The Development of Your **Speaking Ego** through Linguistic Concepts

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By

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*My gratitude goes to all those people I've been lucky to meet
who have said something worth remembering and retelling.*

This book is for

all those who speak for fun
and
all those who speak professional purposes
and
all those who speak privately with family and friends
and
all those who speak publicly.

Whenever and wherever you happen to speak,
this book is meant to help you
boost and understand all your speaking experience.

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APPEAL FOR SPEECH

> **We need to cherish speech**
> **and**
> **protect it against the negative impact of technological development**.

Technology – despite its benefits – often makes us reticent or speechless: (a) young generations spend more and more time watching things online (which is not harmful per se, but keeps them *quiet* for most of the day); (b) they spend time listening to audio books (rather than read paper ones) (which is not harmful per se, but keeps them *away* from others); (c) they get befriended with their mobile phones as faithful companions (which is not harmful per se, but it *prevents them from talking* to people); (d) they find themselves self-sufficient as long as their wifi is working (which IS definitely harmful because in order to develop properly, people need people).

We live in a world which – quite undoubtedly – makes our lives more comfortable, easier and longer, too. Yet, at the same time we fail to observe the fact that **ordinary human speech is being – to a certain degree – eliminated and gradually wiped out.** And linguistic abilities, as a whole, instead of being valued more and more, are becoming diminished or disregarded altogether – as we put more and more trust in artificial intelligence, which can already make, for example, actors in old movies appear to speak in our native language, in the light of which learning foreign languages becomes an unnecessary challenge. Whether you like it or not, you will soon be deprived of the original sound and subtitles, and the entire linguistic dimension will be provided for you by "smart" machines.

We need to run against such a stream and this is what this book aspires to do. You are encouraged to join the mission of saving the natural human talk and speech.

Think of the times when people used to meet and spend time together without the Internet, any gadgets, and – most importantly – without holding tightly in their hands any mobile phones. On such occasions they sat and drank together, played games, but predominantly **talked**. They told stories and jokes, and they shared the news and information which was not awaiting their attention online. We can do the same these days, but **young generations hardly ever do**. They choose technology-generated solitude, the negative impact of which is probably greater than we now realise, but still experience on a daily basis when hearing more and more stories about mobbing, cyber violence, or youngsters that decide to test their virtual reality in their real life, which proves tragic and costly. **The remedy can lie in speech**, cherishing it and practising it with others. In this sense, this book suggests going back to good old times when speaking and sharing mattered so much. When I myself was a child (which had been a long time before I first heard of the Internet), I would visit my grandfather living in the country, who would always offer me a new mathematical riddle. He obviously did not find those riddles online, but just memorised them as a fruit of daily human speech. These days when we happen to be asked 'what is your favourite riddle (or joke)', most of us will reply 'I *don't* have my favourite riddle (or joke)' – which, with this very book, I would also like to at least partially change – for our joint sake and for – pathetic as it may sound – entire humanity.

is perhaps the main reason why it is not realised by most people, who just take speaking for granted.

This book is meant to prompt you to examine and enhance your Speaking Ego – in any language you happen to speak and communicate with and in any spoken interaction you may participate in. Hopefully, the book may substantially contribute to your enjoyment of spoken communication and increase the quality of all your interpersonal contacts occurring in your daily experience. I may even risk claiming that by applying some recommendations formulated in the book, you can – via discovering and developing your speaking ego – take your experiencing of reality altogether one big step further.

The book introduces the reader into the world of concepts falling within the scope of applied linguistics and it "filters" speaking through them. Although in some units there are some references to the preceding part of the whole publication, the book can be read (and applied) practically in any order the reader likes (although there are two recommended ways outlined below). Yet, none of the book's parts should be regarded as more important than the others.

Structure of the Book

The book has four modules which correspond to the components named above and which are complementary to one another – very much like our beliefs, emotions, actions, and thoughts are:

Module 1. **APPROACH** – philosophical - in that it builds up a kind of linguistic philosophy with regard to speech; it shows what qualities to value, what criteria to apply, and why speak in the first place;

Module 2. **EMOTIONS** – psychological – in that it oscillates around categories to do with the speaker's well-being; it addresses the interlocutors' comfort and how they feel about speech;

Module 3. **MANNER** – didactic – in that it introduces rather technical concepts; it outlines concepts which can be regarded as practical speaking tools to be used on different social occasions;

Module 4. **CONTENT** – (more strictly) linguistic – in that it gathers a set of characteristics of language itself which determine on the structural and semantic level what and how one speaks.

Each module has the same number of units so as to emphasise the equality of importance and the balance needed when speaking. In some cases, the association of a particular concept with the given module may at first appear doubtful (e.g., *Thematic Blends* in Module 1 or *Fossilisation* in Module 2), but the reading of the text provides hopefully sufficient justification for such inclusions. Besides, the borders between the four complementary dimensions remain partially fuzzy by definition, which means that some other arrangements of all the units included are possible or even welcome.

The volume addresses those linguistic concepts which can be regard as the CANON for the development of one's Speaking Ego, which jointly boost the experience of speaking. As the next step, they set in question will be followed by other linguistic concepts so as to expend this experience.

Wrap-Ups

Each module is followed by a two-part wrap-up serving your deeper understanding and further practice. The two parts have a slightly different function and a technical construction:

FOR MENTAL TRAINING (less advanced) particularly for those that need further convincing	FOR GROUP DISCUSSION (more advanced) particularly for those that are already convinced
YOUR TASK: to fight the devil's advocate by thinking of a counter-argument	YOUR TASK: to think of a situation to which the point underlined can apply
STRUCTURE: each unit separately (headings given for your convenience)	STRUCTURE: two notions at a time (indicated with the unit's numbers)

REFERENCE: following the notions and principles discussed in a given module	REFERENCE: in relation to schooling, culture, methodology, and personality
Possible FOLLOW-UP: your own arguments and counter-arguments emailed to the author	Possible FOLLOW-UP: your own consideration of further intersections of particular notions

NOTE: The logic presented in the wrap-ups is based on argumentation which you do not need to share. If any of the ideas presented appear questionable to you, do feel free to voice them by email.

How to Read this Book

There are two main ways of reading this book, the choice of which depends on your habits and preferences:

(A) "**TRADITIONAL**" (that is from cover to cover), the main advantage of which is that you get a good grasp of what issues make up each subsequent module and how they underlie everyday speaking.

(B) "**INDIVIDUAL**" (that is following your own sequence), the main advantage of which is that you get a chance of prioritising those issues which matter to you the most and speak afterwards accordingly.

At the back of the book, you will find two respective tables serving as a special place for your notes. If you – which I hope will be the case – choose to either read the book at least twice or return to any of its units which you find of most interest to you, perhaps the best way is to start with option (A) and continue with option (B). Yet, this is only a recommendation and it is all up to you and your choice.

After each unit you will find a short note on how the particular theme and term relate to some other included within the same or another module of the book. As noted earlier, speaking is a comprehensive experience overarching our beliefs, affect, actions, and thoughts, hence the interconnections between and within these four dimensions need to be considered just as well.

Additionally, at the end of each of the four modules included in the book you can find two lists of practical **DO's** and **DONT's**, which you can use to make sure that you have understood the key points and as a checklist during any occasions of speaking.

Another recommendation for you as the Reader of this book is that after reading any particular unit you try to turn it into your own Spoken Stroke (as described at the beginning of the first module) – by telling it to yourself. In this way you can make sure that the unit of choice is something more than a fleeting read but something that you apply with regard to your speaking. The tabular notes at the back of the book can help you achieve that and they can also prove handy in your later revisions.

Suggestion for the Reader

It is crucial that you do not to read this book too fast. You are free to find your own 'route' through the book (in accordance with the TRADITIONAL or the INDIVIDUAL way, as outlined above), but **in order to secure the best effect, you should follow two simple rules**:

Rule 1 – applying to the book's **units**: let every single concept 'sink in' before you move on to the next one. (This is why the opening page of every module encourages you to follow the strategy 'one unit per one day / two days'.) The first part of the module's Wrap-up 'FOR MENTAL TRAINING' can assist you in better understanding, memorising, and 'living through' each particular concept'

Rule 2 – applying to the book's **module**: discuss the concepts included with at least one person (ideally, someone who has also read the same units). The second part of the module's Wrap-up 'FOR GROUP DISCUSSION' can provide the two (or more) of your grounds for your critical and constructive examination of the module's content.

Consider together, the two rules can be presented graphically as follows:

| UNIT X.Y | → | WRAP-UP X (A) | → | UNIT X.Z | → | WRAP-UP X |
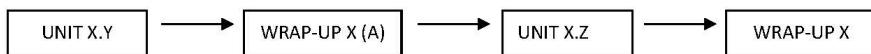
The links included at the end of each unit are recommended as the second 'round' - that is for the second reading of the book, as they relate both to units within the same module, as well as intersect various parts of the whole book.

STRUCTURE OF EACH UNIT

DO bear this in mind when reading any part of the text.

Each unit included in any of the modules – built around one linguistic concept – is divided also into the following four sections, which is meant to clarify the logic for the reader, to emphasise the instructive character of the book, and to show how a given theoretical concept translates into practice:

Preliminary **ADVICE**: First, the reader is advised to reflect on a situation, example, context relevant for the particular notion appearing in the subtitle;

*To fully appreciate the unit's content, you are advised to perform **a short mental exercise***. *In each unit this exercise is different to match the theme.*

Underlying **THEORY**: Then, some bits of theory are briefly described, crucial authors named, and the technical language explained in next-to-colloquial terms;

If you are not interested in this theory, you can safely skip this section.

Selected **OPTIONS**: Afterwards, some other possibilities, variants, settings, consequences, etc. are presented for the reader to diversify the use of notions; and

Chief **BENEFITS**: Finally, the unit closes with notes on what speakers gain by the awareness and application of particular rules and concepts.

ENJOY

MODULE 1

APPROACH

What we often do not realise

People often do not reflect on what they **think** of speaking: what makes them speak, when they decide to speak and when they choose to be quiet (in other words, how they answer the question 'To speak or not to speak?' and how it varies); what sense and purpose they recognise in their own speech and what values they assign to speaking; whether speaking is an important part of their personality and how other people see the way they speak; how they see others through the perspective of speech and whom they respect as a result of that person speaking in a special way.

This means that their attitude to speaking, or, in other words, the axiological component of their speaking ego, falls outside their regular reflection despite the fact that they speak every single day.

What we hope to achieve

The first module aims **to draw your attention to how unique your spoken language is and how important it is in your daily life altogether**. To this end, you are encouraged to consider (1.1) your favourite *spoken strokes* and to develop more, (1.2) what elements in your speech can be seen as fully *redundant*, (1.3) how the so-called *linguistic turn* affects your speech, (1,4) what thematic fields you blend when speaking, and (1.5) *what image of the world* your speech represents.
It is not necessary to read the five units in the same order as included in the module or to read the entire module before studying any other units of the book. Yet, if you are disciplined enough to read the units on a regular basis (say, one unit per day or, still better, one unit every other day) and employ (publically or privately) the concepts addressed in them, you are very likely to enjoy most concrete improvements in the form of increased **speaking awareness**, **novelty**, **freshness**, **richness**.

1.1 Discover your spoken repertoire.

Spoken strokes

Think about the stories, jokes, riddles, or discoveries which you sometimes (or often) tell other people. And think about the reasons why you decide to share them with your family, friends, or strangers. Very probably, you do so because all these "pieces" present things which somehow matter to you. They can be short accounts of your own experience or they may be spoken bits which you have heard from others and, considering the content valuable in some sense, you decide to pass on to others, who, if they happen to share your positive impression, will forward them even further. Metaphorically speaking, we can say that with all such pieces we "stroke" one another and enrich the people we encounter with interesting things to say on different social occasions. The reciprocity of the situation means that after hearing such a spoken stroke, we are inclined to offer ours and we often regret if nothing comes to our mind then. The logical conclusion is that it is worth collecting spoken strokes so as to have "pieces" to share and to avoid the uncomfortable feeling that we have nothing to offer in return and, this being the case, we are not as desirable interlocutors as would like to be. And, although most of us are not in the habit of deliberate gathering, not to mention, categorising the "pieces" we consider worth retelling, it is a commonplace behaviour for people to do so – even for those who claim that, for instance, they are not big fans of jokes or riddles, or that they are not very good story- or riddle-tellers. It may be that in such cases people share some retell-able bits of their everyday experience or family stories, which – when you think of it – serve a very similar social and/or educational function as (more universal and less family-oriented) jokes or riddles. Their effect, too, may be exactly the same and in the course of time they go from mouth to mouth, gradually becoming what we can refer to as a (passable and valuable) spoken stroke.

This concept of spoken strokes is an extension of the theory first introduced by Eric Burne, who referred to *strokes* as the simplest unit of human interaction. As Burne showed, people exchange strokes whenever they meet one another and act naturally when recognising the presence of others. Accordingly, they will, for instance, nod in return for a nod, say

'hallo' in reply to someone else's "hallo", or smile in response to another person's similar facial expression. Most importantly, people seek balance in the strokes they exchange, which, as in one of Burne's examples, implies that when one neighbour goes on a holiday, the everyday *hallo-hallo*-based balance is violated and must be compensated for once the neighbour returns. This in practice means that the neighbours tend to exchange more strokes (such as *A: I haven't seen for a while – B: True, I've had a holiday, A: Where have you been – B: We've been to Spain; A: Was the weather nice – B: Yeah, it was fantastic*) so as to catch up with the strokes lost during the said holiday. Afterwards, that is when the balance has been regained, the neighbours' everyday interaction returns to the mundane *hallo-hallo* exchange – mostly without them realising that they find themselves in a somewhat – emotionally-wise – comfortable situation just because have regained the balance they had previously temporarily lost. According to the extended treatment of spoken strokes, we can apply the same balance-oriented logic to exchanges of longer pieces which people regularly exchange on different social occasions.

To expand your repertoire of spoken strokes (in the wider understanding of the word) and to equip yourself of their diversified set, you can treat this notion as a kind of filter for all information you happen to read or hear. If you apply a simple rule 'one stroke per day', you are bound to quickly discover that your repertoire is growing and you have stories, jokes, riddles, or discoveries to offer. If you do decide to apply this simple rule, give the stroke a title and put it down somewhere to help you memorise it. You do not need to memorise details, but only the essential information which makes the piece worth noting and sharing at a later stage. Now that we are bombarded with loads of information from around the place having a list of such bookmarks will prevent you from forgetting the stroke much sooner than you realise. Bear in mind, too, that a spoken stroke that other people are more likely to enjoy and remember is one in which there is some specific data provided in the form of names, numbers, places or dates, which also adds to your stroke's credibility.

Expanding your repertoire of spoken strokes is beneficial in a number of ways. First, it is useful for your mental 'hygiene': you develop the ability to distinguish information that is crucial for you from the information that

can be regarded as mental waste and, as such, an unnecessary burden. Second, the expansion in question is highly educational thanks to the fact of strokes being articulated and – somewhat accidentally – revised. Third, it serves your social needs and boosts your social status. After all, people that tell lots of strokes are not only those whom we like and whose company we enjoy, but also those whom we regard as our authorities and whom we wholeheartedly admire. You will most probably admit that the person you look up to happens to have communicated something that can easily be classified as a stroke and that has remained in your memory – whether it is a public figure, a person you have meet on professional grounds, a teacher, a family member, or, by the same token, a neighbour who has shared a story with you during one of your morning walks. And fourth, it significantly contributes to the development of a wide range of desirable personal qualities – your sense of humour, sensitivity to others, communication skills, or the ability to listen, to mention just a few.

Links worth noting: *2.1. Affective filter*, *3.1. Oracy*

Page for your own unit-related Spoken Stroke(s)

1.2. Make your messages meaningful.

Redundancy (vs. entropy)

Recall the last news you watched on telly or listened to on the radio. Did you pay attention to the form in which that news was presented? If you had done so (although very few people actually prove to have such an inclination), you might have observed that hardly any words were unnecessary for the message to be successfully conveyed. In other words – as it is technically called – hardly any of them were redundant. Hence, all of them were quite indispensable for the news to be well covered and effectively grasped. The information was continuously dense, as a result of which you needed to stay focused all the time to take in particular stories from A to Z, so to speak. The newscaster did not repeat words, nor make hesitation sounds, and did not use lexical items that people tend to use out of habit (say, *Well,..*, *I mean...*, or *I'll tell you what*) when speaking during everyday talk. As a consequence, there was no space for one to waste time listening to unnecessary wording or to get bored or frustrated over sentences conveying hardly any content. In a sense you could say that it had such a disadvantage that in order to get the entire message, no single fragment of it could be skipped, but the very same thing worked rather advantageously for the message – all along the spoken communication every bit contained meaningful substance. Of course, it would be rather inhuman(e) and absurd to expect such condensation of information from all ordinary spoken exchanges, but if at least some parts of what is normally conveyed do become less redundant, there is a concrete gain which cannot be overestimated – no matter what we happen to be talking about.

The notion of *redundancy* has long been present in the theory of communication and it refers to messages containing, as the word suggests, superfluous wording, which makes them predictable to the receiver (who could easily grasp the information without words or phrases being repeated). The term is generally contrasted with *entropy* (and *entropic communication*), which refers to the opposite situation, such as the one we have observed with the news: messages deprived of repetitions or out-of-habit "decorations", making the information conveyed far more

unpredictable to the receiver. In the so-called transmission models of communication developed by Claude Shannon, the balance between entropy and redundancy has been subject to a mathematical analysis, which is worth mentioning here not for the purpose of encouraging the reader to calculate the degree of superfluity, but in order to make it clear that an increase in one of the two qualities inevitably implies a reduction in the other. In other words, by subtracting unnecessary words (reducing our talk's redundancy), for instance, we add to their information load and resulting unpredictability (hence increasing our talk's entropy), which, as it needs to be emphasised is an issue which generally lies outside our everyday conversational reflection and which also relates to the sphere of grammaticality The latter case applies to grammatically correct sentences are partially redundant by definition – as, for example, the question *Do you like coffee?*, in which both the auxiliary *do* as well as the *yes/no* question intonation pattern function as markers or the interrogative form, which makes one of them objectively redundant. Yet, as the underlying goal of this book is to develop your speaking ego rather than to overrule the foundations of the language you use, this type of redundancy (studied by applied linguists) is viewed here as less crucial for one's speech.

You can view the right ratio of redundancy/entropy as the primary criterion for the assessment of your speech – more redundant in everyday communication and more entropic when what you are saying is meant to attract your listeners' attention (the latter should be the case when you happen to deliver a spoken stroke which we have discussed earlier). If the ratio does not change, you will fail as a speaker, similarly to the case when you get the two mixed up and your everyday speech becomes too entropic but public speeches exceedingly redundant (which may be caused by emotional reasons). Although taking things to the extreme is never a good option, there are several pieces of advice which are definitely worth following. First, eliminate those bits of speech which you use out of habit and insert all over the place in your speech as they might cause people to think that you either do not control what you are saying or need time to think about what to say next. Second, after watching or listening to news, try to retell it aloud to yourself to experience how much (entropy) will be lost in your speech, how much you happen to have lost (names, facts,

numbers, etc.), and how redundant your account of that news becomes (with lots of pauses, repetitions, or hesitation sounds). Third, train yourself in the act of thinking ahead about what to say next so as to reduce redundancy and add coherence to your spoken text. And fourth, pay attention to how the suitable form of delivery (the right redundancy-entropy ratio) is achieved by others.

Reducing redundancy (which is harder than the opposite direction) pays off immediately. Your speech becomes more catchy, substantive, and informative. And even though there is no need for you to hold conversations and deliver talks without any hesitation, repetition, or deviation (as they do in, for example, BBC Radio Four's *Just a Minute*), it pays to harness your speech in some degree and, by considering its form, make the delivery of the content far more effective and enjoyable. Considering the fact that so many people these days record videos and present them online without paying much attention (if any) to how much redundancy their productions contain, we can safely assume that we, as the viewers, would simply lose much less time had this characteristic of the videos been taken into account. If, on the other hand, the authors of online videos and speeches observed the principle "do unto others as you would have them do unto you" and cut down on redundancy at least in some degree, the online content would gain in quality and the negative emotions of the audience would be spared without their need to wait for the meaningful content they expect.

Links worth noting: *4.1. Content words*, *3.3. The Tonic*

Page for your own unit-related Spoken Stroke(s)

1.3. Define your own world.

Linguistic turn

Specify a person whose native language is the same as yours but whose choice of words you find somewhat strange or unusual. It can be anyone from your close circle, a neighbour, a shop assistant, a doctor, or anyone else you come across on a regular basis. Try to name what specifically in that person's speech has made you choose her or him. If you perhaps find it hard to choose a specific person, try to recall a conversation during which you were surprised by what you were told or by the way something was communicated to you. Did it not have something to do with your interlocutor's speech and his or her choice of words? Did you then ask yourself what the hell s/he was talking about? Did it not seem like the two of you naming the same thing in a completely different way? And now, for a change, think about a different person, but also sharing your native language – a person, who chooses words which you most suitable and which you might use yourself when referring to the same situations, people, or issues. You will probably agree here that this words-based mutual understanding between you and that person makes you think that you really see eye to eye with one another. And yet, despite such level of agreement, we have neither evidence nor right to conclude that the choice of words of the second person you chose is any objective sense truer or better than that of the first person, whose choice of words did not conform to yours. The reason is rather simple and complex at the same time: we all assign different meanings to the world we are living in and, from the linguistic perspective, there is no objective world.

The way we see these days the functioning of language(s) is exactly opposite to how it was seen in the past. As a result of what is well known as the *linguistic turn* and associated with Richard Rotry (who popularised the term) and Ludwig Wittgenstein (whose ideas had laid grounds for the reasoning in question), we no longer see language as simply a tool for describing the (non-linguistic) objective worlds, but we see this relationship exactly the other way round, that is language is seen as determining our (essentially subjective) world, to which we assign our own meanings. It is due to this radical 180-degree change of perspective

that in applied linguistics the phenomenon in question is compared to the so-called Copernicus turn. To apply the rationale of the Polish astronomer, we can say that the *linguistic turn* has truly resulted in two entities (i.e., our language and our world) taking completely different positions as compared to their earlier mental location. Perhaps the best formulation of the new positioning of our linguistic reasoning goes along Likutei Sichoss' words: We ourselves are words. We think of ourselves as beings that speak words. But, no, those words are who we are, they extend from our essence and they define our being. They define our place in the world and the define the world in which we are placed". To complete this short theoretical "story" of turns, we should also note that the linguistic turn was followed by the so-called *narrativist turn*, a (slightly more philosophical) concept introduced first by Martin Kreiswirth, whereby language is a peculiar medium used to convey our internal complex narrations. Probably the implication which is most relevant for this publication is that each of us creates a unique narration about the world and the "truth" about it is negotiated (constructed) in the course of social exchange of our individual narrations.

In order to fully appreciate the fact that your language underlies the world in which you live (rather than the other way round), you can carry out several simple mental exercises. First, look at the physical objects surrounding you and reflect briefly on the words you use to name them. You may not be able to realise what or who first prompted you to use these very words, but you will possibly discover that you have been employing them somewhat automatically as if the words literally belonged to these objects – which, quite obviously, they do not. Second, try to come up with some other possible words which theoretically might be fitting for the objects you see. Do you suppose your idea of these objects would be different if they were called with the labels you have just created? I guess you are very likely to agree then that even if your visual image of these objects remained the same, you would have different associations with them and, most interestingly, you might cherish significantly dissimilar feelings with regard to them. Third, consider some abstractions, that is words denoting what you do *not* literally see, be it frankness, difficulty, democracy, or love. How would you define them? Do you believe that if

you asked anyone from your circle, they would come up with the same or very similar definition? If anyone did, how would you account for this closeness of your definitions? If not, would you view this as a positive or negative phenomenon? Such questions can be easily multiplied (but not necessarily easily answered), which makes us realise the fact that with regard to language and our ways of defining our world, there are so many things that we do not realise and/or, being too busy or too lazy to be bothered – most detrimentally for our mental and linguistic development – take for granted.

Once you have implemented the lenses of the linguistic turn into your everyday perspective, there are lots of benefits on the horizon. The most apparent one directly follows from the previous paragraph: you enrich your (automatically narrow) view on reality. Although the ordinary (i.e., very human) tendency of sticking to our usual labels provides us with something of a comfort zone, our set of fixed and unquestioned denotations serves as a serious limitation preventing us from reaching out further and deeper in our experiencing of the world. But apart from this somewhat egoistically-oriented gain, we can observe a number of other possible more socially- and developmentally- poised benefits. The main one could be our increased tolerance of others, their language, and their (language-based) approach to things or ideas, and their overall interpretation of their world. The elevated tolerance implies growing acceptance, compassion, empathy, or respect. It thus pays to observe here that the implementation of the concept in question has the potential of fostering numerous interpersonal and peace-serving values, which – in our conflicts-stricken reality – are benefits just impossible to overestimate.

Links worth noting: *3.4. Formulaic speech*, *2.3. Language performance*

Page for your own unit-related Spoken Stroke(s)

1.4. Compose your own language.

Thematic blends

Consider the fact that language is very similar to music. There are two groups of word combinations: first, those that are so fixed and popular that you simply need to know them to understand what people are saying (like well-known and easily recognisable melodies), and, second, those of a looser and individual character which you create anew by yourself by putting together items not so frequently combined (exactly as advanced composers do). The former will include "pieces" such as *How are you doing?* or *It's very nice to meet you*, whilst the latter may cover *Are your daily matters proceeding smoothly?* or *Meeting you constituted a great experience for me*. The former is a must in the learning of any language, whilst the latter are more of an option for those who wish to master or play with the language. The fixed word combinations are more a social property, whereas the latter characterise individual people and make them stand out in a crowd – just like well-known pieces of music being known and played by many, as opposed to novel musical creations sounding unusual and thus appealing to our ears much more. To cut the story (comparison) short, we can say that language beginners can handle best-known combinations of words only (just like growing musicians can reproduce the most familiar pieces), whilst advanced language users will cut across phrases so as to form those that have not been encountered as of yet (similarly to musicians improvising with the sounds they have learnt).

The idea (perspective) of composing your own language was introduced first (by the author of this very text) with reference to English and in connection with the notion of *thematic blends*. As the concept implies, what gets blended in any human language are not only isolated words, but also whole thematic fields. Hence, we can be talking about a single topic at a time or two or more topics simultaneously, and so, the aforementioned similarity to music also applies at the level of themes. Most interestingly, we begin to blend themes quite unconsciously at a very early stage of our linguistic development as we, for instance, do not talk about, say, numbers only (when saying *Two plus two is four*, or *Four times ten equals forty*), but we instantly and effectively relate them to a wide range of issues we