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.[38]

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.[39] 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.[40] 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.[41] Every

individual speaker emerges from this incessant process of "communicative metabolism"[42] 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.[43] 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.[44]

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.[45] 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;[46] 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).

Marion:	Len:	Rafe:
	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	
Oh just –	analysis of	
	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.[47] 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,[48] 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.[49] 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.[50] Moreover, each familiar expression brings with it more distant anticipations of what may follow, or how one might respond to it.[51]

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.[52]

(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.[53]

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.[54]

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.[55] 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.[56]

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.[57] 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.[58]

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.[59] 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-occurences 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