы поустыни . . . тамо вы естъ дааѣ* [P] *ѣ денниѣ пицѣ* (Euchol. Syn., 73a)<sup>269</sup>  
 ‘go away to the barren mountains . . . there has given you God [your] daily food’

From the empirical point of view, “barren mountains” are manifestly devoid of any food. However, the logic by which the insects are to be persuaded is magical, not empirical. The barren mountains are presented as the place assigned by God to the parasites for them to feed themselves, regardless of whether any food is to be found there (hopefully not, so that they all die out). An apparently self-contradicting offer of barren mountains as the source of food makes sense, once the trans-empirical character of the offer is indicated by the choice of perfect. Had the prayer said *тамо вы дааѣ* [A] *ѣ пицѣ* ‘there God gave you your food,’ it would have sounded like an actual promise that food is there; God would have appeared to be deceiving the insects.

The distinction between the forms of simple past on the one hand and perfect on the other is also maintained in non-narrative genres, first of all in the Psalms. While in the narrative genres the interplay between tense forms can be observed predominantly in the third person singular (except in episodes where direct speech is involved), in non-narrative genres a similar interplay appears in the second person singular – the form with which the subject of the prayer addresses God. The use of perfect in this case can be understood as the affirmation of a mystical connection between the subject and God – a connection that goes beyond any empirical evidence or worldly circumstance:

(7.11) *въ скръви пространилѣ мѣ еси* [P] (Psalt. Syn., 4)<sup>270</sup>  
 ‘In [my] grief, [you] have given me room [lit. have expanded me]’

The subject of the prayer feels “expanded” by God amidst his sorrows. This inner truth, independent of or even contrary to the apparent state of affairs, is quite appropriately rendered by perfect.

In the next example, the subject of the prayer has apparently received some sign affirming his bond with God; the choice of aorist renders the shift of the meaning from mystical to instrumental:

(7.12) оꙋслыша [A] ꙗко молихъ моѣхъ (Psalt. Syn., 6)  
 ‘God heard my prayer’

Viewed from an empirical perspective, (7.12) has a clear resultative meaning: the speaker infers from a sign he received that his prayer “has been heard” by God. Accordingly, in English versions of this passage perfect is consistently used: *The Lord has heard my supplication*. What seems to be more relevant for the OCS text is the fact that the result in question has a worldly nature. When the subject’s faith in God’s protection is confirmed by tangible evidence, the situation is conveyed by aorist; when, however, God’s protection is asserted regardless of any empirical evidence, the subject expresses his mystical confidence in God by perfect.

The semantic distinction described here covers the great majority of all cases when perfect appears in OCS texts. It is fair to say that it constitutes the core of usage of perfect. We should also take note that this way of using perfect utilizes only two forms of the perfect paradigm: second and third person singular, out of nine forms (first, second, and third person in singular, dual, and plural) that are theoretically possible.

One can only speculate as to how such a way of using perfect might emerge. A relatively rare use of perfect in Greek originals made its function less manifest than that of imperfect and aorist. It made it difficult for the originators of OCS to establish a clear correlation in meaning between OCS and Greek perfect, the more so that they had totally different formal shapes, which did not invite analogy. This made it necessary to seek an intrinsic logic for using perfect in OCS. Due to its composite nature, OCS perfect forms stood out in a text as something exceptional, suggesting some kind of emphasis – a potential that in the context of the intense piety of all OCS texts could easily lead to the form’s signification as the one referring to larger-than-life, transcendental, mystical situations and phenomena.

We can also understand why all plural and dual forms of perfect, although theoretically possible, were exempt from this usage, and in fact, were used exceedingly rarely altogether. Any plurality would contradict the singular character of a mystical experience; applying any of these forms would immediately bring the discourse down to earth, virtually nullifying the trans-empirical meaning.

### 7.1.3. Analogous extensions of the meaning: from transcendental to extraordinary

Expression of transcendental values constitutes the most frequent and regular use of perfect forms in OCS. This, however, does not exclude the possibility of using perfect outside of this semantic domain. On the contrary: it is the strong presence of the transcendental meaning associated with perfect that makes possible its various analogous extensions in situations referring to worldly affairs.

Motivations for using a perfect form in such situations are manifold; consequently, the range of diverse meanings expressed by perfect in such cases could hardly be captured in any common semantic denominator. What is common for all those cases, however, is that each single situation of this kind is connected to the transcendental meaning as its partial analogy. This process does not exhibit any general logic. It proceeds opportunistically, resulting in a plurality of diversely motivated analogies. Their diversity means some of these analogies are totally unrelated to each other. In the last count, however, they are all linked as a “family,” if not directly, then by some degrees of separation. Looked upon as a whole, the conglomeration of meanings in which perfect is used in OCS texts can be seen as an uninterrupted web of analogies. Its consistency as a grammatical form is based on contiguities between particular instances of its usage and not on any invariable *Gesamtbedeutung*. The situation vividly recalls what Wittgenstein called “family resemblances”: while no single feature could be found that would serve as a common denominator for all phenomena designated by the word *game*, they all somehow overlap.<sup>271</sup>

Wittgenstein’s concept of a family of signs (and its antecedence in Novalis [1795/1980]) is clearly applicable to our case study. Let us observe analogous connections between different instances of the use of perfect, keeping in mind the uninterrupted continuum of the “family” of meanings expressed by this grammatical form.

#### A) Analogy “God / the Lord” → “the master / the lord.”

In the rendition of the story of Joseph in a sermon, when the wife of Potiphar makes advances on Joseph, he responds in the following manner:



(7.13) КАМА ГОСПОДИНЪ МОИ . . . ВЪСЕ КСТЪ ДАЛЪ [P] ВЪ РЖЦЪ МОИ . . . АШТЕ ЛИ  
ЛЖЖЪ ТИ ГОСПОЖДЕ ВЪНЪ КСТЪ ТО ИЛИ БОГЪ МОИ ОШЪЛЪ КСТЪ [P] СЪ НИМЪ (Cod.  
 Supr., 306)

‘Since *my lord* . . . has given everything into my hands [i.e., entrusted everything to me] . . . if [the] husband of yours, mistress, is out, for me it is [as if] *my God* has departed together with him.

The expression ЕСТЪ ДАЛЪ ‘has given’ is well entrenched (we may say, it constitutes a CF) as the one often used in reference to God’s will; cf. Christ’s reference to the Word that God “has given” to him (while he himself “gave” it to his disciples) in (7.4). Joseph applies this expression, with all its allusional power, to the will of his master, as if bestowing on him divine status. The analogy is facilitated by the fact that the word ГОСПОДИНЪ ‘master, the lord’ is etymologically related and phonologically close to ГОСПОДЪ ‘God, the Lord.’ The analogy is made explicit in the second sentence, when Joseph directly compares his master’s absence with his own situation of being cut off from his God in captivity.

B) An extraordinary / unprecedented event.

Perfect may appear as a reference to a situation that, although belonging to the empirical domain, is perceived as extraordinary. The situation’s outstanding character provides the rationale for using perfect as the means of excepting the described phenomenon from the quotidian order. The utterance with perfect interrupts the orderly progress of the story by infusing an extraordinary element into it.

In Mark 11:2, Christ tells his disciples to go and fetch an untamed colt; he would eventually mount that colt, which had not been mounted by anyone yet, to enter Jerusalem. The colt’s exemption from any quotidian usage has to be “absolute” to serve Christ’s future mission; it is this emphasis on the fact that the colt was not touched by any quotidian affairs that is expressed by the use of the perfect form:

(7.14) ОБРАШТЕТА ЖРЪВЪЦЪ ПРИВЪЗАНЪ НА НЕМЪ ЖЕ НЪСТЬ НИКТОЖЕ ОТЬ ЧЪКЪ  
ВЪСЪЛЪ [P]

‘[the two of you will] find a colt tied [to a stand], which no one among people has mounted’

A similar example arises when Christ describes future punishments that await the non-believers, whose grief will be such as has never yet been seen:

(7.15) БЖДЕТЬ ВО ТОГДА СРЪБЪ ВЕЛИКА ИКА ЖЕ НѢСТЬ БЫЛА [P] ОТЪ НАЧАЛА МИРОУ  
ДОСЕЛѢ (Math.: 24, 21)

‘there will be then great sorrow, such as has never been from the beginning of the world till now’

The use of perfect in (7.15) is motivated by the extraordinary measure of grief, but also by the fact that it will be experienced at the Last Judgment, i.e., after the end of worldly existence. The meanings of something being “extraordinary” and being “beyond the earthly existence” go hand in hand, making the analogical extension particularly closely tied to the prototypical meaning.

C) The reversal of the perspective: earthly existence as *jenseits*.

The story of two Lazaruses – one rich, the other poor – describes how the former, while being tormented in hell, spotted the latter sitting at Abraham’s side in heaven (Luke 16:25). When the rich Lazarus complains about the difference in their fates, Abraham answers him:

(7.16) ЧАДО ВЪСПОМѢНИ ИАКО ПРИМАЛЪ ЕСИ [P] БЛАГАЯ ВЪ ЖИВОТѢ СВОЕМЪ И ЛАЗАРЪ  
ТАКОЖДЕ ЗЪЛАЯ · НЪНИА ЖЕ СЪДѢ ОУТѢШАЕТЪ СЯ А ТЫ СТРАЖДЕШИ

‘[My] son, recall how you have received [all the] good in your life[time], while Lazarus [has received all the] evil. And now [he] comforts himself here while you suffer.’

True to its core meaning, perfect is used here to indicate a state that is outside the bounds of “here and now.” Paradoxically, the “here and now” of the two Lazaruses’ present position is eternity; their earthly existence has been left behind, in a different metaphysical domain. To emphasize the extraneous nature of their former worldly experience, it is rendered by perfect.

A reference to a past state that is decidedly gone is akin to the meaning of English past perfect or French *passé antérieur*. When, however, a similar situation arises in OCS, it is rendered by imperfect rather than perfect:

(7.17) тѣ во иродѣ пославъ аѣтъ иоана и сваза и въ темьници · иродиѣды ради жены филипа брата своего · ꙗко жени сѧ ея · глаше [Imp] во иоанъ иродоу · не достойтъ тебе имѣти жены филипа брата твоего · ирод же гнѣвааше [Imp] сѧ на нь и хотѣаше [Imp] и оубити и не можааше [Imp] (Mk. 6:17-19)

‘For that Herod having sent [them] to get John, and they bound him in a prison, because of Herodiade, the wife of Philip, his brother. Because he married her; while John had said [lit. ‘was saying’] to Herod: It is not proper for you to take the wife of Philip, your brother, and Herod had been angered [‘was being angered’] at him and had wanted [‘was wanting’] to kill him, and could not [‘was not being able’]’

The appearance of imperfect interrupts the main chain of events (rendered in aorist), to tell about the prehistory of John the Baptist’s murder: his opposition to Herod’s illegal marriage and Herod’s hitherto futile wish to murder him. The use of imperfect emphasizes that the past situation, although separated from the present, belongs to the same metaphysical order; what imperfect conveys here is a narrative flashback. In contradistinction to this, when the rich Lazarus is reminded about his former life on earth, the narrative features a metaphysical rather than merely temporal shift, the distinction that is conveyed by perfect.

#### D) Emphatic assertion / Rhetorical question.

When something is proclaimed in the strongest terms, perfect may be used as a means of expressing the emphasis. The situation rendered by perfect is emphatically claimed to be true – so much so as to make any empirical proof inappropriate. Although empirical by its own nature, the situation is presented in absolute terms, as if it were exempt from demands of empirical verifiability.

In John 16:30, Jesus announces to his disciples that although he had been speaking to them through parables so far, the time has come to tell them plainly that he is the Son of God. The disciples’ answer is palpable with indignation:

(7.18) да кто тѧ въпрашаетъ о семъ · вѣроуемъ ꙗко отъ бѧ ишълъ еси [P]

‘But who is asking you about that? [We] believe that you have come from God.’

The situation as a whole belongs to the *dasein*: the disciples address Jesus as their teacher, the one in their midst. As we have seen, under normal circumstances references to Christ's worldly existence and deeds do not call for perfect. In this particular case, however, the appearance of perfect gives the statement an emphasis that goes beyond its substantial meaning.

In an episode in Mark 14:8, a woman, while anointing Christ's feet with precious oil, is blamed by his disciples for wasting goods that could be used to raise money for the poor. In rebuking them, Christ refers to the woman's deed in perfect, thus asserting its rightness (and the disciples' fault):

(7.19) **ДОБРО БО ДѢЛО СЪДѢЛА О МЕНѢ . . . ВАРИЛА КСТЪ** [P] ПОХРИЗМИТИ ТѢЛО МОЕ НА ПОГРЕБЕНИЕ

'For [she] did a good deed for me . . . [she] has anticipated anointing my body for the burial'

The emphatic, polemically charged assertion can also be expressed as a rhetorical question. A rhetorical question features perfect when its claim to the implied truth is particularly strong. This device is regularly employed in situations that describe Christ's polemic with the Pharisees by means of a Socratic dialogue:

(7.20) **ГЛА ИМЪ ИС НѢСТЕ ЛИ ЧЪЛИ** [P] **ВЪ КЪНИГАХЪ · КАМЕНЕ ЕГОЖЕ НЕ ВЪ РАДѢ СЪВОРИША СЕ БЫСТЪ ВЪ ГЛАВѢ ЖГЛАУ ОТЬ ТИ БЫСТЪ** (Math. 21:42)

'Jesus said to them: Haven't [the two of you] read in the books – a stone [the builders] did not use ordinarily, that one was the cornerstone, [it] was from God'

When the Pharisees in their turn use the rhetorical question, it features aorist. The use of different tense forms conveys the disparity between the parties of the dialogue: the assertion made by the Pharisees does not amount to absolute and unconditional truth.

(7.21) **ПРИШѢДЪШЕ К НЕМОУ ГЛАГОЛАХУ . . . НЕ ПОВѢДА ЛИ** [A] **ПРѢЖДЕ БОГЪ ПРОРОКОМЪ ТАКО СЛАВЫ СВОЕКА ИНОМОУ НЕ ДАМЪ** (Cod. Supr., 331)

'having come to him, they said . . . : did not God convey earlier to the prophets as to how [I] will not give my glory to anyone?'

Interestingly enough, Christ himself abstains from using perfect when, in a moment of anger, he uses a rhetorical question in an argument with his own parents:

(7.22) и рече къ нима · что ꙗко искаста мене · не вѣста ли [A] ꙗко еже естъ  
отъ оца моего въ тѣхъ достонитъ ми быти (L. 2, 49)

‘And [he] said to [the two of] them: what for [was it] that you looked for me; did not you know that I am from God my father, where it is appropriate for me to be?’

The parents, although severely rebuked, are spared the full blow of a rhetorical question with perfect, which is repeatedly employed against Christ’s true adversaries.

Rhetorical questions naturally allow the use of second person plural or dual, depending on the size of the party to which they are addressed. Thus, not only the field of meanings but the repertory of used forms is gradually expanding by analogical extensions.

E) Bewilderment, horror, disbelief: an emphatic question.

In the *Life of Isaac*, a hagiographic narrative directed against the Arian heresy, one of the protagonists, a saint named Peter, sees Christ appearing to him in a torn shirt. The following exchange ensues:

(7.23) сѣи петръ и рече · ꙗко кто ти кътъ раздѣралъ [P] котыж · онъ же  
рече · арии раздѣра ми на двѣ (Cod. Supr., 187)

‘Saint Peter said: My Lord, who *has torn* your shirt? He said then: Aries *tore* me in two’

Peter’s horror and bewilderment at what he is seeing can be felt due to the use of perfect; it is as if he was saying: “this is something outside comprehension, something that could not have happened in any conceivable circumstances.” To this, Christ replies in a matter-of-fact fashion, simply pointing to the perpetrator, i.e., the Arian heresy that tore his shirt – a figurative reference to the church – in two; the calmness of his reply is made felt by the use of aorist.

One of Christ’s parables features the story of a man who sowed good seed in his field; when he was asleep, the devil came and mixed his seed with weeds. When the time came to harvest the crop, the man sent his laborers, who discovered that the crop had been overwhelmed by the weeds. In utter bewilderment, the laborers ask their master:

(7.24) пришедше раби г҃оу рѣша · ꙗко не добро ли сѣмъ сѣлъ еси [P] на селѣ  
твоемъ отъкъдоу оубо иматъ плѣвелъ (Math. 13, 27)

‘having come to their master, the servants said: Lord, have not you sewn the good seed on your land [lit. ‘in your estate’], whence would then the weed be had?’

In (7.23) and (7.24), a mystical subtext to a worldly situation might work as an additional motivation for using perfect. However, perfect can also be applied to a situation that entirely belongs to worldly existence, conveying the utter bewilderment of the speaker. In *Life of St. Jacob*, a rather naively written hagiography, we are told that enemies of the saint hired a promiscuous woman to seduce him, so that he could then be chased away. The woman approaches the saint’s lonely hut late in the night, asking him to give her refuge. The saint’s perplexity, upon half-opening the door and seeing a woman, is so strong that he literally refuses to believe his eyes, thinking that what he is seeing must be an apparition:

(7.25) и малы оуверъзъ и видѣвъ ѿ мнѣаше мъчѣтѣ быти . . . и глагола ки . . . отъкъждоу пришла кси [P] сѣмо (Cod. Supr., 515)

‘and having opened [the door] a little and seen her, thinking [her] to be a dream . . . [he] said to her: Whence have you come here?’

F) Reference: a shift of the narrative perspective.

Perfect may appear in a proposition that contains a reference to an external source of information. In such cases, the speaker makes a statement not on his own but through the voice of the “other” imported into the narrative. The statement thus qualified is presented as an outward phenomenon, from the point of view of the speaker’s narrative *dasein*. It is this shift to another narrative plane that motivates the use of perfect.

At one point in his polemic, Christ asserts his divine nature by referring to the authority of the prophets who had foretold his coming into the world:

(7.26) тѣмъ же рече . николи же мене слышасте пророкомъ гл҃гажшта тогда разоумѣете како азъ ксамъ глаголаи пришьахъ [P] . . . азъ бо отъ бога изидоухъ [A] и вънидоухъ [A] въ миръ (Cod. Supr, 331)

‘And he said to those: did [you] never hear the prophets speaking about myself, [but since you did] you understand then that [it is] I [who] *have come* [as] having been [fore]told [by them] . . . I *came* from God and *entered* the world’

Christ makes his statement first by referring to the prophets’ earlier saying, then repeating it as his own assertion. The subject matter of the two

propositions is identical, but their positions in the narrative perspective are different: the former comes from the prophet's saying, the latter belongs to the speaker himself. The difference between the referred and the direct statement is underscored by the respective use of perfect and aorist.

A particularly dramatic contrast between different narrative perspectives occurs in the scene in the Gospel in which the mob mockingly exhorts Christ to produce a miracle that would save him from the cross:

(7.27) ГЛАЖУЩЕ . . . ИНЪ ЕСТЬ СПАСЪ [P] ДА СПЕТЪ и СА ЩЕ СЪ ЕСТЬ СНЪ БЖИИ  
избраны (Luke 23:35)

‘them saying: . . . [he] has saved others, let [him] save also himself if he is the chosen Son of God’

The mob speaks of Christ having saved “others” as a reference to his own words – it is what “he said.” The introduction of perfect makes the alienation of Christ’s words from the mob repeating them particularly strong.

## 7.2. Discussion: grammatical forms and their meaning

### 7.2.1. Relevance of OCS data.

Linguists like extreme cases, which allow them to test the frontiers of language’s usage and meaning. OCS is one such case. Not only is the corpus of OCS texts limited, but they all are closely interconnected through innumerable parallels, cross-references, and periphrases. Even the so-called “free” compositions – sermons and saints’ lives – are in fact woven out of biblical periphrases and allusions. The whole corpus provides a continual field of cross-references. It presents a linguistic environment of extraordinary hermetic density, in which every textual moment reverberates with parallels and contrasts to other instances in the same and other texts.

One can argue that had OCS been employed for translating and producing secular texts, alongside sacral and pious ones, the hub of its usage would have shifted to temporal and aspectual features of described situations regardless of their rhetorical attire. Consequently, the whole paradigm of perfect, comprising all potential variants of person, gender, and number – not just the few forms that are actually present in the OCS data – would appear in different texts. This indeed happened in the course of the next

millennium, when OCS gradually dissolved into the local versions, which in their turn became the foundation of the literary languages of most of the Slavic Orthodox nations. But as far as the original, late ninth- to early eleventh-century OCS is concerned, to contemplate such a possibility is to imagine a different language, not the one it actually was. For the sole *raison d'être* for creating OCS, and the exclusive mode of its original employment, was that of rendering sacral and pious texts of Christianity in an indigenous Slavic tongue. This determined the character of its discourses, its phraseological and rhetorical repertory, and the scope of thematic topoi and symbolic values its practitioners strove to express. In this regard, OCS was quite exceptional, even in comparison with many other “dead” languages, such as Latin or Classical Greek. These singular conditions of its usage make it a unique tool of linguistic investigation.

While it can be clearly seen that the use of language is contingent on communicative premises, speech genres, and value judgments whenever we consider any particular speech situation,<sup>272</sup> it is usually hard to extrapolate such observations onto language as a whole. The diversity of speech experiences of each individual speaker, and even more so, of a community of speakers, is vast. The speech data of a living language is dispersed among diverse speech genres and social strata, each directed by its own precedents of speech behavior. Various discourses call for the use of different speech material, including different grammatical forms. In the final count, virtually any piece of language hardware becomes viable under certain speech conditions. By the same token, it is impossible to make any generalization whatsoever on a phenomenon in language without seeing it frustrated by actual or potential counter-examples in the next instance of usage, which proceed under altogether different speech conditions. Attempts to limit one's data base to a compact discourse domain – say, to “informal spoken speech,” or “scholarly discourse” – are essentially futile, because actual speech comes out as a volatile mix of different genres and discourses. Particular instances of language usage are free-flowing in an open pool of possibilities, hop scotching among stylistic compartments.

Many linguists sought the remedy for this volatility of speech by constructing their own language artifacts, hoping to make their observations under ideal laboratory conditions, in safe isolation from the terrible cacophony of diverse voices in which language exists naturally. Yet the price to be paid is so high as to subvert the whole enterprise. It is not simply that artificial examples do not correspond to what can be observed under actual conditions of speech, a criticism that has often been made. Worse, they



create their own “language game,” with its own conditions of language usage. One simply cannot offer any artifact of language distilled from a certain speech situation, complete with implied premises, goals, and expectations, built into it; in the case in question, this would be the situation of a linguistic mental experiment, or psycholinguistic test.<sup>273</sup> The result is perfect circularity: the created artifact allows to describe a phenomenon whose description was the sole reason for it being created in the first place.

OCS offers a unique opportunity to break away from this dilemma of grappling with either the irresolvable diversity of natural speech data, or the circularity of artificial ones. Its data is “natural,” in the sense that the goals of those who used the language had nothing to do with the goals of the investigator. And yet, the degree of diversity of conditions of usage is unusually low. With its clear limits of *topoi* and stylistic range and a uniquely high intertextual pressure, OCS offers itself as a natural laboratory – a linguistic synchrotron of a kind, in which natural movements of particles of language matter can be traced under hermetic conditions, without interference from the open multitude of contradictory forces that are usually at work in a discourse. By following OCS data, one can observe the behavior of a certain feature not in language “in general” but under specific communicative conditions; and what is crucially important, under conditions that were not artificially created to serve the needs of the observation itself, but naturally arose from the needs of those who used the language as an integral part of their social environment.

Did the uniquely hermetic conditions in which OCS was used by its practitioners result in an unusual degree of compactness and logical correctness in the patterns of usage? The answer is a resounding “NO.” On the contrary: it is the hermeticism of the discourse space that makes it possible to appreciate in full all the disparities and asymmetries in the usage of a language, since in this case they cannot be attributed to “pragmatic” disparities of speech conditions. Under the uniquely homogenous pragmatic conditions of OCS, the non-global, disparate, opportune character of language usage presents itself as its inalienable inherent property.

### 7.2.2. The shape of morphological paradigms: asymmetries and transpositions.

A grammatical category manifests itself in speech in a number of particular forms that can be put together in a description as a paradigm, i.e., a set of alternative entries related to each other in form and meaning.

If the target of description is “language” as a structural abstraction that ignores diverse specific domains of its usage, its grammatical paradigms present themselves as a matrix of neatly correlated forms. For instance, if a paradigm features alternative forms of person (1st, 2nd, and 3rd) and number (sing. and pl.), one expects to find – and indeed finds in the summary corpus of data – a matrix that comprises six entries symmetrically posed vis à vis each other. Using this matrix as an abstract pattern, one can then apply it to any lexical representative of the grammatical class that features this grammatical category. Given the rules for generating a paradigm, one can expect to be able to produce the whole paradigm of a given lexeme, and ultimately, of any lexeme of the same grammatical class. Everyone who has studied Greek or Latin grammar is familiar with this type of exercise, whereby a student produces hundreds of verbal forms as the “paradigm” for the assigned verb, without asking where (and whether) each of those forms would be encountered in speech. The process fully applies to lexemes one has never seen before, whether because of their rarity or because they are ad hoc inventions:

(7.28) Consider the case of Mr. Suggs.

He was an eminent entomologist, which is to say that he knew nothing  
but bugs.

He could tell the Coleoptera from the Lepidoptera,  
And the Aphidae and the Katydidæ from the Grasshoptera.

(Ogden Nash, *Versus*)

For a reader who is not an eminent entomologist, it may be hard to tell without checking in a dictionary whether the first four items of terminology, apparently of Greek-Latin origin, are genuine or concocted (as it turns out, they are genuine); at any rate, the last item is an obvious joke: *grasshoptera*, a transparent allusion to the common *grasshoppers* clad in classical morphological attire. Yet regardless of whether one has any familiarity with *lepidoptera* etc., a sufficiently qualified speaker of English should be able, upon seeing a noun in singular, to produce its plural counterpart, and vice versa, with a reasonable degree of success, even if he has never en-

countered this particular word form before; the patently fantastic *grasshoppera* is no exception.

As a matter of principle, OCS lexemes and word classes can be garnished with paradigms that are as complete in realizing all logical possibilities, and as symmetrical in their inner structure as paradigms from any other language. OCS textbooks usually cite, and students produce as an exercise, full paradigms of OCS grammatical categories applied to various lexemes that are put forward presumably as random examples. Speaking in particular of OCS perfect, its composition implies the possibility of alternative forms of person / number of the auxiliary verb, and gender / number of the participial part. Nothing is easier than deducing the full paradigm of perfect by taking into account all the alternatives for each of those categories: three forms of person multiplied by three forms of number (sing., dual, and pl.) and three forms of gender (masc., fem., and neut.) – twenty-seven alternative forms altogether, theoretically speaking (disregarding a few cases of formal syncretism). The complete set of the perfect forms for any given verb emerges in a logical fashion:

**есмь реклъ - есмь рекла - есмь рекло**

‘I [the man] have said’ – ‘I [the woman] have said’ – ‘I [the child] have said’

**еси реклъ - еси рекла - еси рекло**

‘thou [the man] have said’ – ‘thou [the woman] have said’ – ‘thou [the child] have said’

**естъ реклъ - естъ рекла - естъ рекло**

‘he has said’ – ‘she has said’ – ‘it [the child] has said’

**есма рекла - есма реклъ - есма рекла**

‘the two of us [men] have said’ – ‘the two of us [women] have said’ – ‘the two of us [children] have said’

**есмы рекли - есмы реклы - есмы рекла**

‘many of us [men] have said’ – ‘many of us [women] have said’ – ‘many of us [children] have said’

– and so on. There is no doubt that any competent user of OCS – in the days when it was used as a living language as well as now – would be able to produce any of these forms, whenever the need arose. The question is: *when* could such a need arise?



perfect except the two have only sporadic chances, if any at all, to appear in an OCS text.

The situation in which a theoretically possible form is not actually used, which can be said to be typical of OCS, does not seem to arise otherwise than as an exception in any living language. The reason for this difference, I believe, is more significant than the sheer limitation of the available OCS data. In the open pool of different discourses, speech genres, communicative situations, and speakers' intentions that is typical of a living language, virtually all possible forms of virtually all lexemes find their employment somehow and somewhere, on certain occasions and under certain conditions. Given the fact that a logically constructed paradigm features a certain set of forms, it can be almost taken for granted that each of those forms will be actually observed in some domain of speech. If no questions are asked about the speech provenance of either of those forms, nothing prevents them from being viewed simply as legitimate correlates of the common paradigm.

This way of presentation neglects the fractured diversity of speech conditions under which each of those forms could be observed – the diversity that makes their relation much more complicated than it looks when we put them into their assigned places in the matrix. It obfuscates the fact that within a certain facet of speech experience some of those forms may turn out to be all but nonexistent (except as a curiosity), while in another, radically dissociated domain of speech those very forms may show up as a typical, most frequently used means.

It is telling that the asymmetrical character of paradigms as they are used in speech is detected in studies that rely on informants' responses rather than in those that use the registered language data. The reason is that a speaker, in responding to a stimulus or a question, is always acting within a particular communicative situation rather than considering "the language" at large. As a result, such responses highlight the truncated character of paradigms to which people refer in connection to a particular speech situation,<sup>275</sup> as well as their tight connection to particular lexemes.<sup>276</sup>

The fact that all members of a paradigm show up in speech at large does not mean that they *coexist*. Different word forms show up in different CFs, which may belong to different speech genres and represent different thematic domains. The repertory of CFs in which a certain word form can be seen is always highly idiosyncratic; it never coincides with the repertory of CFs in which another word form, ostensibly its correlate, would occur. The moment one descends from an observation point elevated above the reali-

ties of speech – a point from which those realities appear as abstract geometrical shapes, as if having been transformed into a supremacist composition – the picture of a grammatical paradigm loses its geometrical symmetry. Within each conceivable domain of speech, it appears severely deformed – its overall shape truncated, its surviving separate members being used according to ratios that are wildly asymmetrical, its manifestations greatly favoring a few lexemes while all but ignoring many others.

This is the way a paradigm is treated in speech. Speakers use a particular word form of a particular lexeme opportunely, as part of an expression that seems fitting to the current purposes and conditions of speech, without thinking of the entire paradigmatic matrix it ostensibly represents. On another occasion, under a different set of conditions, they would retrieve another word form in the same opportunistic fashion.<sup>277</sup> Using one of the alternative members of a grammatical category rather than another is never determined exclusively by the inner logic of that category. A pair of word forms that function as correlates within one speech genre may turn out to be alien to each other – to such a degree that the substitution of one of them for another would look odd or far-fetched – within another domain of speech.

The significance of the asymmetrical and fractured nature of speech data concerning the usage of different word forms goes beyond a need of its statistical adjustment. It suggests the character of speakers' knowledge of diverse grammatical forms, and the way they use this knowledge in speech. Speakers' awareness of the morphology of their language does not take the shape of structurally organized paradigms, no matter how clear and coherent those paradigms may look as purely logical constructs. (As a matter of fact, they are never as clear and coherent as they often seem to be at a superficial glance; under a closer scrutiny, they always turn out to be beset by all kinds of subdivisions and particular cases, which makes their full construction extremely complicated). Instead, speakers take advantage of their direct knowledge of each separate word form as such, due to its presence in some (usually many) prefabricated expressions at their disposal. What a speaker is using at any particular instance of speech activity is not a grammatical form of a word as of itself but a whole familiar expression (or its modified version) that contains the given word form. Such expressions, as we have seen, are always marked with specific features of genre and discourse. As a result, speakers may use a certain word form within expressions belonging to one discourse domain, while its ostensible paradigmatic correlate typically appears within different expressions that belong to an

altogether different domain. As a net result, the speakers put into use all the members of a paradigm; the point is that they never correlate them with each other.

The shape assumed by a grammatical category, when adjusted for the conditions of its realization in speech, could hardly please a logician. In a fractal world of speech genres and communicative intentions, the Euclidian potential paradigm of a grammatical category exists only as a secondary, derivative phenomenon – an extract from idiosyncratically shaped, chaotically interloping configurations which the category assumes under actual conditions of speech. It is only by artificially lumping together all possible speech conditions that allows a presentable (more or less) logical picture to emerge.

The peculiarly hermetic character of the OCS data – the fact that it can be observed in its entirety, and that it represents a limited range of closely interrelated speech situations – allows one to observe how a morphological paradigm behaves under specified speech conditions rather than in “language” at large. These peculiar conditions make it apparent to what extent the *actual* paradigm of perfect forms used in speech is different from the *potential* paradigm of constructed forms. Constructing every conceivable form of perfect for every conceivable verbal stem is an undertaking far removed from what competent users of OCS were doing when they used and interpreted concrete word forms of perfect on concrete speech occasions.

It is only rarities or curiosities such as *lepidoptera* or *grasshoptera* which speakers may need to project onto a paradigmatic pattern.<sup>278</sup> But even then, it seems more expedient to seek concrete analogies in known material rather than an abstract rule – for instance, to relate *grasshoptera* to a projected sing. form *grasshopteron* by analogy with a familiar *phenomena* vs. *phenomenon*.<sup>279</sup> The case is different, of course, for a beginning student of a language, for whom virtually every lexeme looks like a *grasshoptera*. Paradoxically, it is the language outlook of such a student, whose lack of proficiency is manifest, that is projected in a formal grammar as a model of “linguistic competence.”

The fact that the Platonic *eidos* of a potential grammatical paradigm does not show up under actual conditions of speech does not mean that it is an *eidolon*, i.e., a total illusion. What is illusory about this phenomenon is the conviction that it is directly grounded in speech. The potential paradigm as such is not employed in speech with the regularity its structure suggests. Yet a generalized matrix – which is in fact nothing but an extrapolation

from the overlapping actual paradigms of many actual expressions – is available as a pool of possibilities, to be used at the speaker's discretion. Speakers never use these potentials automatically, as the symmetry of the matrix might suggest. On the contrary, they are used occasionally and opportunely, as a manipulative device that can be applied to the primary resources of speech.

Every prefabricated expression is cast in a definite grammatical form, or just a few closely related forms. It is as though every established expression carries its own, highly idiosyncratic version of a grammatical paradigm – cut from the general repertory of alternative forms – that fits specifically this expression. However, the shape of a CF is not fixed unequivocally. Except for a small number of frozen idioms, a CF usually allows alterations, including those in which some of its word forms are replaced by their paradigmatic correlates.

Let us observe, for example, what happens when a perfectly conventional phrase *He is reading a newspaper* is changed into *I am reading a newspaper*. At first glance, changing 3rd person of the subject into 1st person looks like a simple substitution of one member of the paradigm of person / number for another. Viewed from the perspective of CFs, however, this change represents a stirring of a conventional expression, whose results exceed what could be expected out of a simple substitution of one morphological form with another. What the change amounts to is a *transposition* of an established expression into a new condition, which reconstitutes its meaning as a whole. The sentence with the 1st person sing. of the subject needs an additional motivation under which it would become plausible and interpretable. For example, it can imply confrontation: “Don’t you see, I am reading a newspaper! Why won’t you leave me alone,” or “I am reading a newspaper, and this is all I intend to do right now.”

Awareness of potential paradigms, i.e., of correlations between word forms, constitutes an integral part of speakers’ linguistic competence. Potential paradigms create *centripetal* currents in the pool of language material; they draw different word forms – and together with them, entire expressions – towards each other, highlighting their potential for being contrasted or juxtaposed one with another. Interconnections between different word forms suggested by a paradigm are crucial for creating new artifacts via transposition of prototypical familiar expressions.

This is, however, only one side of the picture. In belonging to different expressions, which in turn represent different speech situations and genres, members of a potential paradigm are subject to mighty *centrifugal* forces



driving them apart in speakers' consciousness of language. When those centrifugal pressures are taken into account, a paradigmatic matrix turns into a maze of partly overlapping, highly idiosyncratic configurations of usage. It thwarts the promise of uniformity and simplicity in operating with correlated word forms – a promise suggested by the potential paradigm – making each successful transposition a unique event contingent on manifold conditions.

Speakers' life with their language proceeds as a constant tension between the centripetal attractions among the expressions that are promised by the *eidos* of potential paradigms, on the one hand, and the centrifugal forces that strive to lock each expression within the compartmentalized domain of its habitual usage.

Were OCS speakers – those who created, multiplied by copying (a process that always gives rise to some variation), and consumed texts in OCS – aware of potential paradigms, despite the severely truncated shapes of the actual paradigms they used? A few instances in the texts we know attest to the fact that abstract form-building matrices, in the capacity of an auxiliary manipulative tool, were as available in OCS as in any other language.

In the *Life of Holy Martyr Basiliscus* the saint is tied by his persecutors to a dried sycamore tree. The OCS translator of the Greek original, apparently doubting the relevance of a “sycamore” to his northern audience, substituted the exotic name with the common “oak”; however, perhaps out of loyalty to the original, he did not omit the sycamore altogether but appended it to the name of the oak as an attribute of the latter. For this, he had not only to activate the rare noun *аворъ* ‘sycamore’ but to make a derivational operation of turning it into an adjective:

(7.29) *привѣзаша сѣлаго дѣвѣ соусѣ аворовѣ* (Cod. Supr., 18)  
 ‘they tied the saint to a dry sycamoresque oak’

Despite the rarity of the word, its adjectival derivative has been produced, without any apparent difficulty, in the required (by agreement with the noun “oak”) form of masc. loc. sing.

Speaking of perfect, a competent user of OCS should have been prepared to use any potentially possible form with any potentially fitting lexeme so far as a speech situation would invite such usage. The point is, of course, that “speech situations” typical for OCS rarely invited improvisations that would sharply diverge from established practices. It gives us the

advantage of being able to observe actual paradigms in OCS in their “raw” quality, little affected by the diversity and volatility of speech conditions.

### 7.2.3. Grammatical meaning: a web of analogies

Returning to the question of what OCS perfect as a tense form might “mean,” we can see, first, that its meaning was not unrelated to the character of the discourse or discourses in and for which perfect was used, or more specifically, to the set of values, *topoi*, and rhetorical postures that were inherent to those discourses. The direct connection between the meaning of a grammatical category and the character of the “language game” in which it is involved is foregrounded by the exceptionally narrow range of such “games” as a constitutive feature of OCS. Expressing the distinction between the transcendental and the empirical by contrasting perfect and aorist may seem an extravagant employment for a grammatical category if one contemplates an open pool of diverse potential usages. Yet this was exactly what urgently needed to be expressed in the types of discourses and speech situations in which OCS was grounded.<sup>280</sup> Under those conditions, the fact that perfect forms, due to their compound nature, stood out among other tense forms, could naturally tilt them towards expressing everything emphatic, extraordinary, exempt from the usual temporal stratification, and ultimately, from empirical reality. In another language, in connection to another range of rhetorical postures and semiotic needs, the same composite form could be perceived as an “easy-going,” almost improvised grammatical device, in contrast to more idiosyncratic forms of simple past. As a result, it might be employed as the predominant means for expressing immediacy and actuality in spoken communication. This was indeed the way perfect was used in the East Slavic vernacular, and eventually in written texts of a more informal and secular character, concurrently with OCS.<sup>281</sup> This is also the way perfect is used, in contrast to the simple past, in some modern European languages, notably French.

Second, what can be readily observed in the OCS data are the ways by which the meaning of a particular grammatical form arises out of concrete instances of its usage, which by virtue of being repeated crystallize into precedents for further, analogously connected usages.<sup>282</sup> Again, the uniqueness of OCS consists in the limited number of such precedents, which allows many of them to be traced individually. The evidence of learning by “exemplar,” which usually can be seen only in the speech of small chil-

dren<sup>283</sup> or under specially constructed experiments,<sup>284</sup> appears tangible in OCS texts. For instance, an oft-repeated formula with which God is addressed in prayers and Psalms: *далъ еси* ‘Thou hast given,’ might have served as the concrete basis for such further expressions as *възлюбилъ еси* ‘Thou hast offered thy love’, *свършилъ еси* ‘Thou hast accomplished,’ etc. Out of those established cases, an association of perfectual expressions with God’s deeds might arise, a development that in its turn gave rise to further extending analogies. What can be described after the fact as the meaning of a grammatical category is nothing but a crystallization of the meanings of concrete expressions to which its forms contributed in a particular way.

Concrete expressions out of which the meaning of a category arises do not constitute a compact set, even in a language so uniquely homogeneous as OCS. They arise opportunely from various concrete occasions of usage; even within a common speech genre they emerge as concrete analogical extensions of familiar practices, each extension taking place in a unique situation. The meaning of a linguistic form spreads over those concrete instances of its usage, whose disparate, ad hoc analogical character never allows the meaning to reach a uniform common denominator.<sup>285</sup>

The data of OCS yield a palpable picture of how this “connectivist” strategy<sup>286</sup> of building the meaning of a grammatical category works. Firmly established conventional expressions containing references to God are also employed in situations whose partial resemblance allows speakers to make such an extension. The reference to “the Lord” is opportunely transformed into a reference to “the lord,” i.e., the worldly master; a situation in which the speaker acts as the mouthpiece for God’s authority is extended into a case referring to the authority of the prophets, and hence, to an even wider range of instances of referred speech; the trans-empirical meaning of situations involving God is analogously extended into empirical situations that are perceived as exceptional, unprecedented, unheard of; the possibility of enhancing the extraordinary character of a situation by means of using perfect in its turn leads to using this form for expressing utter surprise, bewilderment, disbelief, or on the contrary, for a categorical assertion that empties the situation from any empirical scrutiny.

The obvious way to describe such a continuously evolving playground of analogies out of which ever new variations of meaning emerge is that suggested by the notion of a semiotic “family,” originally introduced by Novalis, and famously used by Wittgenstein 150 years later. Another possible figurative presentation of this phenomenon is comparing it with a

musical leitmotif whose shape, at each instance of its reappearance in the score, is somewhat different from, yet somehow connected to all its other varied yet recognizable appearances.<sup>287</sup> As a family grows, or a musical score proceeds, the analogous continuum of variations never ceases to evolve. Members of such a “family” never lose connection to each other, yet the more intense is the web of such connections, the farther they are from coalescing into a simple common pattern.

Looking at a particular case, one can clearly see its kinship to some other cases. Any such registered instance of kinship can be generalized as a common pattern. But as one moves from one formulated pattern of resemblance to another, the difficulties in maintaining patterns increase exponentially. A feature that could be seen as a clear common denominator for cases ‘X’ and ‘Y’ may disappear in ‘Z’; yet another feature emerges that would connect ‘Z’ with ‘X,’ but not with ‘Y.’

What makes the pursuit of the meaning of a grammatical category fascinating is the fact that the data seem always to suggest the tantalizing possibility of arriving eventually at a coherent description. Sooner or later one runs into cases that deviate, more or less starkly, from expectations based on the established pattern. It seems for a while that these counterexamples can be remedied by formulating a subrule or subcategory to account for deviations from the initial design. Step by step, these forced subcategorizations multiply and become increasingly fragmented, until the overall design drowns in a sea of contradicting formulations and subformulations.

One can walk successfully into the open space of ever new usages of a form only if one never severs the tie to the disparate concrete precedents of its usage. Resisting the temptation of a general rule, spectacular as its immediate impact may look, in favor of local ad hoc analogies turns out to be the only effective long-term strategy for a lifetime of living in and working with language.

## Chapter 8

### Conclusion. The joy of speaking: Creativity as the fundamental condition of language

*Sanat suussani sulavat, puhe'et putoelevat, kielleni kerkiävät, hampahilleni hajoovat.*

‘Words are melting in my mouth, speeches precipitate, they rush to my tongue, disperse over my teeth.’

*The Kalevala*

#### 8.1. From speech to speech: language as the continuum of individual efforts

The usage-oriented approach to language in general, and the model of linguistic intertextuality in particular, is based on what may be called a “horizontal” approach to language. It downplays vertically oriented hierarchical structures grounded in such fundamental concepts as the Saussurean *langue*, Jakobsonian semiotic code, and Chomskian linguistic competence. According to this approach, the horizontally evolving corpus of observable speech behavior, in order to be explicated and described, does not need to be projected upwards, to more abstract rules and patterns, otherwise than in a localized and opportune, contextually contingent manner. The portrayal of language from this perspective consists of multiple snapshots of everyday language experience, diverse and volatile as they are.<sup>288</sup> The picture of language as a whole emerges from the overlaps and the analogous tensions between instances of its successful use. This agglomeration of speech precedents and their interconnections never coalesces into some unified structure underlying phenomena of speech at large, and overriding its “pragmatic” dimensions, such as genre, the texture of discourse, and the profiles and intentions of the interlocutors. Instead of relating facts of speech to such an ultimate ideal projection, the intertextual model grounds the interpretation of those facts by relating them to each other. It proceeds by contiguity, from one speech experience to another, as they accumulate incrementally in speakers’ individual and communal memory.

Contrary to the striving for the utmost universality that was typical of linguistic theories for most of the last century, the description of language

through the contiguity of speech experiences assumes an intentionally parochial attitude. Each instance of speech activity, in all particularities of its genre and the implied speech situation, receives an interpretation by being referred to a few other instances of speech, as specific in regard to their genre and communicative ambiance as this one. The model consciously abandons any attempt at constructing a “grand narrative” about language,<sup>289</sup> i.e., a unified all-encompassing explanatory model. Instead, it remains a patchwork of particular cases that do not fit, and do not seek to fit each other otherwise than partially and occasionally.

Like politics, all speech is local – no matter what lofty global ideas concerning presumable underlying truths it may inspire in an outside observer. Whenever confronted with a particular speech task, speakers turn not to abstract rules but to samples, precedents, analogies from related previous experiences. Instead of banishing the diversity and inconsistency of observable speech behavior – a phenomenon one cannot help noticing if one has a shred of interest in how people actually use language – to the outer limits of linguistic thought (where they can be either half-acknowledged as “pragmatic” ornamentations, or outright dismissed as distortions of the logical core), the concept of speech as largely drawn from memory means that diversity and volatility are the very essence of speech, something absolutely inalienable from the nature of language. The speech process is seen to exist only in concrete circumstances. What allows this process to go on with a reasonable degree of success is not a larger-than-life algorithmic machine of speech production but speakers’ ability to respond to every challenge by referring it to tangible, immediately graspable speech precedents.

Speech is made out of speech, not by general prescriptions.<sup>290</sup> New facts of speech are fashioned by reproducing, modifying, and merging already established speech facts. All patterns that may be used in this process have value only as auxiliary devices whose relevance is always merely local, and has always to be checked by the speaker’s judgment grounded in experience.<sup>291</sup> An operational pattern that works in one speech situation might very well yield undesirable results in another. Speakers could not care less about these inconsistencies, distressing as they may be from the point of view of rigorous rationalism. At every moment they find themselves within a particular situation, activating means they find expedient for the particular set of circumstances, without asking themselves whether those particular means and the way they employ them stand for something grander than what they immediately wish to achieve. Those are questions for beginning

students of a language to ask (and for their teachers to try to answer as best they can), precisely because of their lack of sufficient speech experience in memory. To serve as the fundamental semiotic equipment, ready to be applied to ever new communicative challenges,<sup>292</sup> the agglomeration of memorized or half-memorized expressions in speakers' communal memory has to be unbelievably enormous.<sup>293</sup> Speakers manage this immense, chaotically piled stock of memories by living in a compartmentalized semiotic world, such that they can instantaneously shift from one local set of values to another – not to mention their ability to reconfigure or merge those semiotic compartments at will, in acts of improvised ad hoc creativity.

Speakers' shared speech memory evolves through the never-ceasing exchange of individual experiences of successful communicative contacts, wherein one creates and the other understands something new made out of something familiar. It is a process of communicative metabolism, in which each speaker maintains and develops his speaking skills by constant contribution to and intake from the speaking environment.<sup>294</sup> The patchwork character of how one operates a language is grounded in the multifaceted nature of that environment. The community of speakers of a certain language is in fact nothing but a patchwork of subcommunities, each underwritten by specific communicative goals and precedents of speech behavior. A speaker's language memory is not single-faceted. There are multiple particular memories befitting multiple roles played by that speaker on different occasions, within different speech subcommunities. A speaker's communicative attitudes towards potential addressees consist of a plurality of concentric and/or overlapping circles of mutual experience: from highly idiosyncratic family parlance, to tight "club"- or "gang"-like groups, to broader social and professional circles, to the local community at large, to all speakers of a "language" (i.e., all speakers of "English," "Russian," "Arabic," etc.), and finally, to improvised efforts in a multilingual company. The broader the circle to which the interlocutors belong, the more adjustments they have to make to their speech habits in order to accommodate each other.<sup>295</sup> Through all these manifold exchanges, the *langue* presents itself not as a monolithic phenomenon shared by all competent speakers (and who is he or she who could claim to be a fully competent speaker of a language, i.e., to be fully at home with all subcommunities of its users?), but as a patchwork of overlapping circles of speech experiences of different scope and provenance. In the last count, to say that a certain community of people speak the "same" language means only that all their particular allotments of communal language memory, each pertaining to a certain social

domain, are overlapping in such a way as to form an uninterrupted continuum.

That said, there is no denying that generalizations constitute an integral part of language experience. Analogies with previous instances of speech, concrete as they are, invite generalization. If a speaker succeeds in modifying an expression A into A(x), he cannot help noticing that a similar expression B can also be modified in the same way, i.e., into B(x). The modifying device (x) – be it altering a word form, or omitting a component from a basic expression, or merging it with another expression – emerges as a common denominator underlying the change. It stimulates the quest for other speech facts that could be dealt with according to the same pattern. Such generalizations are indeed very helpful, in fact absolutely necessary, since they open ways for tampering with prefabricated speech units. However, such generalizations never go too far beyond local speech facts. They evolve by analogy from one experienced fact of speech or a small group of facts to another, to yet another, never becoming general prescriptions independent of characteristics of the material to which they are applied.

Nothing seems to be more natural than projecting local generalizations observable in speech to patterns of ever higher order, until one arrives at a general pattern or general rule. However, what inevitably occurs at some point in the course of this ascendance toward the general is a rupture with actual speech experience. Generalizations made by speakers remain effective as working tools only as long as the cord tying them to concrete speech material and concrete communicative circumstances is not severed. A local generalization tells you what you can do with expressions of a certain kind, under certain circumstances, and what ensuing effects you can expect to obtain (no guarantees, though – watch for possible side effects). For another remembered expression, or another set of circumstances, another local analogy may turn out to be apropos, and another set of precedents fitting. Speakers' operative conceptualizations of what could be done with the material at hand are always parochial and opportunistic. They use a certain device for tampering with speech material as far as it goes, and forget about it when another device is called for. A speaker may entertain in abstraction a lofty vision of the orderliness and unity of the language he speaks, or of language in general; but such meta-thoughts about language have no impact on his speech behavior – except in cases when his lofty vision itself becomes a very special goal he would pursue in utterances he produces.



Language has an uncanny, almost seductive ability to induce and invite all kinds of generalization and pattern-building. Whenever one observes speech data, nothing seems to be more obvious than the fact that certain features in this data recur again and again, so that a pattern behind them begins to emerge as if by itself; it is hard to believe that this and other patterns that seem to arise so naturally are not part of an ultimate overall design. The submissiveness with which language, due to its infinite flexibility, yields to pattern-building efforts, makes a comprehensive understanding of the whole seem within one's reach, needing just a few additional analytical steps. By following this mirage, however, one inevitably finds oneself drawn into the vortex of a never-ceasing proliferation of patterns whose relation to each other always turns out to be only tangential, and therefore calls for additional pattern-building.

In speakers' experience, underlying patterns evolve incrementally through concrete analogies; the net result is not a unified super-pattern but a maze of concrete and semi-concrete devices, restrictions, and anticipated effects. Having found themselves each time within a concrete communicative space that calls for activating particular speech resources and employing particular devices, speakers navigate in an N-dimensioned semiotic world of their language at large without caring, or even noticing, that its different dimensions never coagulate into any mental geometry, let alone the Euclidian one.

Attempts to bring language to heel concerning its presumed structural coherence often look spectacular at their inception; inevitably, however, as one goes into more detail and the global vision is elaborated, it sinks deeper and deeper into a swamp of classes and subclasses, rules and subrules, codicils and subcodicils that continue to pile one upon the other until total chaos ensues.<sup>296</sup> A linguist with a sensibility for the history of ideas might draw a lesson from observing the rise and fall of three mighty linguistic empires that reigned supreme successively over the course of the past two centuries: nineteenth-century Indo-European linguistics, early twentieth-century structural phonology, and generative grammar. Perhaps, at this point we can do better than to wait for yet another linguistic superpower to emerge with its promises of an ever new (and ever essentially the same) global order.

## **8.2. Speech production and speech management**

Creating and interpreting speech requires innumerable ad hoc decisions and proceeds under ever changing operational guidelines. Under such conditions, speakers would have no chance of success if they had to assemble or analyze facts of speech each time anew, in the way a complex industrial product is put together on an assembly line. If workers at such a line should need at each moment to adapt the prescribed way of operations to changing circumstances – from a ripple on the assembly band, to a colleague's new shirt, to a cloud appearing in the sky – the viability of the final product would obviously be in jeopardy.

The crux of the matter is that speech is produced by a fundamentally different strategy: speakers do not assemble their speech artifacts out of elementary constituents that function only when they are put together in a certain way, according to a manual of standard operating procedures. What speakers have at their disposal as primary components are prefabricated expressions, each of which either is ready to be used, or contains clues as to how it could be modified in order to fit the given utterance. Speakers' concern is not about how to make elementary particles of language fit together – this has already been taken care of due to the prefabricated nature of the primary speech material they have at hand – but rather how to forge these already fabricated or nearly-fabricated expressions, each with its own allusional environment and associative synapses, into a new fact of speech.

The central claim of the intertextual model of language concerns the semiotic nature of remembered expressions – the communicative fragments. Due to the fact that they are recalled by speakers as whole units (or at least recognized at such), CFs constitute primary signs of language – the principal material with which speakers work in their efforts to express themselves and to communicate. The meaning of a CF, in its capacity of a primary sign, is conventional; that is, it is grasped by speakers as an instantly perceptible whole. Speakers react to a familiar expression spontaneously with a vision of a comprehensive scenario that it evokes.

This integral meaning of a primary, conventionally established sign is not fully deducible from the meanings of its constitutive parts. It emerges out of the intertextual allusions it calls forth, anonymous and generic as those allusions mostly are – i.e., from the recollection of concrete or generic speech situations in which the given sign was or could be used. Because of that, the integral meaning of a primary sign is always richer than the sum total of its semantic constituents.

While putting into use various pieces of this primary semiotic material, each with its particular stylistic profile and associative potential, the speaker strives to make them accommodate his communicative intention. This very “intention,” however, does not exist independently of the available material used for expressing it. The speaker cannot state his “intention” abstractly, outside of speech realities, as a pure cognitive artifact. Any cognitive design, no matter how severely schematic, cannot avoid using some language material without which it could not be made explicit. It thus is invaded by stylistic features and associative connections built into that material. From the very first step, the propositional design of a message loses its purity, due to the need to embody its content with available expressions, each refusing to shed completely its own semantic and stylistic world. The only way to make what one wants to express graspable even for oneself, let alone for others, is to voice one’s intention with available expressions whose diverse allusional forces affect that intention in the very process of its realization.<sup>297</sup>

Examining the effectiveness of what emerges, via his speech product, as the realization of his intention – however modified in the very process of its realization – the speaker may find it to be wanting in some respects. It may have failed to express something the speaker intended to say (that “something,” however, remaining ungraspable unless and until he finds a fitting expression); it may reveal unexpected side effects, created by clashes between the allusional potentials of different expressions. The meaning of the whole may emerge out of those clashes as blurred, contradictory, or worse, charged with implications the speaker absolutely did not mean. The speaker may attempt to improve the situation by making some adjustments in the artifact he created: to remove a component whose contradiction to some other components produced an undesirable side-effect, to search for additional material that could express what is still missing. Or otherwise the speaker may rely on direct contact and self-evident circumstances to help to get his message through despite its flaws. The degree of the speaker’s communicative success is established by the reactions of his addressees.<sup>298</sup> If those reactions turn out not to be satisfactory, the speaker has to make adjustments to his operations, or to his perception of the addressee, or both.

To be sure, “rules of the game,” similar to those that prescribe how you are supposed to move your knight or queen on the chessboard, do exist in language, or rather, can be extracted from language experience. That one must form a perfect by appending the auxiliary verb *to have* to the properly formed participial form of the main verb (i.e., to say *I have given* rather

than *have give* or *have gave* or *have given*), seems to be as universal as the rule that one must move one's knight angularly. However, neither seasoned chess players nor seasoned speakers are actually benefited by such guidelines. The correctness of *I have given* is attested not by a rule of perfect formation but by the fact that speakers have used this combination thousands of times, as part of various prefabricated expressions. A true speaker, like a true chess player, thinks in terms of integral "positions" and the possible avenues of development they suggest. Both language and chess are not about making "correct" moves, in that trivial sense – they are about making effective ones that contribute to a larger goal. For a competent practitioner of language, to make an inadvertent "incorrect" move would be an accident as comic and as unlikely to happen (unless done deliberately) as that of failing to apply "rules" of walking, stepping twice with the same leg as a result.<sup>299</sup>

It is one of the poignant ironies of language that insufficiently competent speakers, who have to rely on generalized rules in their speech behavior, find themselves repeatedly trapped into violating those very rules they strive to follow. Clarifications concerning rules of the linguistic game – making them ever more intricate and garnished with innumerable caveats – may be forthcoming in all eternity, without preventing a nonproficient speaker from running into accidents of "ungrammaticality" again and again. I remember racking my brains over the usage of the word *history* – should it be 'a history' (of a particular nation or period) or 'the history' (in general)? – until I found myself knowing for a fact, directly and unreflectively, a multitude of relevant expressions: *Western history*, *history of ideas*, *the end of history*, *history always (or never) repeats itself*, *this is history*, etc. Alongside these conventional expressions comes the understanding of how they can be modified to yield a special semantic effect: *A history of Russia*, or *French literature: A history*, etc. Prior to this experience, one would not be able to grasp the presumable rule; afterwards, one did not need it.

If there exists a difference between language and a game in this respect, it is that in the former even the most trivial rules may be occasionally violated if there is sufficient situational motivation to do so. When Rafe says (2.6): *His – it just tore the y'know from one end to the other so*, he makes a thoroughly ungrammatical but in fact very effective speech artifact, whose very ungrammaticality produces the intended meaning under a speech modality that fits the speech situation extremely well.

The innumerable ready-made speech pieces and precedents for manipulating them that are stored in memory absolve speakers from much if not all of the “blue-collar” labor at the linguistic assembly line. This, however, comes not without cost: the task of forging different available expressions into an effective whole is work that calls for agility and ingenuity in improvised manipulations more than for sturdiness in following prescribed operational procedures.

The result of such creative manipulations of the available material may be successful, in which case, the benefits of putting the two expressions together supercede potential clashes between their diverse integral semantic worlds. Another recipe for success may consist in utilizing those very clashes, with the effect of making a speech artifact sound paradoxical, unexpected, sarcastic. Thus, CFs *things to remember* and *avoid*, merge into an ironically suggestive *things to avoid*. On other occasions, the communicative result of a speaker’s effort may turn out to be successful only to a limited degree: the clashes between the merged expressions might not disappear completely, producing some awkwardness, which, however, may be tolerated for the sake of the whole. When *highly risky measures* emerges out of *high risk* and *risky measures* – the result may make an over-sensitive reader wince, yet can be considered tolerable for the not overly demanding purposes of newspaper discourse, which imply fast writing and cursory reading. Sometimes, the result turns out to be downright disastrous: when *the Legislative Council is powerless / weak / impotent* and *relatively weak* are merged into *the Legislative Council is relatively impotent*, the unexpected clash between the allusional worlds of the two merged expressions turns the utterance into a comically inept *double entendre* – inept in that it was apparently not intended as such by its creator.

In order to fashion a new integral meaning out of pieces each of which has an integral meaning of its own, one has to make a number of ad hoc decisions concerning the selection and handling of this material – decisions whose result can never be fully calculated and whose degree of success can never be guaranteed. The intertextual model envisions speakers’ communicative efforts as acts of *speech management* rather than speech production. Speakers take the already fabricated speech material as their starting point; from there on, managerial decisions as to how to handle this material have to be made in order to put it into satisfactory usage.<sup>300</sup> First, these decisions are creative, since they do not follow automatically a prescribed procedure; even when they proceed as a close imitation of a known precedent, such a precedent has to be found in an open search among available resources.

Second, they are made not as a matter of law but opportunely, in view of particular circumstances. And third, their success is always *relative*.

There is no such phenomenon as a definitively perfect speech act. Every speech product comes forth attended by the awareness of alternative speech moves that could have been used. Its meaning resounds with overlapping semantic overtones stemming from the alternatives, recollections, and associations it evokes. In fact, the most effective speech artifacts are precisely those that evoke the most rich and diverse yet somehow manageable associations.<sup>301</sup> A worker on an assembly line has only two options: to perform the prescribed operation either correctly or incorrectly. But a speaker, as the manager of his speech, ever strives to achieve a satisfactory degree of success, investing in his efforts as much as he thinks will be required for the particular occasion (which will vary).<sup>302</sup> Individual speakers show different degrees of agility, inventiveness, and subtlety in producing and interpreting speech, even assuming equivalent available resources. In this respect, speech abilities are in line with the differing abilities individual human beings exhibit in performing any conceivable task. Moreover, every speaker experiences varying degrees of success or failure in the course of his speech experience. The effectiveness of each achieved result is measured not by checking it against a virtual manual but by the degree of success with which it conveyed what the speaker, in his own perception, wanted to express, and by the same token, by the degree to which the reaction of his interlocutors proved to be commensurable with what he hoped for.

The result of the speaker's efforts is an artifact, the fruit of creative efforts rather than a mechanically assembled commodity. It alludes to so many things at the same time that it loses unidimensionality and becomes open to multiple reinterpretations and responses. It always bears within itself an imprint of the speaker, or at least of his social and professional profile; it always bears an imprint of the time and place to which it belongs.

The tasks faced by a yet unskilled learner of a language are essentially *joyless*. The vision of a new language opening up to a learner might be appealing and inspirational, but his speech experience as such offers, at least for a considerable while, little but hard labor. One has always to remind oneself of lexical items one needs, of their paradigms out of which proper word forms have to be produced, and of various properties of the syntactic construction in progress (syntactic agreement and government, word order, deictic connections). For some enigmatic reasons, the fruit of these labors almost always turns out to be painfully trivial and bizarre at the

same time. In all its primitiveness, it does not fit into any genuine communicative situation that accords with the student's experience with his own language. Even when our student produces a patent speech formula, it somehow sounds out of place. (Have you ever heard formulaic greetings addressed to you by first-year students of your language?)

Vladimir Nabokov took as the epigraph to *The Gift* quotations from a grammar textbook:

(8.1) Дуб – дерево. Роза – цветок. Олень – животное. Воробей – птица.  
Россия – наше отечество. Смерть неизбежна.

П. Смирновский, Учебник русской грамматики

‘An oak is a tree. A rose is a flower. A deer is an animal. A sparrow is a bird. Russia is our fatherland. Death is inevitable. (P. Smirnovsky, *Textbook of Russian Grammar*)’

What these “grammatical” sentences stand for, in all their bizarreness, is not the Russian language but, on the contrary, its death. They highlight the predicament of the novel's hero, an aspiring writer who feels linguistically suffocated in the severely reduced environment of the Russian-speaking émigré community.

### **8.3. On the *ladushki* and blue cheese and ham: a marginal note on language acquisition**

The contradistinction between an accomplished “speaker” and a beginning “student” inevitably raises the question: where do children stand between these polarities? I cannot claim any expertise in the enormous field of “child language” and child language acquisition. All I would like to do is to offer an observation that may accentuate some differences in the order of language acquisition between small children, learning their native language through natural experience, and classroom learners of a foreign language.

At least in some important respects, that order seems to be inverted. What looks, when one contemplates the ladder of students' progress, to be the uppermost rung of technical skills – a prize possession one may hope to attain only at an extremely advanced stage (and even then, not with complete certitude) – often turns out to be securely at the command of children whose age is still measured by months. I still feel shaky with the usage of English enclitic adverbial expressions: all those *check up*, *check in*, *get*

over, get along, come on, come up, etc. etc.; even if I comprehend all or most of them by now, I often lack the courage to use them actively. Yet I cannot help noticing that the speech of small children is liberally strewn with such expressions. Perhaps children produce this device, with its "gesture"-like semantic palpability, even more often and with more gusto than grown-ups. What for a learner amounts to the subtlest tuning of the language machine is, for a nascent native speaker, one of most elementary and elemental language skills, something that naturally emerges from the "gesture" texture of communication.

Students of Russian, even at very advanced stages, experience similar difficulties grasping the meaning of the multitude of Russian prefixed verbs, which are notoriously abundant and idiosyncratic. It goes without saying that all these monstrosities not only pose no difficulty for me as a native speaker of Russian, but would have remained totally unnoticed had I not had to confront them in the speech of advanced students of the language. What is particularly remarkable is the facility, even eagerness, with which children handle this phenomenon from their very first steps in the milieu of the Russian language.

There exists an extremely popular nursery rhyme that virtually every (would-be) Russian-speaking child is exposed to at a pre-lexical stage, and masters between one and two years of age:

Ладушки-ладушки,	Ládushki-ládushki,
Где были? – У бабушки.	Gdé byli? – u bábushki.
А что ели? – Кашку.	A chto éli? – káshku.
А что пили? – Бражку.	A chto píli? – brázhku.
Кашку поели,	Káshku poéli,
Бражку попили,	Brázhku popíli,
Сами полетели,	Sámi poletéli,
На головку сели.	Na golóvku séli.

For many children, this becomes their very first encounter with the phenomenon of poetry. The verses indeed represent characteristic features of poetic discourse; their verbal texture is so dense and idiosyncratic as to make them virtually untranslatable:

Little *ladushkas*, little *ladushkas*, ['hand-clapping'? – this is a neologism whose meaning has to be guessed; its grammatical form of nom. fem. pl. is apparent, though]

Where have you been? – At the little [or 'dear'] grandma's.



What have you eaten? – The little [or ‘pleasant,’ or ‘intimately known’] kasha.  
 What have you drunk? – The little *braga*. [a traditional home-made drink,  
 known to most modern speakers only by name]  
 We ate a little of the little kasha,  
 We drank a little of the little *braga*,  
 [As to] ourselves, we have begun flying,  
 [And] have landed on [the] little [or ‘sweet’] head [of the child who is saying  
 this].

The verses, usually pronounced together with an elder participant of the game, are accompanied with rhythmical hand-clapping (hence the enigmatic *ladushki*: an improvised diminutive vaguely hinting at *ladoni* ‘the palms’) – until the last line, whereupon the child covers his head with both hands, demonstrating the *ladushki*’s landing. One can easily imagine the tender age at which children repeat this naive ritual, rapturously, hundreds of times, mastering it to perfection; later in life they would recite it again, teaching it to their younger siblings, children, and grandchildren.

At the same time this game, as far as language is concerned, strikes an outside observer with its extreme technical and semantic complexity, to a degree that makes it virtually inscrutable for one not intimately involved with the language, from which it emerged in times immemorial. The text abounds with diminutives – from the point of view of production, a very challenging item, since assembling a diminutive from a basic noun stem often requires changes in the position of the stress alongside complex morphophonemic alternations (*galav-á* → *galóf-k-a*). For better or worse, some of those basic stems from which the diminutive is ostensibly to be produced are not available to the child at all: the nebulous *brazhka* from the archaic *braga*, let alone the altogether arbitrary *ladushki*. The meaning of those diminutives is likewise complex, mainly because of their fluidity; it changes from word to word, and from one instance of using a word to another, freely floating within the semantic spectrum that ranges from the diminutive proper to intimate, endearing, jocular undertones, to a general sense of an informal, easy-going atmosphere. The verses glide through all this scope of overlapping meanings effortlessly: from “little *ladushkas*” (with the diminutive conveying their hearty reception, whatever they are, perhaps also hinting at the tiny size of the child’s palms), to “little grandma” (the usual form of address by grandchildren), to “little kasha” (that is, something well-known, unprepossessingly pleasant, taken without much ceremony), to “little *braga*” (with the same connotation bestowed on this vaguely perceived but apparently pleasant and “friendly” drink), to

"little head" of the child himself (which is little indeed – but at the same time signifies, via the use of the diminutive, the intimate / endearing relationship between the child, the partner in the game, and of course, the *ladushki*).

The verses feature various prefixed verbs that navigate through the maze of ensuing semantic effects and aspectual modalities. Application of the prefix *po-* means a short duration and/or low intensity of the action; it also suggests that the action may have been unaccomplished, or at least was not brought to full consummation. Within this loosely assorted pool of possibilities, the meaning fluctuates depending on the verb and the context. For instance, *po-eli* means simultaneously '[we] ate / drank a little' and/or 'not in the way of a full meal' and/or 'in an easy-going manner, without much ceremony, as a habitual affair.' The same prefix with *po-leteli* means something quite different: the initial stage of the action; or more precisely, it signifies initiating an action rather than the action itself.

No less complex is the confrontation of prefixed and non-prefixed verbs: *eli* vs. *poeli*, *pili* vs. *popili*. Morphologically the former represent the imperfective aspect, while the latter belong to the perfective aspect. Yet in this particular case, it is the imperfective *eli* that indicates that the experience did take place, while the perfective *poeli* suggests that it was "not fully accomplished," perfunctory, not definitive. This case presents one of the foremost difficulties for learners of the notoriously difficult category of Russian aspect. I know by experience how hard it is to rationalize this usage of aspectual forms that seems inverse to their "basic" meaning. Yet the feature is quite common in Russian speech, though, to be sure, it is applicable only to some verbs, and even to them, only within certain expressions. This nursery rhyme goes into the heart of the matter, exposing infants to all those capricious vicissitudes of meaning by leading them to memorize typical expressions wherein they take place.

One should also not forget the distinct design of the vocalization involved in this verse, which is repeated innumerable times with the persistence of musical rehearsals. Its climax comes at the word *poleteli* '(suddenly) began to fly,' at which point the recital features a sharp rise in pitch, accompanied by a pronounced fermata on the stressed vowel and a clear, cheerful quality of voice. Another salient feature of vocalization in this rhyme is the identical contour of parallel speech segments (*kashku poeli* / *brazhku popili*), each of which ends in a rise of intonation suggesting the continuation of the utterance. One can clearly see how some very basic skills of vocalization, such as placing an emphasis, producing an augmenta-

tion, and indicating the end of an utterance, can be mastered simply by the repeated recital of this artifact.

Linguistic complexity as a characteristic of children's rhymes is not confined to Russian. When I face nursery rhymes or the simplest stories addressed to English-speaking infants, I invariably find their linguistic features extremely challenging. Some of those features are such that I would hardly venture to use them myself, even when I have come to understand them, after seeing them in use repeatedly. To give just one example – here are a few lines from one of Dr. Seuss' pieces:

I don't like them here and there.  
 I don't like them anywhere!  
 I don't like blue cheese and ham,  
 I don't like it, Sam I am!

It takes a non-native speaker of English to appreciate the naturalness with which the poem introduces one of the "rules" concerning the use of articles – namely, that nouns like *cheese*, *ham*, *water*, *sand*, etc. are used without an article. It does so by literally hammering into memory the phrase *blue cheese and ham* by reiterating it innumerable times. Some other features of the poem, however, may strike even an accomplished speaker with their degree of syntactic and rhetorical sophistication. Such is, for instance, the device of using the PS inversion (*Sam I am!*) for the effect of an emphasis – an operation that involves a fair measure of risk and is rarely performed in English, at least outside certain stylistic domains; or a complex semantic effect ensuing from a free appendage of one phrase to another (*I don't like them, Sam I am!*).

Certain aspects of the language development of a child can be seen as movement toward increasing capacity and complexity. The child's vocabulary is expanding, he learns more complex syntactic devices typical for written speech, masters an increasing range of different discourses. Such developments are by no means limited to the early years of childhood; accumulation and incremental transformation of one's language experience is a life-time process.<sup>303</sup> Yet from the very first steps of taking possession of his native language, the child's progress seems to defy, even contradict, a rational order of development "from less complex to more complex." It moves instead directly into the most idiosyncratic, least rationalizable and "learnable" phenomena of the language.

Both the child's intellectual equipment, and the time allotted for this work, are manifestly inadequate to arrive at these formidable accomplishments if we take them to be derived from logical patterns and rules. Hence the appeal to God, or to genes, without whose help no child – not even a future analytical philosopher – could conceivably master this super-human level of intellectual complexity. One common element between the eighteenth-century appeal to God and the twentieth-century appeal to genetic structure is that both strive to explain something insufficiently known and comprehended by safely referring it to something much less known and comprehended.

I hope that the above sketchy observations attesting to the haphazard character of the process of language acquisition may be helpful, at least as a jumping-off point: a child is able to grasp outright certain formal and semantic shapes of language, which from a rational point of view pose most complex and advanced constructional and interpretational problems, because he absorbs them unreflectively from ready-made texts – be they intimate family conversations, or nursery-rhymes and simple stories. While the child's – or anybody's, for that matter – intellect is clearly not up to the intellectual richness of what he deals with, his memory is. He memorizes a host of expressions, alongside precedents for playing with them; they become his primary semiotic tools, the true foundation of his language, even if he will never use many of those expressions as such at a later age (except talking to his own children).

Acquisition of the foundations of the mnemonic language repertory proceeds in a magnificently chaotic fashion; it does not follow any logical sequence of stages that could be rationally construed by an observer. It is wide-ranging, blatantly idiosyncratic, omnivorous; it has no regard for whether the acquired expressions are “productive” for future language experience or will never be used outside this particular experiential moment.

Perhaps some features of this process could be purposely transferred into the classroom. While I have no experience of teaching language at the beginning level, I have found myself more than once on the receiving end of this experience as a learner of languages. From what I could perceive, effective teachers tend to do intuitively much of what has been suggested in this book. That is, from the very beginning they expose students to ready-made expressions, alongside explanations of speech conditions for their usage, expanding the repertory of such expressions throughout the learning process. I hope that the notions of the communicative fragment and of the communicative contour of an utterance may make this process even more

explicit and effective. It simply seems sensible to introduce any rule not as an abstraction but as local operational guidelines connected to concrete speech material and concrete situations. When students encounter some other situation in which this rule fails, it seems more productive to formulate another local rule, also pinned down to concrete speech material, rather than trying to save the previously learned rule by adding never-ending caveats to it.

As a student progresses along the path of language experience, the language becomes less of an intellectual challenge, and more a pure joy of self-expression and communication. When one senses that one has expressed oneself in an adequate and effective way, seeing the signs of success in the reactions of one's interlocutors – when native speakers stop complimenting one on how good his language performance is – speech turns into a joyful and enriching experience. It is through such moments of successful interpersonal contacts by means of language that the communicative metabolism is nourished.

Joy is manifestly not a scientific category. I do not hesitate to mention it, though, since it seems an inalienable property of genuine speaking, whose recognition as a phenomenon in its own right, and subsequent exploration, constitutes the most general aim of this book. The infiniteness of meaning produced by the intersecting trajectories of volatile allusions; the sense of freedom arising from the unlimited flexibility of speech, as its virtually inexhaustible resources adapt to ever changing situations; and a distinct feeling of touching the world of the other, by evoking common domains of speech memories and playing with their potentials – this is what every speaker experiences whether engaging in a fleeting informal conversation, trying to grasp a dense piece of poetry, striving to get his meaning through in a severely formal discourse, or silently expressing himself in a soliloquy.

## Notes

1. While Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* ([1953] 1958) is a much-quoted source in recent works on cognitive psychology (Rosch 1978) and linguistics (Lakoff 1987), the other authors mentioned here are mostly associated with the domain of literary criticism and cultural studies (an important exception to this is an illuminating discussion of Derrida's critique of Saussure in Cilliers 1998).
2. The issue of Kant's rationalism is indeed more complicated than it has been presented in some works exploring the philosophical roots of linguistic models – both those in which Kant the rationalist was embraced (Chomsky 1966) and rejected (Lakoff and Johnson 1999, Fauconnier and Turner 2002). These works invariably refer to Kant's "first critique" (*Critique of Pure Reason*, [1781] 1974), while ignoring the upper echelon of his model of cognition as outlined in the "third critique" (*Critique of Judgment*, [1790] 1974). Meanwhile, it was Kant's introduction of what he called "genius" (creative fantasy and imagination) as a major factor in cognition that exposed the limitations of the hermetic system of universal categories and inspired Romantic metaphysics and philosophy of language (see in particular Benjamin [1920] 1996; Frank 1997). As I hope to show later, this more complex understanding of the Kantian heritage is highly relevant for approaches to language that strive to posit an alternative to formal linguistic models.
3. Novalis and Friedrich Schlegel are rarely mentioned in relation to the history of linguistic ideas (except for the latter's role in the emergence of comparative linguistics). Meanwhile, their theory of signs and meaning, as outlined, particularly, in Novalis's *Fichte-Studien* (1796) and F. Schlegel's part of the *Athenäum* "Fragments" (1798), provides a crucial bridge between Kant's third critique and the cognitive approach to language. The importance of the early Romantic background for understanding Saussure's ideas of the bipolarity and arbitrariness of linguistics signs is explored in my book *Freedom and Mystery: Ferdinand de Saussure's Metaphysics of Language and Its Early Romantic Antecedents* (in progress).
4. Vossler – another name rarely mentioned in recent linguistic studies – emphasized the crucial role of the texture of style and voice in linguistic creativity (see esp. Vossler 1904 and 1925). Vossler and his school (Leo Spitzer) influenced Bakhtin's concepts of heteroglossia and speech genres (for this connection, see in particular Voloshinov [1928] 1973), and possibly also Wittgenstein's idea of "language games."
5. The pioneering role in describing structural and semantic (and not merely "pragmatic") properties specific to informal oral communication belonged to

Russian studies of the late 1960s and the 1970s. See in particular early attempts at the “alternative” morphosyntax of oral speech (Lapteva 1976; Zemskaja 1973; Zemskaja 2004); for alternative strategies of semantic categorization characteristic of the oral mode of communication, see (Gasparov 1978).

6. In fact, the latter set of principles applies to any formal linguistic model, including textbook grammars. What an algorithmically oriented theoretical model shares with a language textbook is the deliberate exclusion of the massive language data that contradicts the formulated rules. The “minimalist” version of generative grammar carried this strategy to a point where it turned into an exercise in theoretical auto-communication.
7. “Wir suchen überall das Unbedingte, und finden immer nur Dinge” [We seek everywhere the absolute, and always find merely things] (Novalis [1798] 1981).
8. As will be evident from the discussion that follows, I use the term “texture” in a sense that is different from that employed by functional linguistics (Halliday and Hasan 1976: 2; Eggins 1994: 85), where it is understood as the set of implications by which the text is connected to extra-textual information.
9. Langacker (2000: 42) calls this phenomenon the “hybrid domain”: *he demolished my argument* evokes, alongside the conceptual metaphor at its root, an “ethereal image” of a construction collapsing; *he is a tiger* prompts an adumbration of a hybrid human-tiger shape, etc.
10. Cf. the distinction between “common frames” involving “encyclopedic knowledge,” and “intertextual frames” that serve as “narrative schemes,” in (Eco 1979: 21).
11. In (Goffman 1974), a path-breaking work that opened the way for studies of frame semantics, frames were understood as various “realms of being.” Goffman’s actual treatment of this concept, however, seems to be close to Wittgenstein’s “language games”; at least, his examples of frames, such as “make-believe, dreams, theatrical, quotidian,” etc., are suggestive more of different speech genres than of real-life situations.
12. To cite only a few of the games suggested by Wittgenstein ([1953] 1958: I, no. 23): “orders, descriptions, confessions, formulating and proving a hypothesis, presentation of an experiment with tables and diagrams, stories, theater, singing, making puzzles, witticisms, translating, thinking, curses, greetings, prayers.”
13. See an extensive discussion of the function of the genre in literary works: (Todorov 1990).
14. See observations about the rarity of such direct expositions in parents’ conversations with their children: (Bloom 2000: 191-193).
15. Taylor (2002: 545) seems to make a similar point when he notes that the meaning of a metaphor is not fully derived from its image schema: for instance, the meaning of “looking forward” is not exhausted by the schema FU-

TURE IS AHEAD, since it indicates not all future events but only positive ones.

16. Jackendoff illustrates Chomsky's thesis that one could in principle fully develop a "knowledge of English" as a cognitive structure "with no capacity to use this structure" (Chomsky 1975) by the example of a person afflicted with motor paralysis who cannot ride a bicycle yet has the competence of riding it (Jackendoff 2002: 28-29). The example clearly overlooks the fact that such a person must have acquired that competence before he or she was afflicted with the disease. As a matter of fact, I cannot ride a bicycle, simply because I have never learned to do so.
17. In particular, as I have already mentioned, I take issue with the unqualified identification of Kant with present-day rationalism, or "the age of the triumph of form" (Fauconnier and Turner 2002: 11; see in particular Ch. 4: "Dialogue with Kant"). Cf. recent criticism of Lakoff's and Johnson's philosophical position by (Haser 2005), who also, however, offers little historical background to her critical argument.
18. See a thoughtful critique of this approach in (Fauconnier and Turner 2002: 360).
19. This aspect of linguistic rationalism has been fully exposed in its critique; to cite just one example: "In Cartesian tradition, belief in the individual as the locus of knowledge, consciousness, and thought sanctioned essential neglect of questions of interaction" (Sarles 1986: 227). In recent times, however, essentially the same reproach could be heard directed to "sterile asocial cognitivism" of cognitive psychology (McNeill 2005: 1-2).
20. (Rosch 1978); Berlin and Kay, in their classic study of prototypical recognition of colors ([1969] 1999), determine eleven primary colors that universally serve as prototypes for all the languages and cultures they observed. The authors have themselves been struck by the similarity of this result with Jakobson's theory of phonological universalia (Jakobson 1941; Jakobson and Halle 1956). The coincidence is indeed striking, given the fact that Jakobsonian phonology was one of the most radical products of the "abstract rationalist" attitude toward language. An alternative approach, emphasizing the multiple and contingent character of prototype identification, can be seen in (Brooks 1978).
21. Cf. a particularly rhapsodic example of critique of the Western philosophical tradition (from Descartes to Husserl) in (Varela, Thompson and Rosch 1993). Predictably, the authors invoke – in extremely vague terms – non-Western systems of thought (Buddhism, etc.) as healthy alternatives to the blight of Western rationalism. Their rhetoric recalls the eulogies of Mao's Cultural Revolution (viewed as the continuation of the Confucian tradition) by French intellectuals in the early 1970s, who sought in it the remedy for the Western "bourgeois, patriarchal, and monotheist" world order (Kristeva 1974; Kristeva



- [1977] 1980; Barthes 1975); see about this episode in the history of semiotic studies (Gasparov 1995).
22. Perhaps the most extreme expression of this attitude can be found in Lynne Baker's assertion that "we derive who we are as persons in terms of our first-person bodily perspective" (2000: 16).
  23. The primary source of this idea in modern semiotic studies was Bakhtin, in particular, his works on novelistic discourse (Bakhtin [1975] 1981b) and the culture of "carnivalization" ([1965] 1984). Bakhtin's ideas were introduced in the context of Western theory by (Kristeva [1969] 1980). Another powerful influence on French, and eventually American, cultural studies was Lacan, who drew a sharp distinction between addressed speech and what he called "parole vide," i.e., a solipsist, purely formal speech exercise (Lacan 1977). For a thorough discussion of the philosophical underpinnings of the concept of dialogism, see (Nikulin 2006).
  24. Cf., however, an argument in favor of literary texts as carrying features that are fundamental for everyday use of speech in (Turner 1996: 27).
  25. For instance, (Scheerer 1996) identifies oral discourse with openness and the holistic nature of meaning, while attributing to written discourse all the drab qualities imposed on language by formal models.
  26. The theory of the implied reader that highlighted the principle of dialogism in literary, and eventually in all written texts, was developed in Germany in the 1960-70s. See especially (Iser [1972] 1974), and for the philosophical foundation of the theory (Jauss 1982). The connection of the dialogic approach to the thought of the early Romantics was explored in depth in (Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy [1978] 1988) and (Frank 1972). A linguistic echo of the concept of the implied reader can be detected in the notion of the "ideal reader" in (Kay 1997e). The crucial difference is that the implied reader has many faces whose features are contingent on the character of the "language games" involved, while Kay's ideal reader is universal: "Given the text and an interpretation, the ideal reader is a device that is possessed of just the knowledge and skills required to extract that interpretation from that text" (189). Apparently, Kay presumes that the inherent meaning is built into each text as its objective quality; all the ideal reader has to do is to retrieve the meaning from the text, using his complete and perfect knowledge. It was precisely the collapse of this belief that inspired the departure of semiotic studies, beginning in the late 1960s, from Jakobsonian / Lévi-Straussian objectivism; cf. the seminal polemic between Lévi-Strauss and Eco concerning this issue (Eco 1979: 7-8). The idea of the implied reader makes the meaning of a text implicit and open to multiple interpretations by actual readers, each of whom is an "ideal" reader in his own way.

27. According to Lyotard ([1974] 1984: 15-16), every communicative move means displacement, not only for the addressee but also for the sender of the communication.
28. The most radical expression of this principle can be found in Roland Barthes's idea of the "death of the author" ([1968] 1989). According to Barthes, the new approach to literary texts, illuminated by the principles of dialogism and heteroglossia, put an end to the idea of the author of a text as the sovereign master of its meaning. Nobody has a monopoly on the meaning of a given product of language: it emerges at the intersection of the author's and the reader's mind, as a compromise between different interpretative efforts.
29. "Es muß ein Nichtich seyn, damit Ich sich als Ich setzen kann" (Novalis [1795] 1981: 107).
30. (Novalis [1795] 1981: 547).
31. The most extensive exploration of the cognitive and rhetorical power of the fragmentary discourse was undertaken in the famous *Athenaeum Fragments*, a set of 451 fragmentary pieces contributed by the four key players of the Jena Romantic school (Friedrich and August Wilhelm Schlegel, Novalis, and Friedrich Schleiermacher) and published anonymously in the group's journal (*Athenäum*, I/2, 1798).
32. Cf. Langacker's repudiation of the principle of economy when it contradicts "factuality" (1987: 41).
33. Cf. the suggestion that random learning and ad hoc analogies are a "fairly economical" strategy of learning in (Brooks 1978).
34. In Halliday's formulation: "Just as words can be new, so also sentences can be old" ([1978] 1994: xxi). Halliday's thesis is echoed in Van Lancker's refutation of Pinker's "hyperbolic assertion" of the uniqueness of all uttered sentences: "Not all sentences are novel" (2001: 349).
35. The concept was introduced in (Kristeva [1969] 1980), in close connection with Bakhtin's ideas of dialogism and heteroglossia. Since then, it has given rise to a vast literature dedicated to general theoretical problems as well as textual analyses. See a relatively recent comprehensive assessment: (Plett 1991; for bibliographical reference, see May 1993). Among the most vocal expressions of the new trend was Barthes' assertion of the "death of the author," or Grivel's maxim paraphrasing the famous Saussurean thesis: "Il n'est de texte que d'intertexte" [there is no text other than intertext] (1982: 240) In recent times, see a particularly strong emphasis on the "second-hand" quality of all literature in (Genette 1998).
36. There are a few examples of intertextual studies of non-literary texts which, however, tend toward a rather limited interpretation of the concept. For instance, Caldas-Coulthard (1994) understands intertextuality in newspaper language as an issue of quotations ("reported speech"), while Tannen (1988: 89-90) interprets intertextuality as interpersonal relationships within dialogue.

37. See on memory as an intermediary between the spirit and material reality in (Bergson [1912] 2004).
38. While structural and generative linguistics worked primarily with constructed language artifacts, the importance of genuine data drawn from actual speech has been emphasized in many works of the last two decades. A particularly vocal protest against relying for a theoretical argument on sentences that “seldom if ever occur in real life” can be found in (Chafe 1994: 106; see also Fleischman and Waugh 1991). The importance of genuine data was also strongly emphasized by functional linguistics (Halliday [1978] 1994).
39. As Brooks (1978: 198) notes, speakers “do not even respond to an instance the same way every time that it is presented.”
40. In Herbert Clark’s words (1996: 3): “Language use is really a form of *joint action*. A joint action is one that is carried out by an ensemble of people acting in coordination with each other.” Clark defines the “common ground” of interlocutors as “a great mass of knowledge, beliefs, and suppositions they believe they share” (Clark 1996: 12).
41. Reading newspapers can be described according to Wittgenstein ([1953] 1958: I, 23) as a particular “language game” (*Sprachspiel*). In a similar vein, Clark speaks of different “settings” within which interactive use of language by speakers takes place; one of the settings he suggests is that of “the reader of the *New York Times*” (1996: 5-6).
42. “A *self* does not amount to much, but no self is an island. . . . Young or old, man or woman, rich or poor, a person is always located at ‘nodal points’ of specific communication circuits, however tiny these may be. Or better: one is always located at a past through which various kinds of messages pass” (Lyotard [1974] 1984: 15).
43. Cf. the formulation of the interactional character of memory in (Sarles 1986: 241): “A lot of what is called memory is not exactly in one’s ‘head’ or ‘mind’. Perhaps it can be said to be located in interactional contexts.”
44. Vanlancker-Sidtis (2003) checked the reactions of various informants to various formulaic expressions drawn from the script of *Some Like It Hot*. Predictably, native speakers of English showed a facility in recognizing and manipulating such expressions that was superior to non-native speakers; however, the subcommunity of American native speakers showed a significant advantage over non-American native speakers of English as well.
45. Turner (1991 and 1996) has demonstrated convincingly that certain properties of literary texts are in fact fundamental for language in general; see also (Gasparov 1996). More generally, it has been argued that certain features of literature, such as the use of metaphors, are not merely extensions of a “normal” use of language that should not concern linguists, but on the contrary, reveal the very essence of how speakers deal with language (Lakoff and Turner 1989).

46. Riffaterre ([1979] 1983) calls this phenomenon “agrammatism”: typically, there is something peculiar in an intertextually charged segment of a literary text, which signals the reader that he must search for an intertextual clue. Contrary to this, linguistic intertextuality in most cases does not disturb the conventional smoothness of discourse (unless it does so deliberately).
47. The category of speaker’s cooperation has been explored in the rapidly developing field of linguistic discourse analysis. See, for instance, Tannen 1993; Ochs, Schegloff and Thompson 1996; Givón 1997; Givón 2005.
48. A rich psycholinguistic literature on the anticipatory nature of speech behavior has emerged in recent years. It has been shown experimentally that speech is produced “incrementally,” segment-by-segment, rather than along the hierarchies of syntactic structures. Speakers “sometimes” plan their speech and speak simultaneously (Levelt 1989; Ferreira 1996; Roelofs 1998; Ferreira and Swets 2002). This incremental strategy results in predictions of the segments that are to follow (Altmann and Kamide 1999); such predictions involve not only the segments that are to follow immediately but more distant “thematic roles” in discourse (Kamide, Altmann and Haywood 2003). The speakers’ anticipatory ability in following speech increases the “fluency” with which they respond to offered stimuli (Jacoby, Kelley and Dywan 1989; Whittlesea and Leboe 2003).

(Snedeker and Trueswell 2003) have done an interesting study of the impact of anticipation on prosody. It is well known that prosody often helps to resolve the ambiguity of sentences. The authors noted, however, that speakers embark on a particular prosodic pattern even before the ambiguity surfaces in the sentence – which means that they anticipate the approaching choice and are able to resolve it beforehand.

49. Vygotsky was perhaps the first who noticed what he called a “different dynamic of the meaning and the sound of speech” (*razlichnoe dvizhenie smyslovoi i zvuchashchei rechi*), i.e., the discrepancy between what has been actually uttered and what the interlocutors grasp ([1934] 1956: 331).
50. See psycholinguistic experiments based on the premise of the anticipation of idiom completion by the first word: Harris 1998, and a survey of similar experiments concerning prediction of the entire word by its initial letters: Carr 1986.
51. Cf. van Dijk 1987, who has drawn similar conclusions about the anticipatory nature of speech by observing primarily written discourse.
52. Lemke (1991: 35) aptly calls predictions and expectations punctuating the continual flow of speech “prospective intertextuality.”
53. Cf. the description of similar phenomena of interference that cause grammatical errors in (Fromkin 1988).
54. Cf. the analysis of speech errors as diagnostic of speech production in Bierwisch 1982; Fromkin 1988; and for the Russian data, Kazanskaia 1998.

55. Kövecses (2002: ix) makes a similar point concerning the so-called “dead metaphor”: “What is deeply entrenched, hardly noticed, and thus effortlessly used is most active in our thought.”
56. The wildly and hilariously mixed metaphors that emerge in this text defy the straight lines of metaphorical production suggested by the idea of conceptual metaphor. It would be hard to formulate a single conceptual metaphor or image scheme that stands behind such expressions as “dereligionized ground” or “one colossal turkey for two hundred and fifty million people.”
57. Cf. Hopper’s observation that all artificially constructed sentences are “scraps from previous discourses whose grammaticality could be judged only to the extent to which their context can be reconstructed” (Hopper 1988: 119).
58. As Chafe remarks with amusement, “Sapir apparently thought *the farmer kills the duckling* was a normal English sentence” (1994: 47). To me, this “unnatural language” is not the antipode of a natural one, but rather, its peculiar yet still recognizable extension.
59. Taylor (1989: 87) mentions the capacity of a word to evoke the whole frame to which it is related. I would argue that this capacity more universally belongs to memorized expressions than to separate words. The fact that conventional expressions are tied to their typical contexts is emphasized in (Fillmore 1997b: 8).
60. According to Halliday ([1978] 1994: xxi) there are two basic units recognized by “folk linguistics”: words and sentences. Devitt and Sterelny (1995: 8) make in effect the same statement, although in a different mode, about what they sarcastically call “gems of common sense”: “People divide linguistic phenomena into sentences and words. ... They think that expressions are meaningful and have meanings.”
61. However, Scheerer (1996: 221) indicates that in preliterate cultures the concept of a “word” may actually refer “to any meaningful utterance of almost any length.” Olson (1994: 261) cites anthropological evidence that informants expressed difficulty when asked to repeat their story “in the same words”; for them, it was in the same words so far as the same meaning was there.
62. As Harris (1998: 68) puts it, “The idea that phrases are stored units strikes non-linguists as common-sense,” yet there has been considerable resistance to this idea in theoretical linguistics.
63. Vanlancker-Sidtis (2003) protests “the opprobrious label of clichés” attached to ready-made expressions.
64. Gibbs (1993); Gibbs (1994); Turner (1996); Kay (1997a), to name only few. Harris (1998: 55) complains that there is no established tradition yet in psycholinguistic studies to address the way speakers operate with units that are “larger than words but smaller than sentences.”
65. Perhaps the most extensive list of various genres of “familiar conventional expressions” has been offered in (Vanlancker-Sidtis 2003): pieces of slang

- and professional jargon, quotations, proverbial sayings, “irreversible binomials” (*salt and pepper*), expletives, song lyrics, etc.
66. “I believe a very large portion of a person’s ability to get along in a language consists in the mastery of formulaic expressions” that are directly memorized rather than generated. Fillmore then lists various types of such expressions: “clichés, bromides, proverbs, greetings, leave-taking and other politeness formulas” (Fillmore 1979, 92-94). Even this list, I believe, does not give full justice to the pervasiveness of this phenomenon.
  67. A very early example of the approach to colloquial speech as predominantly formulaic – which at that time went against the common conviction that what is typical for this mode of communication is improvisational “freedom” – can be found in (Shvedova 1960). Today, this view is widespread in functional and cognitive linguistics.
  68. (Fillmore, Kay and O’Connor 1988). See also (Kay 1997b). A much earlier attempt in that direction can be traced back to V. Vinogradov’s classification of idioms (Vinogradov [1950] 1977).
  69. Cf. also an argument made in corpus studies that collocations usually carry a particular grammatical form, a phenomenon that Hoey (2005; 2007b) calls colligation. Colligation means that lexicon is not neutral to grammar.
  70. “Prefabricated,” or otherwise “prefab” (Langacker). Cf. also Taylor’s term: “pre-formed” language items (Taylor 2002: 545).
  71. “The compelling but strange fact remains that speakers of a language know ‘by heart’ a very, very large number of formulaic expressions” (Vanlancker-Sidtis 2003). To illustrate her point, the author compiled a list of recognizable expressions that surfaced in the dialogue of *Some Like It Hot*. Even though she took into account only syntactically coherent expressions (which, as we shall see, constitute only a small part of the expressions settled in the memory of speakers), her list comprises hundreds of items.
  72. Fillmore, Kay and O’Connor (1988: 504) postulate the existence in language of “things that are larger than words, which are like words in that they have to be learned separately as individual whole facts.”
  73. Chafe found that the mean length of intonation units – many of which turn out to be identical with CFs – is 4.84 words. According to Chafe, “it is a striking fact that the number of words in an intonation unit remains within a narrow range for any one language” (1994: 65).
  74. Cf. evidence of speakers’ relatively high ability to retain in memory entire sentences (Begg 1971; Keenan, McWhinney and Mayhew 1977).
  75. Jackendoff (2002: 31) notes that a natural pronunciation of the sentence “This is the cat that caught the rat that stole the cheese” requires pauses that do not coincide with the brackets of its syntactic structure. He cites Chomsky (1964: 10), who called such discrepancies between syntax and intonation “a performance error.”

76. For instance, Chafe maintains that 60 percent of intonation units have the shape of a single clause (1994: 65-66).
77. An important suggestion of the possibility of structural fragmentariness of stationary impressions can be found in (Langacker 1987: 35). Langacker offers, by way of a "sample," a random list of conventionalized expressions, many of which turn out to be fragmentary: *take it for granted that; hold...responsible for; express an interest in*, etc.  
 An early foreshadowing of this approach can be noticed in Saussure. In a rarely noted passage in *Course in General Linguistics*, Saussure suggest the possibility of elementary semiotic units that are larger than single words. Remarkably many among the cited examples of expressions that speakers possess "in the form of concrete recollections" turn out to be fragmentary: *avoir mal à (la tête etc.)*, *à force de (soins etc.)*, *pas ne besoin de*, and so on (Saussure [1916] 1985: 172-173).
78. The overlapping nature of information is a crucial feature of a "complex system." Cf. the excellent analysis of the applicability of this concept to the study of meaning in (Cilliers 1998: 95): "The fact that information is distributed over many units not only increases the robustness of the system, but makes the association of different patterns an inherent characteristic of the system – they overlap in principle."
79. Chafe (1994: 35) cites experimental evidence that "people do not remember verbatim wordings very long, although they may remember particular salient words or phrases." See the experimental data: (Hjelmquist and Gidlund 1985; Wilensky 1982). This is certainly true for quotidian communication, but not for the culturally marked experience of language, for which the accumulation of extended quotations is more usual.
80. The art of memorization, based on an elaborate technique, was highly developed in antiquity and the Middle Ages, where it yielded truly mind-boggling results (Yates 1966; Carruthers 1990; for the art of musical memory, see Busse Berger 2005). Yates cites Cicero who wrote of "average men" that their "mental capacity is hard to estimate, so much do they remember." In recent times Luria experimentally studied deliberate techniques of memorization concentrating on "remembering to remember to remember" (Luria 1968: 241).
81. Cf. Riffaterre's notion of 'agrammatism' ([1979] 1983: 4). Some idiomatic expressions do have the quality of "agrammatism" in the sense that they feature lexical units or grammatical constructions that are not employed elsewhere, such as *kith and kin*, or *in point of fact*; one cannot possible approach such an expression otherwise than as an idiom. However, there are many idioms that look perfectly "normal" (Fillmore, Kay and O'Connor 1988: 506-510), i.e., devoid of any overt agrammatism by which they could alert the speaker to their allusional potential.
82. Cf. Gasparov (1993).

83. Goldberg, Casenhiser and Sethuraman (2004: 291) have recently confirmed an earlier observation by Tomasello (1992) that “by far the best predictor of his child’s use of a given verb on a particular day was her use of the same verb on the previous few days, not, as might be expected, her use of other verbs on the same day,” a trait that strongly suggests the prevalence of direct recollection over analogical or inferential thinking. Lieven, Behrens, Spears and Tomasello (2003) have shown that in the speech of two-year old children, 63% of multi-word utterances were not novel, and three quarters of the remaining 37% could be traced to a distinct source. Dabrowska and Lieven (2005) carry this method of observation to children of three years of age; as it turns out, 87-88% of their utterances can be derived from two particular precedents; the result for two year old children turned out to be practically the same (87-91%).
84. Cf. recent research in child language acquisition showing that children initially acquire and use certain devices in a limited context, then later “decontextualize” them (Ervin-Tripp 1993; Pak, Sprott and Escalera 1996).
85. Elias Canetti, *Die gerettete Zunge: Geschichte einer Jugend* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1990).
86. A curious detail concerning the generalization of memories has surfaced in the following experiment: subjects were offered a fictional narrative that stated certain facts; as time passed, they showed a tendency to treat this fictional information as factual knowledge stemming from life experience (Marsh, Meade and Roediger 2003).
87. According to Langacker (2002: 15) a “unit” indicates “a thoroughly mastered structure, i.e., one that a speaker can activate as a preassembled whole without attending to the specifics of its internal composition.” Langacker’s definition finds an early antecedent in Vygotsky’s ([1934] 1956: 48) distinction between an “element” and a “unit,” the later being a complex phenomenon whose features could not be set apart. Karaulov (1993: 191-92) also emphasizes the irrelevance of the inner structure of stationary expressions, which he calls “syntactic primitives.”
88. As Jackendoff (2002: 153) put it, little clichés that are stored in memory like words “can be constructed online ... but need not be.”
89. “...there is no real difference in the way we process *the gray house* and *la maison grise*, because in both cases the phrase is available to consciousness in its entirety” (Chafe 1994: 55).
90. This is indeed a feature typical of an early stage of speech development (Kol’tsova 1973).
91. This is why the prefabricated “grammaticality” of ready-made segments of speech may remain “brilliantly intact” even in cases of severe communicative dysfunction in schizophrenic speech (Van Lancker 2001: 345).



92. As Baudouin de Courtenay noted a long time ago, Russian speakers know the correct form of the accus. of the noun *vtornik* (Tuesday) because they habitually use it within expressions like *vo vtornik* 'on Tuesday' (1963a: 46).
93. According to Daelmans, "people do not extract rules or other abstract representation from their experience, but reuse their memory of that experience directly" (2002: 157). This thesis can be illustrated by an experimental attempt to teach forms of German plural (which are highly irregular as a whole, although allowing some pockets of modeling) by formulating rules, which proved to be less efficient than direct memorization of a large number of particular forms (Wulf 2002).
94. According to Taraban, McDonald and MacWinney (1989), who studied the process of German speaking children learning article forms, "... there is no direct evidence that language users actually manipulate rules and rule symbols in their heads in the same way that rules are processed in a linguist's grammar" (163).
95. Cf. an observation in (Schegloff, Ochs and Thompson 1996) that grammar as perceived by speakers and described by linguists may be different.
96. A. A. Zalizniak, *Grammaticheskii slovar' russkogo iazyka* (Moscow, 1977).
97. According to Rumelhart and McClelland (1986, vol. 2: 216-271), children pass through three stages in learning the past tense forms of English verbs. First, they pick up scattered forms from speech, then try to generalize their experience by "regularizing" non-regular verbal forms, and finally, correct the regular pattern when they encounter irregular forms in their further speech experience.
98. Pinker (1999: 280) offers an interesting reinterpretation of the notion of "regularity" that, I believe, has shown the true place of this phenomenon in speakers' linguistic consciousness. According to Pinker, regularity is a "default case": speakers apply a regular pattern whenever their memory fails to retrieve the needed form directly. This means that at least in principle one can conceive of a language in which "regular forms" actually constitute a minority of cases.
99. "As a word is acquired through encounters with it in speech and writing, it becomes cumulatively loaded with the contexts and co-texts in which it is encountered" (Hoey 2005: 8). The specifications of genre and discourse attached to each collocation are particularly emphasized by (Mahlberg 2007).
100. Taylor (1989: 87) states that a single lexical item "typically denotes the whole frame." This is true in a number of cases, although I am not sure how typical this situation is with regard to single words.
101. Cf. Turner's notion of "narrative imagining" as "the fundamental form of predicting" (Turner 1996: 20). As experiments tracking respondents' eye movements have shown, awareness of a context made identification of an of-

- ferred item faster (Barr and Keysar 2002), while an abrupt shift of topic increased the time needed for identification (Forrest 1996).
102. "Texts never have no style" (Wolf and Polzenhagen 2003: 249). The authors, however, envision the possibility of a "neutral" style, which should count as a specific style as well. (I have difficulty, myself, picturing a textual phenomenon that could be deemed absolutely neutral).
  103. As some experiments have shown, speakers tend to recall items of language data together with a lot of "irrelevant" information – irrelevant, that is, from the point of view of a narrowly understood linguistic relevance (Goldinger 1997). Subjects spontaneously recollect various "presentation modalities" of words (Lehman 1982), sometimes up to their location on a page (Lovelace and Sauthall 1983).
  104. Cf. the discussion of such alternative collocations (based on the statistics of expressions drawn from a corpus) as *the time has come // the time has come to // the time has come to [think / feel / decide / believe]* in (Hoey 2007a: 11-13).
  105. Cf. Cilliers' (1998: 108) remark on the nature of memory in "complex systems": "Memories are not stored in the brain as discrete units that can be recalled as if from a filing cabinet. Memory traces are stored in a distributed fashion and are continuously altered by experience."
  106. The dual-process hypothesis was initially formulated by J. Deese (1959), at which time it did not receive much notice. Experimental work started on a massive scale only in the 1980s. See for a comprehensive survey of the vast literature on the problem: (Yonelinas 2002).
  107. Experiments with informants affected by triazolam (an agent suppressing memory) and midazolam (which suppresses associative ability) showed the prevalence of recollection and recognition, respectively (Mintzer 2003; Hirshman, Fisher, Henthorn, Arndt and Passanante 2002).
  108. Mandler (1991); Roediger and McDermott (1995).
  109. The phenomenon is known as the "mirror effect." See Glanzer and Adams 1985; Guttentag and Carroll 1997; Joordens and Hockley 2000; Arndt and Reder 2002.
  110. Cf. psycholinguistic data in Gibbs, Nayak and Cutting 1989; Harris 1998.
  111. Karaulov (1993: 178-179) speaks of the associative network, out of which recognition emerges, as "pulsating," i.e., changing its configurations every moment. The fluid character of language memory, which is "continuously altered by experience," is emphasized by Cilliers (1998: 108); memory as a self-organizing system is impossible without a "selective forgetting" (Cilliers 1998: 92). See on the phenomenon of self-organizing associative memory Kohonen (1988).
  112. As Eco put it, "even though the interpreters cannot decide which interpretation is the privileged one, they can agree on the fact that certain interpretations are not contextually legitimated. ... Indeed, symbols grow but do not remain

- empty” (Eco 1990: 41-42). The crux of Eco’s remark was aimed against the excesses of “post-modern” interpretative voluntarism that, to cite one author, “works to deregulate dissemination and celebrate misreading” (Leitch 1983: 122).
113. The dominant theme of recent Saussure studies, based on Saussure’s recently published notes, has been the critique of the phenomenon dubbed “Saussurism,” i.e., of an excessively rigid interpretation of Saussure’s ideas that stood at the foundation of structural linguistics and semiotics. See in particular: (Engler 1986; De Mauro and Sugeta 1995; Bouquet 1997; Harris 2001; Pétrouff 2004). See a further exploration of the principle of arbitrariness and its consequences for meaning in Gasparov (in progress).
  114. Particularly important in this respect are attempts to provide an exhaustive explanation for the usage of each word. For Russian, see an early example of this type of “explanatory dictionary”: (Melchuk and Zholkovsky 1984). This work has been carried on later on a larger scale as a collective project headed by Iu. Apresian (Apresian 1997-2000). A similar project for English is now being worked on by Fillmore and Atkins (Fillmore and Atkins 1992; Atkins 1995).
  115. Cf. the study of the different frequency of *as*-constructions based on the ICE-GB: (Fries, Hampe and Schönefeld 2005).
  116. *Russkii assotsiativnyi slovar’*, vol. 1-2 (Karaulov, ed. 2002). A draft of the Dictionary has been published, under the same title, in six issues (1994-98).
  117. See Karaulov (2002: 751-782).
  118. The idea of a massive study of the phenomenon he called “collocations,” based on speakers’ associations, was stated in the 1950s by Firth (see in Palmer 1996: 12-26). Firth’s idea has been recently explored in Biber (2000); the latter work is particularly interesting because it takes into account associations not only between lexemes but between grammatical constructions as well.
  119. Karaulov (2002, esp. 762-66).
  120. Characteristic in this regard is the title of the Dictionary which, strictly speaking, should be translated as *Russian Associative Dictionary* rather than “Dictionary of Russian.”
  121. Eduard Sievers, *Grundzüge der Phonetik* (1901).
  122. Cited in Parret (1993: 197).
  123. See, for instance, studies of “speech repair,” i.e., instances of partial “rewriting” of an utterance in the process of its production: Fox, Hayashi and Jasper (1996).
  124. A pirate edition came out in 1518.
  125. See the English translation: *The Colloquies of Erasmus*, transl. by Craig R. Thompson, Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press (1965).

- I want to express my profound gratitude to the late Robert Valkenier for making me aware of Erasmus' book.
126. The latter point has been made by Paolo Rossi (2000), who, however, emphasized that despite its denunciation in the age of humanism, the "art of memory" persisted until at least the seventeenth century.
  127. In Aitchison's (1994) estimation, the personal vocabulary of an adult speaker of English comprises as many as 60 to 80 thousand words, yet in most cases the time speakers need for retrieving a word from memory is "surprisingly short" – the operation is performed "literally in a split second." Aitchison's reasoning for this seeming paradox is that words must form a "system" in the speaker's mind. It is hard to see how any "system" (which would have to be extremely complex and multi-layered) could make the process of retrieval so rapid and effortless.
  128. Some recent works on language learning advocate offering to students an "input" of language material that is deliberately fuzzy rather than strictly controlled (Achard 2004); in this, such works seem to follow Erasmus' method. An input that is not "finely tuned" can aid against the danger of fossilization posed by the non-grammatical method of language learning (Achard 2004). In particular, teachers are advised to challenge students with material that is somewhat above their current level (Krashen and Tracy 1983).
  129. As early as 1803, the French philosopher Antoine Louis Claude Destutt de Tracy pointed to this problem with admirable precision. Speaking of the ideal of "perfection" and "uniformity" of language, pursued by the universal grammar, as the one that agrees with the "nature" of man who ever strives for perfection, he adds: "I was second to none in being affected by the prestige of these brilliant chimeras; but, as the reader can now see, I have freed myself from them, at least as far as the universality is concerned. If all the humans on earth had agreed today to speak one and the same tongue, immediately, by the very fact of using it, they would have started altering and differentiating it in a thousand ways, differently in different lands, giving birth to distinct idioms that would have gone ever further one from another. A language is formed little by little through usage, without any project" (Destutt de Tracy, *Eléments d'idéologie*, [1803] 1970).
  130. In Fillmore's words, if a linguist's goal implies the "direct relationship between the properties of the grammar and the nature of linguistic products," it cannot be achieved (1979: 86).
  131. Lemke (1991: 30) speaks of dynamic "formations" of language, evolving in the process of speaking, in contradistinction to "systems."
  132. To attribute this presumable miracle to inborn knowledge preprogrammed in our genes means to take safe refuge in a notion that, at least at the present stage of our knowledge, can be neither tested nor described in any particulars. There is hardly any difference between saying that our faculty of language is

given to us by our “genes” or by God. The latter idea was expressed with particular eloquence in the eighteenth century by Johann Peter Süssmilch. Comparing the logical marvel one can discern in any language (which exceeds in this respect even the most elaborate clockwork) with the dumbness of most of the people who speak it, the author takes this discrepancy as irrefutable proof that the only way humankind could acquire the faculty of language was by receiving it from God: “The greasy Hottentots, the multisyllabic Oronoco, the devious Tartar, the precious Chinese, the Japanese and their antipode the Caraib, all speak an orderly language. Even children learn it quite easily, including all general and abstract things. ... Even the inhabitants of Greenland are not exempt from this” (*Versuch eines Beweises, daß die erste Sprache ihren Ursprung nicht von Menschen, sondern allein vom Schöpfer erhalten habe*, Berlin, 1766). The author’s florid language and fancy linguistic notions notwithstanding, his principal argument – the glaring gap between “impoverished” human experience (Chomsky 1993) and the miraculous structural complexity of language – is not far from some modern assertions to this effect.

133. “Listeners encode particulars rather than generalities” (Pisoni 1997: 10).
134. Wray (2002) suggests the “dual-system model,” based on the vocabulary of words and formulaic expressions. However, Wray does not draw the fundamental difference between words and expressions, which consists in their status as stationary and volatile signs, respectively.
135. Cf. in particular recent experiments aimed at reviving the old hypothesis according to which speakers “generate” the meaning of words by recreating their derivational history – “putting *teach* into *teacher*,” in the words of A. Marantz (paper given at the seminar “Language and Cognition,” Columbia University, 2003). The experiments seemed to show that the time of speakers’ reaction to derivative words such as *teacher* is longer than that to simple words such as *teach*. This may well happen when speakers respond to a series of isolated words – an artificial exercise for whose accomplishment help from deductive procedures indeed might have been needed – while under actual speech conditions speakers would have neither any need nor sufficient time for delving into words’ derivational history. See Pylkkänen, Stringfellow and Marantz (2002; Pylkkänen and Marantz (2003).
136. Cf. Fillmore’s (1982b) analysis of the meaning of *bachelor*; to use Lakoff’s lucid summary of that analysis: “Male participants in long-term unmarried couples would not ordinarily be described as bachelors; a boy abandoned in the jungle and grown to maturity away from contacts with human society would not be called a bachelor; John Paul II is not properly thought of as a bachelor” (Lakoff 1987: 70). It makes the definition of “bachelor” as “unmarried adult man” (cf. Katz and Fodor 1963) obviously insufficient.
137. This was indeed how Saussure’s notion of arbitrariness was criticized by Benveniste ([1939] 1966). In recent times, the concept of “arbitrariness” in its

narrow interpretation has been challenged by the theory of conceptual metaphor (Lakoff 1987; Johnson 1987). Specifically, it emphasizes that idiomatic expressions, despite their conventional form, contain inner motivation of their meaning (Gibbs 1993; Boers 2004).

138. Turner (1996) cites Geertz' remark to the effect that after one has summoned one's notes of the data, it becomes possible to construct "pieced-together patterns, after the fact."
139. "Traditional rule-based systems can be helpful in summarizing language behavior, but sometimes offer little in the way of predictive power" (Wulf 2002: 121).
140. There is considerable skepticism in modern linguistics about the viability of the thesis that "words' meanings form a structure" (Hjelmslev [1957] 1959). Cf. Ross' remark that semantic fields "are consequences, not explanations of semantic organization" (Ross 1992: 153). Experimental evidence now exists that "individuals acquire structural knowledge on the basis of initially holistic, non-analytic understanding of expressions" (Verhaegen 2002).
141. Cognitive semantics emphasized the fact that meaning is grounded not in immanent structural relations between elements of language but in "direct physical involvement as an inseparable part of our immediate environment" (Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 176). As Fillmore noted, "The notions 'left' and 'right' can be learned . . . only by demonstration; and, in fact, not everybody succeeds in learning the distinction" (Fillmore 1997c: 35).

As a person with a lifetime history of difficulty distinguishing 'left' and 'right' in real life, I cannot agree more. However, this deficiency has never given me any trouble operating with 'left' and 'right' in speech (in any language). I would not hesitate a moment when it comes to saying "the party at the right side of the aisle" (wherever that side might be), or "this boxer is left-handed," or to understanding the whole semantic spectrum of the title of Leonhard Frank's memoirs *Links, wo das Herz ist*. It is only when I need to indicate the actual physical location of 'left' and 'right' that difficulties arise.

142. (Langacker 1987: 19). To cite a more ornate formulation, products of language, like those of chemistry, "are not foretold in the principle that atoms combine to make molecules" (Fauconnier and Turner 2002: 90).
143. Taylor (2002: 499) cites an experiment in which "a half of informants determined *baker* as a simple word, although, of course, they would see its similarity to *walker* when suitably prompted."
144. Hampton (1979) showed experimentally that respondents, when asked for categories by which the meaning of a word could be described, tended to use "non-necessary features" alongside those that were logically necessary (for instance, "flying" for bird). Despite their logical "superfluity," such features are inalienable from speakers' integral perception of the concept. Hampton's experimental findings go hand in hand with the case described in (Eco 1999:

- 186-187): a small boy responding to the request “to define ‘bird.’” Cf. also Labov’s (1973) early observation that people’s idea of a cup does not agree with the formal definition of this concept.
145. Cf. Lakoff’s (1987: 83) brilliant description of the conventional categorization of the meaning of “mother” as a person of female sex who is married to the father, shares with him a household and sexual relationship that produced children, stays at home caring for the family, etc. This does not mean, of course, that people are unaware of “mothers” who do not fit this stereotypical characterization; but all deviations from the basic integral concept arise as its alterations and qualifications, a process that is attested by the existence of stationary qualifying expressions such as *single mother* or *working mother*.
  146. Jonathan Franzen, *The Corrections* (London: Fourth Estate, 2001): 406.
  147. Geertz (1973).
  148. To this effect, Keller (1998) asserts that logically formed “concepts” are not meanings of linguistic signs. In a similar vein, Garner made a distinction between what he called “the simples” and “the configurations.” The former are deducible from their constitutive parts; they represent “a very minimal concept” that hardly “has any real meaning at all” while in the meaning of the latter the whole “overrides component properties” (Garner 1978: 122-124).
  149. The strategy of recognizing a concept as an integral whole has been pursued by the “exemplary” theory of meaning; see (Smith and Medin 1981: 143-161). The authors explore in detail the opposition between what they call the “classical” and the “exemplary” approach to meaning, which is fairly close to what has been discussed here as the opposition between deduction and signification. According to Smith and Medin, “decades of analysis” failed to confirm the core assumption of the “classical” approach that every concept has to be exhaustively defined by a set of necessary and sufficient features (Smith and Medin 1981: 30).
  150. According to Fillmore (1982b: 131), one is ever “tempted” to build proportions like ‘man : woman = boy : girl,’ but in fact there are many ways in which one relational pair differs from the other. No matter how clear paradigmatic relations between words may be, they do not determine the words’ content (Murphy 2000). Cf. also Langacker’s remark (1987: 20-21) that the function of “feature representation” of meaning, i.e., its deduction, is “primarily classificatory”: distinctive semantic features serve as “diacritics specifying class co-membership with other units.”
  151. Fillmore is currently involved in a project aimed at building a dictionary on the basis of frame semantics (Fillmore and Atkins 1992; Fillmore 2003c). The approach has also proven productive in works on artificial intelligence (Coulson 2001:19).
  152. Cf. the remark in (Paradis 2003) about the gradual “softening” of Jackendoff’s position.

153. Sweetser and Fauconnier 1996. Cf. also the analysis of multiple and manifold cultural factors involved in the composition and comprehension of the sentence “The stork dropped George Bush on third base with a silver spoon in his mouth, and he thinks that he hit a triple” (Fauconnier and Turner 2002: Ch. 7).
154. In Russian, any sculpture commemorating a person or an event is called *pamiatnik* (lit. ‘memorial’) rather than *statuia* (‘statue’); it therefore requires the dative rather than the genitive case of the subordinate noun; in this particular case, the fully grammatical version would be *pamiatnik Pushkinu*. However, this formal requirement is more often than not neglected in casual speech.
155. M. I. Tsvetaeva, *Moi Pushkin* (Moscow, 1981: 36).
156. Cf. Chafe’s (1994: 118) analysis, quite similar to Tsvetaeva’s, of the phrase *asthmatic bronchitis*: “There is no question here of two separate ideas, one expressed by *asthmatic* and the other by *bronchitis*”; among other examples of this kind cited by Chafe are *rapid progress*, *beautiful weather*, *personal relations*, etc. A curious example of the phenomenon is cited in (Wray 2002: 3): people “expressed surprise at discovering” that Kellogg’s Rice Krispies are made of rice; they never thought of the brand name in terms of its constituent parts.
157. See the definition of an idiom in (Fillmore, Kay and O’Connor 1988: 501): “Constructions may be idiomatic in the sense that a large construction may specify semantics (and/or pragmatics) that is distinct from what might be calculated from the associated semantics of the set of smaller constructions that could be used to build the same morphosyntactic object.” Cf., however, Taylor’s (2002: 550) objection to the traditional view that the meaning of idioms is non-constructional in contrast to “free” phrases – as if the meaning of the latter *were* constructional.
158. According to Langacker (2002: 25) the meaning of conventional expressions is based on the same principle as that of words, namely, that it is “not predictable from the component structures.”
159. This work by Fillmore, while published in 1997, was done in the early 1970s. In some of his later works, the author seemed to revise some of his earlier positions – as for instance when he made an explicit distinction between his famous “cases” and a “full set of notions” that constitutes the frame of a sentence (Fillmore 2003b: 191).
160. As Fillmore shows, this is one of three principal modal meanings of *may*, which he called epistemic (concerning a possibility), pragmatic (concerning a request), and magic (a preternatural wish) (Fillmore 1997b: 11-12).
161. Cf. a similar analysis of the word *physical* in combination with different phrasal components (assault, attributes, bodies, proximity, damage, etc.) in (Sinclair 1992). His analysis, however, leads the author to a paradoxical conclusion that words in combinations are different in meaning from their independent state. But where is this “independent state” to be observed? Even dic-



tionaries, at least in modern times, tend to avoid explaining the meaning of a word in isolation, outside the expressions in which it is manifested.

162. There is rich experimental evidence that different meanings of so-called polysemous words are dissociated in speakers' perception. In one experiment, informants "did not categorize together phrases that used a polysemous word in different senses, though they did when the word was used in the same sense"; as it turned out, "many people think that most words have only one meaning" (Klein and Murphy 2001).

Dissolution of polysemy has become a common practice in frame semantics. According to Fillmore (1982), the same lexical item may evoke alternative frames; in agreement with this principle, the project of a frame-based lexicon considers each meaning separately (Fillmore and Atkins 1992).

163. As Harris notes, "the question of how polysemous words are interpreted in context becomes easier, since many polysemous words may be stored with both their contexts and the unique meaning for that context" (Harris 1998: 68-69).
164. Ironically, certain strains in cognitive linguistics have recently shown an increasing propensity to appeal to "real-life" experience as the foundation of meaning; I mean the idea of "embodiment" in recent works by Lakoff, Johnson, and Gibbs. According to the latter, for example, different senses of the polysemous word *stand* stem from different "bodily experiences of standing" (Gibbs, Beitel 2006: 175; see in more detail Gibbs, Reiel, Harrington and Sanders 1994). This is a paradoxical result of over-emphasizing the purely cognitive aspect of processing and interpreting meaning, at the expense of the language matter in which meaning has to be incorporated.
165. Cf. the observation in (Klein and Murphy 2001) that respondents' identification of any core meaning of a word was "minimal."
166. As Bloom (2000: 191-193) describes it, when children are not toddlers anymore, they rarely encounter the situation of explicit naming ("This is a . . ."); the best way to explain how they learn thousands of words every year is through "linguistic context," namely, by hearing a word in conversation or, less effectively, through reading.
167. Lakoff (1987: 37) cites Brent Berlin (in a private communication) as suggesting that people of urban culture still have a general gestalt perception of the tree, while weak at distinguishing different kinds of trees. This is probably true but does not explain how such people still manage to treat different trees' names as distinct signs.
168. One can agree with Putnam that "we could hardly use such words as 'elm' and 'aluminum' if no one possessed a way of recognizing elm trees and aluminum metal"; the content is present in the linguistic community "considered as a collective body" (1993: 155). This does not contradict the fact that some members of that body do not possess the knowledge of that content, while

they nonetheless share with others the knowledge of how that word can be used.

169. Extreme as the case looks, it is by no means unusual that speakers makes the signification of a word based on a limited experience of its usage they have. H. Gleitman and L. Gleitman (1979) reported about 5-year-old “suburbanites” who rejected the sentence *The man wait for the bus* not because it is ungrammatical but on the grounds that only children wait for buses.
170. As Jackendoff (2002: 183) noted, some variation of the grammatical form remains almost always possible in expressions whose meaning is fully idiomatic; it means that words within an idiom continue to be perceived as being “borrowed” from the verbal vocabulary. Jackendoff’s observation can be applied not only to idioms in the strict sense but to any established expressions.  
This seeming paradox was addressed, with regard to idioms, by S. Gibbs who called it the “direct access hypothesis” (Gibbs 1980 and 1986). According to Gibbs, idiomatic expressions and words are stored as parallel entities; speakers are capable of addressing a word as such and also as a component of an idiom; see recent experiments related to this hypothesis: (Hillert and Swinney 2001).
171. Cf. Taylor’s observation that perfectly interchangeable words are “exceedingly rare” or nonexistent (Taylor 2002: 56). To this I can add that while I have heard much about the extreme rarity of “perfect synonyms,” I have never seen a single fully convincing example of such a phenomenon. This applies even more emphatically to whole expressions.
172. This is what Jakobson’s theory of shifters claimed: that shifters mean exactly the same in terms of the subject matter; all they do is to switch the perspective on the situation vis à vis the speaker (Jakobson 1957).
173. See a recent assessment of the concept of structural order in (Tenny and Pustejovsky 2000).
174. An early example of the emphasis on the “different dynamics of how the meaning and the sounds of speech evolve” (“razlichnoe dvizhenie smyslovoi i zvuchashchei rechi”) can be found in Vygotsky ([1934] 1956: 331).
175. Vygotsky (1956: 132) was perhaps the first to point out that the meanings of successive segments of speech “pour into each other, as it were . . . so that the preceding phenomena are present in the following ones and modify them.” In an early paper (Gasparov 1978) I analyzed this process in Russian oral speech. At that time, I treated the phenomenon of semantic conflation as a specific attribute of oral discourse; cf. a similar claim in (Scheerer 1996). Recent studies treat conceptual integration as a universal cognitive category (Fauconnier and Turner 1996).
176. Langacker (2001: 177-178) speaks of “consolidations” that occur when preceding segments are being integrated, in a reduced and compressed form, into successive discourse; Fauconnier and Turner (2000) speak of integration as a

- process able to “control long diffuse chains of logical reasoning.” One should also consider in this connection Chafe’s remark about the “echoic memory” of past speech that influences its further progress (Chafe 1994: 42).
177. Cf. (Ono and Thompson 1996).
  178. “Wort und Bild sind Korrelate, die sich immerfort suchen . . . So von jeher, was dem Ohr nach innen gesagt oder gesungen war, sollte dem Auge gleichfalls entgegenkommen” (*Maxims and Reflexions*, No. 907).
  179. See also earlier works on the communicative role of gestures: (Rimé and Schiaratura 1991; Kendon 1994). A more careful approach treats gestures as an auxiliary means that helps to process speech (Krauss, Chen and Chawla 1996; Krauss 1998); in particular, gestures help the retrieval of words (Krauss and Hadar 1999).
  180. See also an attempt to add direct visual representation to spatial schemata in (Casad 1995).
  181. Kosslyn (1978: 234) mentions that verbal prompting could alter or enrich the inner picture, yet he never looks in the opposite direction, i.e., how images could affect the perception of words.
  182. Chafe (1994:12) mentions “mental imagery,” alongside emotions and consciousness, among phenomena that are “privately observable, accessible to each individual but not in any direct way to others.”
  183. As Paivio’s early experiments have shown, the connection between the concreteness of a word’s meaning and the clarity of the image it evokes is not totally straightforward. Abstract words with emotional overtones tend to evoke an image. On the other hand, concrete words with highly specialized areas of usage, such as *antitoxin*, do not elicit a visual response (Paivio 1968).
  184. In her studies of the ancient and medieval “art of memory,” Carruthers noted that building mental pictures helped to evoke portions of earlier texts (Carruthers 1990: 230); in other words, images were used as prompts of intertextuality. This is what made the art of memory a part of ancient rhetoric (Carruthers 1998).
  185. “The conventional imagery invoked for linguistic expression is a fleeting thing that neither defines nor constrains the content of our thoughts” (Langacker 2002: 56).
  186. The spatial nature of images that makes them exempt from the time flow was emphasized in many studies (Kosslyn 1978 etc.). In this capacity, images form a counterpoint to the time-bound verbal progression of speech (Paivio 1991: 50; McNeill 2005).
  187. According to Givón (1995: 65), “working memory” retains not more than 2 to 5 clauses at a time. This limited capability would obviously have been insufficient for maintaining continuity of large textual segments without prompts, at least some of which come from imagery. See on the role of imagery in this re-

- spect (Richardson 1998). Rich evidence of the importance of imagery for the “art of memory” can be found in (Yates 1966) and (Carruthers 1990).
188. One has only to compare the intensity of Kant’s inquiry with the posture of haughty rationalism with which Chomsky shrugs off statements like “Boston is near New York but not London” as a matter of quotidian routine from which “there is no general way to abstract” (Chomsky 1993: 28-29).
  189. F. Schlegel et al., *Fragmente*, no. 116 (*Athenäum*, I:2, Berlin, 1798).
  190. See on the psychology of analogical thinking: (Gentner 1989; Hofstadter 1995).
  191. Cf. Langacker’s remark that speakers employ established symbolic units for “assessing the conventionality of novel expressions and usages” (Langacker 2002: 16).
  192. Cf. Saussure’s insightful remark to the effect that a derivative word emerges as an alteration of another (one might say “prototypical”) word, rather than as a new combination of morphemes: “. . . les sujets parlants procèdent toujours en parlant du mot fait: c’est-à-dire qu’en formant *oseur*, on ne se dit pas: je combine *os-* et *-eur*. Mais on procède comme suit: *graveur:graver, je grave = x:oser, j’ose; x = oseur*” (Saussure [1916] 1985: 185).
  193. Langacker (1987: 65-69) formulated a similar concept, which he called “target structure”; it is a “usage event” that emerges out of a convention (“the standard”) by a “partial sanction.” See also (Langacker 2000: 4). I prefer the name “artifact” since it emphasizes the creative aspect involved in every act of departure from the familiar.
  194. Cf. a poem written by the eighteen-years old Jakobson, which manifestly violated not only lexicon and grammar but prosodic and phonetical features of Russian language:  

мзглыбжвуо йихъяньдрю чтлэщк хн фя съп цкыполза  
 а Втаб—длкни тьяпра какайзчди евреец чернильница  
 (Jangfeldt 1992: 114)

 In a letter to Kruchenykh (Jan. 1914), Jakobson exhorted the already famous Futurist author to become even more radical in pursuing “transrational” linguistic innovations (ibid.: 73-74).
  195. See especially (Rosch 1978). For later comprehensive assessments of the theory, see (Dirven, Frank and Pütz 2003).
  196. See the sharply outlined opposition between the two paradigms: Taylor 1989; Lakoff and Johnson 1980.
  197. Cf. recent findings that people learn categories better when presented with a few positive cases before confronting the categorical boundaries than when they are presented from the start with examples that emphasize such boundaries (Avrahami, Kareev, Bogot, Caspi, Dunaevsky and Lerner 1997; Goldberg, Casenhiser and Sethuraman 2004).
  198. Familiarization is reflected in the phenomenon of false memory, when subjects claim to recall words that were not present in the original list on the basis

- of associations with words that were (Roediger and McDermott 1995). According to one experimental study, speakers, when presented with high-frequency and low-frequency words separately, remembered the former better; in a mixed list, however, recall was equal for both groups of words; recollection of low-frequency words was helped by associations with high-frequency words on the list (Hulma, Stuart, Brown and Morin 2003). On the other hand, when presented with a list with low associative connections, informants showed a low degree of “false memory” (drawn by association); in other words, where there is no support from prototypes speakers have to rely primarily on what they directly recall (Gallo and Roediger 2002).
199. See on the connection of avant-garde experimental poetry to Jakobsonian phonology (Gasparov 1997).
  200. Some experiments show that speakers’ false memories can be grounded in semantic as well as phonological associations between words (Sommers and Lewis 1999; Watson, Balota and Roediger 2003). Speakers were presented with lists of isolated words, an artificial condition that highlights phonological similarities. A possible correction to these findings is suggested in (Zalevskaia 1990: 83), who noted that phonological similarities between words appeared more pronounced when subjects dealt with a non-native language – i.e., when they possessed an inferior facility in projecting isolated words onto speech domains of their potential usage).
  201. Bosch (2002: 209) calls this phenomenon an “instance family.” According to Brooks (1978: 195), “centralized tendencies of family resemblance or a prototypical structure coexist with a decentralized set of analogies for a given concept.”
  202. References to a “homogeneous supracontext” (Skousen 2002a: 25), “imagined contexts” (Langacker 1987: 37), or “background knowledge” (Taylor 1989: 93) all point to this principle.
  203. Cf. an example in (Miller 1978): *The Smiths saw the Rocky Mountains while they were flying to California*. Speakers don’t even notice the ambiguity: they know that it was the Smiths, not the mountains, who were flying, because of the compelling presence of this interpretation as an established formula. Generally speaking, an overwhelming majority of the cases of “semantic ambiguity” cited in linguistic treatises are purely fictitious. They find no support in the way language is actually known and actually used by its speakers. At best, such counter-intuitive connections, which requires a degree of mental ingenuity to be spotted in the first place, can be used as puns – besides their primary utility as theoretical examples.
  204. Cf. Givón’s assertion (1989: 73) that the relevant context for communicating knowledge or belief is not objectively given: “it is in itself some knowledge, information, or belief held by some interpreter.”

205. "If effective cover is maintained, a great deal of deviation can be got away with" (Goffman 1974: 346).
206. Cf. for instance the discussion of the strikingly different meanings yielded by overtly analogical expressions *dolphin-safe* and *shark-safe* (Fauconnier and Turner 2002: 354).
207. See a recent reiteration of this principle in (Eco 1999), a work that strongly emphasizes the multidirectionality of prototypical connections.
208. In the foundational work on the cognitive theory of metaphor (Lakoff and Johnson 1980), the principle of universality was not emphasized. It emerged as the field was rapidly growing, clearly in order to regain conceptual control over the enormous variety of emerging descriptions. Hence an emphasis on universal cognitive structures that produce conceptual metaphors in different languages (Lakoff 1987 and numerous works that followed).
209. Taylor (1989: 79) goes to a length that is almost unprecedented among linguists in admitting the freedom with which the Wittgensteinian "family of resemblances" can expand; yet even in this case, he finds it necessary to add that at least those expansions that are contradictory should be rejected. However, it takes as little as a touch of irony to make logically contradictory phenomena appear hand in hand. Another linguist who strongly emphasizes the multidirectionality of speech is Chafe, yet he attributes this feature exclusively to informal conversation (Chafe 1994: 53; Chafe 1996).
210. This is how the motivated nature of meaning (as opposite to Saussure's arbitrariness) is understood in works on conceptual metaphor: (Gibbs 1993 and 1994; Berndt 1997: 3-4; Boers 2004: 211).
211. See a similar point in (Bulygina and Shmelev 1990).
212. Cf. Coates's (1995: 42-43) remark that speakers go "almost to any length to discover coherence in utterances they hear," sometimes to a point where this results in miscommunication.
213. Observations of interfering intentions that lead to speech side effects can be found in: (Bierwisch 1982; Kazanskaia 1998: 119; Kukushkina 1998: 21; Sannikov 1999: 24-25)
214. "There is a strong correlation between the frequency with which the token occurs and the likelihood that it will be considered a prototype by the learner" (Goldberg, Casenhiser and Sethuraman 2004: 302).
215. According to (Krott, Schreuder and Baayen 2002: 181), all novel words are modeled on existing forms that function as an "analogical set." Cf. a particularly rich description of improvised and semi-improvised analogical vocabulary formations emerging in spoken speech: (Zemskaja 1992).
216. In a complex system, when the network of analogies provides enough precedential examples, it generates new values "by itself," without any abstract procedure being responsible for the process (Cilliers 1998: 28).

217. In works by Lakoff and his co-authors, the basic term has evolved from the original “conceptual metaphor” to “image schema” (Lakoff 1987; Lakoff and Johnson 1999); cf. also the “metaphoric theme” in (Boers 2004).
218. Cf. the remark about devices of blending capable of controlling “long diffuse chains of logical reasoning” in (Fauconnier and Turner 2000).
219. Gibbs (2006: 116) acknowledges in passing that a “challenge for metaphor theory is that some metaphors are equally appropriate to describe different conceptual domains.” He does not seem, however, to appreciate the real magnitude of the problem. Lakoff and Johnson (1999: 267) also seem to vacillate between asserting that what they call “complex metaphors” (that is, stemming simultaneously from more than one conceptual structure) in the last count always can be traced to a single, more abstract conceptual pattern, on the one hand, and emphasizing that “we do not have any single, monolithic, consistent way of conceptualizing our inner life,” on the other. A tour de force that allows the authors to reconcile these opposite claims comes from the thesis that all metaphors, for all their variety, are ultimately “incorporated,” i.e., stem from the experience of the body.
220. Rich evidence has in fact been presented in support of the thesis that conceptual metaphors are cognitive universals that emerge across cultural differences (Yu 2003; Neumann 2003; Kövecses 2002). This latest claim of universality, like all the others before it, inevitably runs into counter-examples (Rakova 2001; Haser 2005). Particularly interesting in this regard is the exploration of culturally, socially, ideologically, and stylistically specific metaphors in (Kövecses 2005) that seem to deviate from this author's earlier position.
221. In a complex system, local interactions proceed in a manner “ignorant of the system as a whole,” in an environment that is constantly changing (Cilliers 1998: 10). Almost half a century prior to the concept of a complex system, Vygotsky spoke in a remarkably similar way of “complex thinking” that is based not on an abstract concept but on concrete and factual connection between distinct objects (Vygotsky 1956: 169).
222. (Hendrickson 1997: 352). In an understandably apologetic tone, the author attributes the proverb's origin (apparently no later than the early eighteenth century) to an alleged custom among some Indian tribes. The latest example of using the expression in print, cited in (Whiting 1989: 336), is dated 1970. (It was also used as the title of a pop song in the 1970s).
223. A notion related to cross-pollination can be seen in the distinction between mapping and blending – the latter integrating only parts of two domains (Fauconnier 1997: 4).
224. Cf. the observation that the significance of an action can be “dramatically altered by a change in background assumptions” (Coulson, 2001: 1-2), the phenomenon Coulson calls “frame-shifting.”
225. (Jakobson 1960).

226. The theory of blending emphasizes the crucial role of the conceptual process in shaping utterances. Syntactic features alone are not sufficient: it is the character of blending that resolves the ambiguity of a syntactic structure (Mandelblit and Fauconnier 1997). However, the syntactic design serves as the frame that marks a distinct blended configuration (Fauconnier 1996).
227. I mean the two principal types of syntactic tree: the IC tree (Wells 1947) later adopted, with some modifications, by generative grammar, and the dependence tree (Tesnière 1959) widely employed in European linguistics.
228. A somewhat more cautious acceptance of this phenomenon can be seen in Jackendoff's (2002: Ch. 5) suggestion of a "parallel architecture" involved in constructing a sentence: a syntactic pattern and a specific portion of the lexicon that serves as the pattern's legitimate components.
229. Cf. the definition of such constructions in (Fillmore 1997a: ix): "A few of them are quite general and abstract, but most of them identify specific lexical constructions, in most cases just one . . . but in many cases more than one."
230. Cf. also an earlier observation that children acquire transitive sentences by entrenching a few prototypes and then making "metaphorical extensions" from them (Slobin 1981; Schlesinger 1981; cited in Taylor 2002).
231. A curious example emerged in the discussion between Van Lancker and her opponents in a special issue of *Aphasiology*. To Van Lancker's principal thesis, proclaimed in the title of her piece, "Is your syntactic component really necessary?" her opponents responded with a piece pointedly entitled "Your syntactic component really is necessary"; to which Van Lancker retorted that in fact they illustrated her point: they did not produce their title anew but created it by manipulating hers, following it as a template. See (Van Lancker 2001; Shapiro and Friedman 2001).
232. A wonderful example of such holistic perception of an utterance in the speech of children is given in (H. Gleitman and L. Gleitman 1979: 112): a seven-year old boy is presented with the sentence *Boy is at the door*. His response: "If his name is Boy. You should – the kid is named John, see? John is at the door or A boy is at the door or The boy is at the door or He's knocking at the door." This commentary does not address the role of an article (or its absence) as a structural component of the sentence; instead, it assesses the offered utterance holistically as an artifact whose interpretation emerges in comparison with a few other, more conventional utterances, each perceived as a whole.
233. (Zemskaja 1973). Cf. studies of what Hopper (1988) calls "amalgamation of clauses" in various languages: (Goodwin 1979; Cumming 1984).
234. Hopper (1988: 119) comments on the contrast between what he calls "emergent grammar" (EG) and "a priori grammar" (APG). APG relies on artificially constructed sentences, while what EG recognizes as legitimate utterances are always "scraps of previous discourses, whose grammaticality could be judged only to the extent to which their context can be reconstructed."



235. To cite just one of many testimonies to this effect, it has been found that “intuitions about grammaticality” are “notoriously unreliable or nonexistent” among speakers of Pacific languages (Mühlhäusler 1987). The full extent of the problem is recognized in (Schütze 1996). The author tries, with mixed success, to find a remedy in various empirical criteria that could serve as the basis for judgments of grammaticality.
236. See on the early controversy between grammaticality and acceptability that was triggered by Chomsky’s example: (Gasparov 1974).
237. Construction grammar approaches syntax as the “interconnected repertory of grammatical constructions” (Fillmore 1997a: ix). Likewise, Langacker (1987: 73) speaks of the grammar of a language as “a vast inventory of units structured in hierarchies that overlap and intersect on a massive scale.”
238. Cf. Langacker’s assertion that cognitive grammar does not appeal to deep structure; the so-called synonymous sentences are treated separately (2002: 13).
239. Cf. (Levelt 1989).
240. That “planning” a sentence does not precede its “production” but proceeds simultaneously with it has been attested in some psycholinguistic experiments (Roelofs 1998; Ferreira 1996; Ferreira and Swets 2002).
241. According to Halliday ([1978] 1994: 58-59), remarkably complex structures can emerge in oral speech; in fact, oral speech favors constructions with more clauses and with fewer words in each clause. Meanwhile, listeners experience no difficulty, thanks to the prompts they receive from intonation, in grasping a complex agglomeration of clauses, which would be hard to follow in writing.
242. Children become aware of different prosodic templates at a pre-lexical stage. According to (Soderstrom, Seide, Kemler Nelson and Jusczyk 2003), 6 month olds are already “sensitive to prosodic markers of syntactic units”; two week old infants already react to modulations of voice (Lisina 1997; Ushakova 1998).
243. In cases of syntactic ambiguity, speakers prove to be able to choose the correct alternative before reaching the point at which the resolution of the ambiguity becomes apparent from the meaning of the utterance; they are guided by prosodic cues that help to “predict material which has yet to be spoken” (Snedeker and Trueswell 2003).
244. For instance, speech with “disfluencies,” i.e., such expressions as *well*, *like*, etc., or pauses of hesitation (Fox 1995) does not affect the intonational contour of a sentence; after the disfluencies are digitally removed from the sentence, they leave no trace in its intonational contour (Bailey and Ferreira 2003).
245. Turner (1989: 159) notes the difference in this respect between the American tradition of treating intonation as a set of discrete pitches, and the British tra-

- dition (exemplified in Halliday and Greaves 2006) of seeing the prosodic repertory as “a set of intonation tunes, or contours.”
246. See observations on degrees of “loudness” and “pitch-stress relationship” in speech in (Sarles 1986: 149).
  247. Pioneering work on the role of voice timbre as an integral part of prosody was done by K. Scherer in the 1970s (Scherer 1972); see also (Iliukhina 1981). The subject gained some recognition among linguists in recent years: (Kreiman 1997; Chafe 1994: 63-64).
  248. Fraser (1977) established experimentally that a sentence showed different intonational patterns when it was used in a direct and in a figurative sense.
  249. Literature on child language acquisition is rich with observations of how children, while following concrete utterance samples, become aware of “slots” in them that can be variously filled (Tomasello 2000; Dabrowska 2000; Dabrowska and Lieven 2005).
  250. Cf. the observation in (Aitchison 1994: 18) that “the hole left by the missing word is far from empty.” Aitchison cites William James’s characterization of such a gap as “extremely active. A sort of wraith of the name is in it, beckoning us in a given direction” (James [1890] 1981, I: 243).
  251. According to Sarles (1986: 237), “whole words can be excised, even from out-of-context sentences, with little or no loss in intelligibility.” Sarles cites an early psycholinguistic study of the subject (Pollack and Pickett 1964). Cf. also recommendations to language pedagogues not to restrict the material they offer to what students already know (Achard and Niemeier 2004), a strategy that could not work without intimations built in the very shape of speech material.
  252. Pushkin’s extreme popularity in Russian cultural tradition often obfuscates the fact that his lines, familiar to many from early childhood, contain numerous expressions whose meaning is either extremely vague or altogether incomprehensible to a modern reader without an extensive commentary. As Loman (1980) points out, it is rather difficult to make such a reader pause and contemplate what he has actually understood or failed to understand in a familiar line. The same is true for particularly difficult modern poetic discourse.
  253. Cf. Scheerer’s remark (1996: 128) that the “structure of oral discourse is coordinative and additive, whereas literate discourse a subordinative, hierarchical structure,” which attributes processes related to grafting exclusively to casual oral communication, in contradistinction to more elaborate “literate” discourses.
  254. Cf. speakers’ creative use of devices in dealing with “formulas,” among them juxtaposition and superimposition, in (Dabrowska and Lieven 2005: 442-443).
  255. Cf. an observation in (Nuyts 1992: 184) that syntactic competence is not separate from communicative competence: “The former is an element of the latter.”

256. As Langacker (1987: 405) notes, speakers' primary concern in terms of syntagmatics is mutual accommodation in the integration of two semantic structures.
257. See a richly documented account of the beginnings of OCS: (Schenker 1995).
258. See an extensive analysis of OCS lexicon in its relation to Greek: (Vereshchagin 1997; Tseitlin 1986); on morphosyntactic and rhetorical calques in OCS see (Gasparov 2001).
259. Givón (1979 and 1989) gives numerous examples of how what was initially a lexical or derivational meaning eventually developed into the meaning of a grammatical category. Cf. in particular his observations on the mutation of the meaning of spatial into temporal motion (1989: 57).
260. In a pioneering work, Forsythe (1970) addressed the role of perfective vs. imperfective forms in shaping discourse. See an ensuing exploration of the problem: (Gasparov 1990).
261. Cited from the *Codex Marianus*. While there are discrepancies between the four versions of the OCS Gospels, concerning mainly orthography, and occasionally lexicon, the choice of tense forms is consistent throughout all the versions. In all following quotations only the place of the passage in the Gospel will be indicated, without specifying the concrete manuscript from which it is quoted.
262. See, for example, (Selishchev 1952; Diels 1932/1963; Khaburgaev 1974; Vaillant 1977).
263. (Bunina 1959; Amse-De Jong 1974; Vec`erka 1993).
264. "Don't say: There *must be* something common, or they would not be called 'games' – but *look and see* whether there is anything common at all. – For if you look at them you will not see something that is common to *all*, but similarities, relationships, and a whole series of them at that. To repeat: don't think, but look!" (Wittgenstein 1953/1958: I: 66; author's emphasis). In his typological description of the aspectual meaning, Comrie (1976/1998) gives a standard definition of perfectivity as "the continuing present relevance of the past situation" (56). However, Comrie accompanies this generic definition with a qualification that sounds almost Wittgensteinian: "In discussing perfect, it is important not to be misled into thinking that every form that is labeled 'Perfect' in the grammar-book indeed expresses perfect meaning" (53).
265. See the analysis of these oppositions in relation to the perfectual meaning in: (Comrie 1976/1998).
266. *Codex Suprasliensis*. All quotations from this document are drawn from the edition: *Supraslski ili Retkov sbornik*, Sofia: Academy of Sciences, 1983.  
Here and in all following examples, English translation follows the use of tense forms, and also – as close as possible – the wording of the OCS original.
267. See particularly (Pelikan 1974, Ch. 3 ["The Mystery of the Trinity"] and 4 ["The Person of the God-Man"]); Bolotov 1917/1994; Kartashev 1994).

268. *The Klots Collection* is cited from A. Dostal, ed., *Glagolita Clozu* v. Prague: Academy of Sciences, 1959.
269. Quoted from the edition: Geitler, L., ed., *Euchologium, glagolski spomenik manastira Sinai brda*. Zagreb, 1882.
270. Sever'anov, S., ed., *Sinaiskaia psaltyr'. Glagolicheskii pamiatnik XI veka*. Petrograd, 1922 (repr. Graz: Akademische Druck und Verlagsanstalt, 1954).
271. (Wittgenstein 1953/1958, I: 67).
272. Cf. Fillmore's emphatic assertion of this principle: "I wish to regard the pragmatic dimension as an inherent part of every grammatical construction" (Fillmore 1996: 57).
273. According to (Wolf and Polzenhagen 2003: 249), "texts never have no style."
274. Such asymmetries, which are unique among languages at large, are not at all uncommon in children's speech for the same reason – namely, due to the limited scope of discourses to which a child is exposed. For instance, Budwig (1996) reported that mothers speaking with their children tend to use constructions with *I* more often with mental state verbs (*I think, I like*) than with action verbs – a result that she finds unexpected.
275. This result has been particularly emphasized by Karaulov. According to his findings, a grammatical paradigm is never fully realized in connection to a particular lexeme (1993: 188); different lexemes show different preferences for certain members of the paradigm (1991: 10).
276. According to (Goldberg, Casenhiser and Sethuraman 2004: 307-308), in the speech of small children one particular verb accounts for the lion's share of usages of a particular argument structure.
277. The local and dissociated character of usages as a general principle of a complex system is underscored in (Cilliers 1998).
278. Cf. Pinker's finding that regularity (that is, reliance on a rule) is the "default case," which is applied only when the speaker fails to retrieve the needed form directly from memory (1999: Ch. 8).
279. An interesting experiment was reported in (Brooks 1978): two groups of English speakers were involved in learning to recognize gender in German nouns. One group was given a sample of nouns of different grammatic gender with various endings, without any further explanation; the other group was given the same sample plus pre-formulated rules for gender recognition. In the subsequent test, the first group showed better learning results than the second. In other words, pre-formulated abstract rules frustrated the process of learning instead of aiding it. Cf. also in (Taraban, McDonald and MacWinney 1989): speakers' performance of learning gender forms "may look rule-like, but it is clearly not generated by explicit rules."
280. In Turner's succinct formulation, "Grammar comes from story through parable" (Turner 1996: 145).

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*Editors*

Walter Bisang

Hans Henrich Hock

(main editor for this volume)

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281. An extensive data of early East Slavic vernacular is offered by the Novgorodian birch bark letters, the earliest among them from 12th-13th centuries (*Novgorodskie Gramoty na bereste*, 1-11. Moscow: Academy of Sciences, 1953-2004). There, perfect is featured as the principal past tense. It is aorist that appears rarely, usually as a mark of a more culturally oriented style (i.e., in a letter by a priest). One distinctive feature of perfect in this stylistic domain, in contradistinction to its OCS counterpart, is the loss of the auxiliary verb in 3rd person. In fact, the 3rd person perfect has turned in the vernacular into a simple past (Zalizniak 2004).
282. According to Langacker (1987: 36), grammar “represents a speaker’s knowledge of linguistic convention.” Gawron (1995) calls this trend “lexicalism,” i.e., explaining properties of grammar as “lexically motivated constructions.” Descriptions of quite a few such constructions can be found in works on construction grammar.
283. Cf. Budwig’s finding that children interpret grammatical forms in “local ways,” i.e., on the basis of particular lexemes (1996: 154). On the other hand, analogous learning among grown-ups requires speakers to be exposed to a considerable number of diverse exemplars in order to be successful; as Skousen (2002b: 22) has found in an experiment testing the process of learning past tense forms, respondents achieved stable results only after having been exposed to 244 different verbs. However, in a homogenous discourse, such a skill would have to be applied only to a limited number of verbs; consequently, less data would be needed to master it. This is what is characteristic of children’s experience with language, and also, quite uniquely, of the core texts of OCS.
284. See an extensive exploration of the exemplar approach in (Smith and Medin 1981).
285. Vygotsky (1934/1956: 175) calls this phenomenon “complex thinking”: a child receives a yellow triangle as the sample; he then selects various triangles, but also trapezoids, because they resemble a triangle to him; to yellow objects he adds green, to green-blue, to blue-black. A “pile of objects,” put together “without a sufficient intrinsic logic,” represents “diffuse, undirected expansion of the meaning” (Vygotsky 1956: 165-66). Cf. Wittgenstein’s observation that if one learns the concept of “green” by being shown a leaf, one would never know whether the “green” has always a diamond-like shape, or whether this shape has always to be “green” (1953/1958: I: 73-74).

Jackendoff (2002: 91) called this approach, with a tinge of irony, the strategy of “cheap tricks,” i.e., of approximate and opportune actions, exemplified in male cichlid fish that attacks not just other males, but anything which has the right kind of red spot. One can sense in the rhetoric of this passage the reluctance of “pure reason,” anchored in the idea of ultimate logical order, to bow to the creative chaos of practical judgments.

286. The connectivist approach to learning has been employed in psycholinguistic studies since the late 1980s (McClelland 1988; McClelland and Rumelhart 1986; Daugherty and Seidenberg 1992; Palmer 1996). See discussion of the connectivist vs. generativist paradigm in (Eddington 2002).
287. The comparison of the process of proliferation of the meaning with musical leitmotifs was once suggested by Saussure in his notes (Saussure 2002).
288. Fifteen or twenty years ago, the antagonism between the then-dominant algorithmic and then-nascent usage-oriented approach to language seemed absolute. Recently, however, more thoughtful adepts of the former have begun attempts to accommodate the opposing vision of language (whose validity one can hardly flatly deny any longer) into a larger scheme of things, still dominated by the principle of rational organization. Pinker evokes in this regard "symbol combination" and "associative memory" as different subsystems under which the human mind operates (1999: 279), while Jackendoff defines this duality as that of "conceptual structure" and "spatial representation" (1996: 5). While there is no denying this duality being a universal property of mind, I am convinced that as far as using language is concerned, the priority belongs to fuzzy "associative memory," while the meta-reflection on combinatorial rules serves as an auxiliary tool.
289. Cf. Lyotard's definition of the "post-modern condition" as "incredulity toward metanarratives," dispersing them in "a pragmatic of language particles" instead (Lyotard [1974] 1984: xxiv).
290. In Hopper's (1988: 121) formulation: grammar is "secondary to discourse."
291. In Hopper's words once again, language is a "real-time activity, whose regularities are always provisional and are continually subject to renegotiation, renovation, and abandonment" (Hopper 1988: 120).
292. A particularly strong emphasis on the volatility of the cognitive processes underlying speech (in his words, "the inevitable restlessness of focal consciousness," "constantly changing foci of consciousness") can be found in (Chafe 1997: 52).
293. Aitchison (1994: 7) points to the immensity of the vocabulary of an adult speaker of English, which, according to her estimate, comprises 60 to 80 thousand lexemes, any of which can be retrieved "literally in a split second." Of course, the number of expressions that speakers recall, either as precise quotations or more fuzzy allusions, is many times larger. The author's explanation for this phenomenon: there must be a "system" according to which the mental lexicon is organized; it is hard to imagine, though, the degree of complexity such a system must have in order to be effective, and how it could then work, as it does, with the speed of lightning.
294. As Lyotard (1984: 15) put it, every person is located at "nodal points" of specific communication circuits, "or better: one is located at a post through which various kinds of messages pass."

295. Coates (1995: 42-43) observes that interlocutors establish “a common universe of discourse”; they go “almost to any length to discover coherence in utterances they hear,” sometimes to the point of miscommunication.
296. It was a strategic stroke of genius when Chomsky, with his “minimalist program,” led his forces out of this swamp by instituting an organized retreat to a place where the theory’s “elegance and simplicity” could be reclaimed – a place much further away from the speech data than had been envisioned at the inception of the theory.
297. I take issue with the thesis – reiterated on a number of occasions by such proponents of cognitive linguistics as Fauconnier, Lakoff, and Turner – according to which the role of language is purely instrumental in relation to cognitive processes that underlie speech. Cf. for example the assertion that language offers “prompts” for conceptual integration but not for meaning itself (Fauconnier and Turner 2002: Ch.17). One should not forget that “prompts” help an actor to play successfully only if they make him recognize his part, which he has to remember, at least approximately.
298. According to Frank (1989: 79), every utterance is “hypothetical”: to become actual, it has to be confirmed by those to whom it appeals. The interlocutor’s judgment shows whether the speaker “really” said what he intended” (500).
299. “Talking is like walking . . . if you think about it, you stumble” (Halliday [1978] 1994: xxv).
300. “Putting together novel expressions is something that speakers do, not grammars. It is a problem-solving activity that demands a constructive effort and occurs when linguistic convention is put in use in specific circumstances” (Langacker 1987: 65).
301. As (Tracy and Coupland 1990) note, people typically have more than one goal when they talk to each other; speech situations with a single goal are practically nonexistent (Griffin, Cole and Newman 1982).
302. According to Ross (1979: 160), grammaticality does not exist as a compact and uniform quality; rather, it is an “n-space” of manifold dimensions; as examples of such various dimensions, Ross cites “judgments of formality, of clarity, of slanginess, of floweriness, of sentences that one would use in speech but not in writing, of sentences with the opposite preference, of sentences which one would not use but would accept. . . .”
303. (Aitchison 1988: 347-348).



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