

Language conventions — paradoxically — as grounds for EFL students' (oracy-oriented) personal experience

The paper addresses the seemingly paradoxical phenomenon of the conventional underlying the personal in foreign language learning, i.e. how the presence of fixed language elements (collocations etc.) contributes to EFL learners' subjective sensation of personally meaningful educational experience. Resting on the rationale of FL learning taking the form of composing, the paper aims to outline observations justifying the application of ready-given word combinations (which, by some theoreticians and practitioners, tend to be disparaged as being not ambitious or developmental enough). It discusses the key point from the four perspectives: pedagogica — whereby the fact of students' uttering subject matter is cherished, didactic — here the so-called 'directed utterances' are advocated, linguistic — in the case of which the pivotal issue is exemplified with one specific semantic field, and psycholinguistic perspective — whereby EFL learners' awareness of conceptual relationships within and across topics ("formal control") proves highly conducive to learning and as such merits being treated as a central educational objective. Although the examples included in the paper are derived from EFL materials, the overall approach presented herein applies to all other disciplines and subjects.

Keywords: foreign language learning, educational experience, linguistic.

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1. Through pedagogical lenses: utterance as an educational value and personally meaningful event

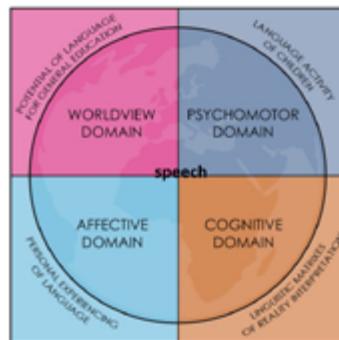
If students' utterances are to be fostered, they are to become an educational value per se.

Students' unforced utterances do not easily fall to empirical studies, which, consequently, remain few and far between. Whilst **fostering students' utterances in the classroom** is — beyond any doubt — most advisable and conducive to their academic and professional success, the studies of student utterances, hard as they are, need to pertain to all four educational domains — that is, a student's cognition, emotions, psychomotor aspects and his or her worldview. This results from a simple observation that it takes a fair lot for a student to unforcedly speak in the classroom: specifically, a student needs to

- ♦ (on the cognitive level) **know what to say**, and
- ♦ (on the affective level) **be in a mood to say it**, and
- ♦ (on the psychomotor level) **have the physical ability to articulate it**, and
- ♦ (on the level of the student's worldview) **find it worthwhile to speak and regard it as concordant with one's approach to education and life**.

How much it takes for a student to speak can be presented graphically as follows¹.

This **four-facetedness** of classroom speech partially accounts for the **rarity of its comprehensive studies**, with studies pertaining to only one dimension being more commonplace, especially with regards to the affective dimension (there is an interesting example demonstrating how scaffolded constructive teacher-guided talk can lower ESL learners' affective filters, presented by Naicker and Balfour



¹ The graph is used by the author as a representation of the widely understood educational role of language, the concept of which has also prompted a creation of an international scientific ERL network.

(2009)) [14]. The wide-ranging four-faceted studies may, however, soon become more commonplace following significant advancements in the methodology of qualitative research (particularly in empirical techniques aimed at recognition of the so-called personal constructs² or studies taking the so-called classroometric perspective³, both of which assign novel meanings to the traditional concepts of validity, reliability and others⁴). The progress observed in the qualitative research methodology has thus yielded techniques which are far better suited for interdisciplinary studies as complex as those pertaining to students' utterances. Considered separately, the four domains named above have traditionally required methods such as proficiency or achievement tests, questionnaires, phonetic analyses or interviews respectively; nonetheless, regarded jointly through the prism of modern qualitative research approaches, the four dimensions appear "tameable" by personalness-focused techniques. In the case of methods applied with a view to recognizing in what sense (dimension, domain) students' utterances do become personally meaningful events, empirical studies need to leave room for what is referred to as learners'/respondents' "climbing down the ladder" (in search of lower-level categories), that is providing specific and detailed instances of personally experienced utterances and situations prompting those, as well as "climbing up the ladder" (looking for higher-order categories), that is referring to more general concepts standing beyond students' unforced classroom utterances.

Apart from the empirical complexity, another reason why studies of students' utterances may not have been too extensively undertaken is the **subservient role of classroom speech typically assigned in education**. As found in empirical studies focused on the status of classroom speech [3. P. 133–136], the more common approach is — unfortunately — that

(it is) students' speech (that) serves classroom activities

rather than

(it is) classroom activities (that) serve students' speech.

The research in question, based on the premise of existence of four general approaches taken with regards to the educational role of language, that is (i) language as a tool for solving classroom tasks, (ii) language as a tool for acquiring general knowledge, (iii) language as an attribute of personality, and (iv) language as an educational value/objective per se. As follows from the study's findings, whilst the approaches referred to under (i) prove very common, the attitudes covered under (ii), (iii) and (iv) were hardly present in students' remarks on their own classroom utterances. In practice, this means that students' comments on when and why they speak in the classroom reflected a highly utilitarian approach to speech as useful for classroom activities (e.g. *I speak when I want to give somebody information, or I also speak when I want to show that...;* or *I speak when I feel pushed to do it for example during group works, pair works, presentations...*). Their remarks, however, contained hardly any statements which might be seen as indicative of the other approaches such as *I do my best to speak as much as possible to see that I'm learning things or I seize all opportunities to express myself so that my teachers correct me if I think wrong* (representing approach (ii)), *if people do not know what and how I speak, they don't really know me...* or *I see the world through language and by speaking I construct my reality*

² The development and implications of the personal constructs technique are synthetically presented in D. Bourne and Devi A. Jankowicz 2012 [2]. What constitutes an additional merit of the text is that it also relates to the quantitative aspect of the technique and briefly demonstrates its representative "Red Grid" applications.

³ The foundations of the classroometry, construed as essentially opposite to psychometry and as a more readily available teacher approach to everyday instruction and learning, are well presented by P.A. Moss (2003) [12] and J.K. Smith 2003 [2], whose classroom-oriented re-consideration of validity and reliability chimes with the rationale of the approach based on students' language composing as referred to in this paper.

⁴ Particularly promising here are recently coined definitions of concepts assigning more flexibility as compared to their traditional understanding, such as, for example, 'communicative validity' or 'procedural validity' (Flick 2014) [8], the latter of which is close to "reflexive accounting", as suggested by Altheide and Johnson (1998) [1]. Following the rationale outlined by the authors, we can infer that language teaching and learning remains valid as long as it allows for personal language composing, taken into account at the level of planning, teaching and assessment.

more consciously... (representing approach (iii)) *I get involved in group work so as to exercise and experience speech or I do wish my school made me able to speak for a while about all the issues we study in it* (representing approach (iv). Accordingly, it was inferred from the study that the developmental potential of classroom speech is grossly undervalued, which is, no doubt, related to not sufficient attention being paid to language per se and insufficient practice focused on its form rather than the content. (From the empirical perspective it needs to be added here that in the study the respondents were requested to explain what influences their decisions to speak or not to speak in the classroom (which provided an opportunity for them to “climb up the ladder” as referred to above, and also to refer to a specific classroom situation in which they made such decisions (which, to complement the former, was a prompt to “climb the ladder down” by referring to these situations’ specifics)).

One solution to the aforementioned problem of (teachers and students) assigning too low a status in education to language (which is highly detrimental to the process of teaching and learning) is the **idea of language composing**, whereby students build up their unique combinations of language elements and topics⁵. There occurs here a direct analogy to the process of composing music consisting in admitting into one’s personal repertoire both ready-made pieces as well as combinations formulated anew (which is largely but not fully a chronological process of a person progressing from the (ability to make use of) the conventional into the stage of attaining (the skill to produce) the innovative. What makes this analogy even stronger is that whilst the latter is a highly personally meaningful experience generating pride, sense of well-deserved achievement and satisfaction, the former remains necessary and, especially but not only in the case of beginners, yields a sound volume of positive emotions, too. In other words, although both in the case of music and language, a student will rest on conventional pieces (of music or text) on his or her individual path to creation of novel (musical or textual) constructions, the element of personalness will arguably constitute the common denominator of the two stages.

What follows from the above is that by thinking of students’ utterances in a way comparable to music, **we (help students) render what they say a personally meaningful experience**, regardless of the degree of creativity or unconventionality. To systematize and operationalise our understanding of this phenomenon, we can refer here to the classical concept of meaningful learning by Carl Rogers construed as the extent to which a student wishes to change under the influence of learning. As noted by the American psychologist, this extent can be evaluated through the prism of four criteria, namely a student’s satisfaction, internal progress, unforced contribution to classroom activities and willingness to further delve into particular issues [19. P. 92], all of which, as Niemierko notes, are “internally deep” and require more than the teacher’s activity [15. P. 4]. Hence, if we accept students’ utterances as an educational value per se, the personal status of their utterances will become emphasized as we, as teachers, make students realize that they can and should derive satisfaction from the very fact of uttering things (be it in a conventional or creative manner), appreciate the influential character of one’s speech, welcome contributions to classroom activities (again, both less and more creative), and encourage work on one’s way of expressing subject matter (with one’s own words or words borrowed from other speakers). The concept of personal meaningfulness is closely related to the pedagogical notion of acquired helplessness, that is the students’ sensation of being unable to cope, which, as Sędek observes, signal future failures [21], and which results from their failure to grasp the subject matter and for which teachers are to blame. We need to note here that in the case of language such helplessness “learnt” at school will be made more likely by those teachers who do not allow conventional utterances and allow their students to speak only if they have something innovative and unusual to say.

2. Through didactic lenses: a directed utterance as a teacher’s tool and socially shaped element

If every utterance is educationally valuable, directed utterances are to be allowed/encouraged.

⁵ The idea was initially applied to the learning of a second language, but in this very text it is treated as equally applicable to other subjects as well, with students’ speaking skills being of primary importance just as well.

In didactic terms, the above implies that the **personal element of students' utterances remains essentially intact even when they are explicitly directed by the teacher or otherwise**. By a *directed utterance* here we shall understand any formulation made by a student, the form of which (not necessarily the content, which is harder to prove as directly suggested) is at least partially copied from a ready-given written or oral statement. As shown by another study, students learning English as their second language prove (a) to value directed utterances both in the sphere of production as well as reception, (b) to recognize them as an integral component on their path to fluency and, most importantly for this very text, (c) to be convinced that repetition of conventional combinations of words boosts their ability to express views in more innovative ways [3. P. 221]. In the study in question (which also articulated the potential of directed utterance in keeping the gap between reception and production possibly narrow), after having been presented with the division of utterances into authorial and directed ones, the respondents replied to questions concerning their position to the latter category (with the questions retaining a balance between reception and production and also between form- and content-oriented issues). Apart from the general stance revealed by the respondents and referred to above (under (a)–(c)), they demonstrated a highly personal approach manifested with statements concerning self-confidence in speech (e.g. *make me sure...*), acquisition of subskills (e.g. *I can focus on correctness...*), emotions when listening to others using conventional speech (...*they impress me...* or ...*they signal the language I'd like to achieve...*) or personal needs (...*I need to repeat to acquire it better...*).

Practically speaking, in the case of foreign language learning, the directing of utterances can easily be envisaged and fulfilled within specific topics or thematic fields. For example, with the topic of EATING HABITS, in which several key sub-fields can be recognized such as meals, cutlery, cuisines, dishes etc., directed utterances will best be those word combinations which can be argued to well represent the sub-fields distinguished. For example, *I have my breakfast at seven*, *She always eats with a knife and fork*, *My favourite cuisine is the Italian one*, or *For lunch we generally have meat with vegetables* (respectively). Whilst each of these sentences is highly conventional and, as a consequence, far from being innovative (similarly to the very idea of beginner language learners reproducing them), they complement one another in that it is on the basis of language users articulating them that we infer that they are capable of speaking about the particular topic. In other words, thanks to mastering conventions, language learners reach the stage when they can pass as those that can discuss particular subjects. Furthermore, it is such conventional utterances that lend themselves easily to the so-called replacements (to be discussed below).

In the case of subjects in which it is not language that is the primary object of learning (but, say, geography, mathematics, history or science), the directing of utterances also has the potential of serving a very significant (and commonly underrated and unnoticed) educational function. As we now know, talk supports thinking (and, consequently, learning, too), “teachers should enhance oracy through their teaching regardless of their subject and (...) all teaching can be enhanced by oracy regardless of the subject” [7. P. 14]. Although the character of learners' difficulties differs in the case of subjects other than language in that, for instance, articulating subject matter (in their native language) may not be a problem, the same four dimensions come to the fore and so students still experience their classroom utterances on the cognitive and affective level, and, similarly, hold their own convictions as to whether it is worth speaking in the classroom or not. This being the case, also in the case of lessons devoted to subjects other than (native or second) language itself, directed utterances effectively serve the functions and bring about the benefits mentioned by the respondents of the aforementioned study. What follows is that practices focused on directed utterances (e.g. oral repetitions of definitions, completing ready-made beginnings of sentences), which have been traditionally associated essentially with learning a foreign language one and which may appear unnecessary, amusing or artificial, gain here a fully justifiable status in the learning of any school subject.

One reason for which directed utterances prove conducive to education is that they serve as sort of templates for students which are filled or completed with specific content, which **narrows down the scope /**

load set by the four domains referred to in the first section by lessening the cognitive and affective load of a particular utterance: thanks to being presented a ready-given formulation and following its form, it takes less on the part of a student to speak in the classroom: the form of an utterance is “already there” and so a student does not need to reflect (and spend time) on its form or — on the affective level — be concerned about others having and/or showing negative emotions with regards to his or her classroom utterance (with this kind of fear, commonly referred to as social anxiety to speak, having been shown to frequently prevent students from expressing themselves⁶).

To make such lessening of the student’s load most likely and effective, **directed utterances need to be incorporated into all three stages of classroom instruction**, that is planning, teaching and (widely understood) testing. At the stage of planning their inclusion into the instructional process may consist in simply familiarizing students with the sense and usefulness of directed utterances, at the stage of teaching — in, for example, encouraging oral repetitions of the previously uttered content, and finally — in building such (written or oral) test items in which acquisition of conventional word combinations is left room for by being positively credited (as the important initial stage of development preceding further progress on the way to language spontaneity and mastery). This point can be looked at in such a way that to weaker students (albeit not only) such an approach at the three stages to directed utterances provides the key opportunity to personally experience the subject matter studied.

The said **incorporation of directed utterances into the three stages of classroom instruction is socially conditioned**. As “no social code cannot be construed in separation from its social application” [9. P. 89], the acceptance and appreciation of directed utterances is bound to vary from culture to culture, depending on what level of conventionality/spontaneity is advocated and exercised by various educational systems. The approach to directed utterances themselves will then often be an effect of the unconscious process of assuming the national perspective in a given society within which its members follow one another on the level of language, which, as Mudyń notes, is related to our former personal language experience: “We largely think the way we speak, and we speak the way our interlocutors used to” [13. P. 82]. The social conditioning encompasses primarily our closest surroundings, which in the education context encompasses school friends and their instructors: “The intersections of language, learning and learner identities converge in the relationships between peers, teachers, and the communities of each” [18. P. 271].

3. Through linguistic lenses: *replacements* as a shift in oracy-geared language composing

If directed utterances are to be admitted, then in FL learning there is to be room for conventions.

In the case of language, that is **when it is language that is itself the object of learning**, there are numerous labels that denote groups of words, phrases or sentences which are fixed, simple to reproduce and, as such, reminiscent of directed utterances as defined above. Such is the case with the so-called formulaic speech (viewed as pragmatic units facilitating children’s linguistic development [25. P. 23], similes, binomials, social-exchange conventions, polywords, institutionalized expressions, phrasal constraints, sentence builders⁷, etc., the acquisition of which is both necessary and beneficial to all further stages of language learning. Despite the fact that these language categories — simplistically associated with drills, audiolingualism or fossilization of language — can be frowned upon as eliminating or reducing language creativity⁸ (especially if they

⁶ As demonstrated a long time ago now, speaking in the foreign language in the classroom is claimed by many a student to be the “most anxiety-producing experience” [24. P. 539], which is one of numerous reasons why it is worthwhile looking for ways of reducing students’ emotional load, which appears doable with language conventions.

⁷ Representative examples and the roles they play are discussed in, for example, Wei & Ying 2011 [23].

⁸ Another common grounds for disparaging teaching methods following the premises of or similar to audiolingualism and such relate to them not being natural enough and not taking the pragmatic element into account. On these grounds the communicative approach is based as doing away with these weaknesses or earlier methodologies.

are used too excessively or repeatedly), they, most admittedly, have the power of moving language learning forward. This appears to be related to them generating the sense of achievement and producing speech, which makes their use a personally significant experience. From the point of view of other language users, it is the conventional phrases, word combinations, replies, sentences, etc. that lead to our interlocutors observing one's *familiarity* with language, as opposed to novel word combinations, unheard-of collocations, unusual replies, rare content words (i.e. verbs, nouns, adjectives & adverbs) distinguishing subtle shades of meanings etc. that generate the impression of *proficiency* with language. This is interestingly borne out by non-native language users (especially language beginners) generating a possible impression on the part of interlocutors that they are not familiar with language whenever they happen to be excessively unconventional, and, at the same time, native language users being "allowed" to speak any way (i.e. using any combinations) they like. This seems to reflect an unwritten principle "First you learn to copy, before you learnt to create.

There quickly comes a stage, though, that we can think of language learning in terms of (personally-experienced) language composing, the **next naturally following step** of which are **the so-called replacements**. 'Replacements' are understood here as parts of text stretches/sentences which perform the same function in them (e.g. subjects, verbs, direct or indirect objects, adverbials). Obvious as the concept might appear, it is well-grounded in pedagogical, psychological and linguistic sciences. From the pedagogical perspective, the move from conventional expressions to utterances including elements newly provided by students to replace other functional elements is tantamount to a (well-informed) shift from the simple to the (slightly more) complex, which is considered to be a motivating instructional behavior; from the psychological perspective, it adds to the feeling on security and comfort when learning, which then is seen as pleasantly controllable and predictable; and, additionally, from the linguistic perspective – the shift in question is concordant with a focus being moved from more frequent or prototypical words and expressions onto less frequent⁹ or less prototypical¹⁰ ones.

As an example we can refer to the previously cited topic called EATING HABITS and the examples of conventional sentences given. The shift (escape) away from the conventions is to be easily envisaged by replacing in them the meal, cutlery, cuisine and dishes, respectively, so that we arrive at, for instance, *I have supper at nine, She never eats with a spoon, My favourite cuisine is Welsh, or For lunch we generally have baked beans on toast*. Reminiscent of drills as it may appear, this process of moving away from conventions by means of replacements substantially differs, among other aspects, in that the replacements are semantically (rather than syntactically) motivated and complementary to one another (as they represent formerly established thematic subfields), the resulting sentences are open to students' spontaneous content, and, as a result, the key aim of the procedure is not mechanization of language use, but (prompted-but-not-dominated-by-conventions) its personalization.

Replacements work best if considered and employed **across all parts of sentence and all parts of speech**. Therefore, apart from the examples presented above, in which it is noun phrases functioning as direct objects or objects of prepositions that fall subject to replacements, their potential scope encompasses a wide range of other options to be taken into account and put into practice¹¹. Their possibly harmonious incorporation is vital for students to better appreciate the role of language conventions (as necessary for

⁹ In English the popularity of specific words has been well studied and can now be easily established with the so-called frequency lists; replacements, as defined here, will consist in replacing words used more often (i.e. scoring high on the lists in question) with the more seldom ones (having fewer "hits" on the frequency lists).

¹⁰ The category of prototypical concepts is one of the underlying ideas of cognitive linguistics (e.g. in G. Lakoff's publications), which can be argued to constitute yet another form of language conventions, with some concepts conventionally understood as more typical representations of notions, and others less.

¹¹ Ideally, the replacements should cover multiple sentence elements and multiple functions described in, for example, Greenbaum 1996 [10. P. 88–202].

further studies but also imposing limits on their interlanguage¹²) and for their language use not becoming too fossilized, but appropriately personal on the cognitive and affective strata.

By replacing in this fashion various major or minor components of utterances, we embark on genuine language composing (similarly to how it works in music, where less or more prominent sounds can be altered) and a sensible piece of advice to follow reads along the lines “**the more replacements, the more composing**”. Yet, there remains “at the back of our heads” the idea of language conventions, from which it all starts. To modify, amend, reconstruct or render a sentence more innovative, one needs awareness of its “genesis”. In other words, to be able to alter a piece of text and to realize that it is indeed an alteration, one must be familiar with the convention, the familiarity with which allows one to embark on linguistic creation and to be aware of performing it. As studies on psychometrics of word use prove people’s word choice to be stable over time and consistent across topic or context [17. P. 556]¹³, the ongoing implementation of replacements can be regarded as one way of acting against excessive stability or fossilization of language; whilst the awareness and mastery of conventions is beneficial and conducive to further development, their excessive presence, as any other form of one-sidedness or exaggeration, does disservice to students.

4. Through psycholinguistic lenses: blending ideas as an objective in conscious FL studies

If in FL studies there is room for conventions, then ideas are to be consciously blended.

The next step naturally sought by those that have acquired the ability to replace language content within one given topic is **reaching beyond by combining two or more topics within the same utterance**. There comes a stage in language learning when repetitions, directed utterances, or monothematic replacements cease to pose an obstacle per se and to trigger sufficient personal sense of achievement. It is then by blending issues that the educational potential of utterances, initially fully directed, can best be sensed and experienced.

For example, the topic of EATING HABITS referred to earlier, naturally blends with other topics generally introduced at early stages of language learning, e.g. FAMILY (an exemplary question checking on the ability to utter sentences blending the two topics: *Which members of your family do you have breakfast with?*), TIME (including issues such as telling the time, days of the week, months of the year) (an exemplary question: *Do you have the same thing for lunch in summer as in winter?*), or NUMBERS (an exemplary question: *How many spoons and knives do you generally put on the table before Saturday dinner?*)

From the concept of blending topics and ideas there emerges a need for students to develop **awareness of what specifically is and can be combined**. This awareness has been referred to as the “formal control” over the language being learnt (complementing their informative control over it, which consists in reflection the content as opposed to the form) [5. P. 47]. Empirical studies clearly show students from different countries to be far more concerned about the content, the message and communication than about the build-up of their interlanguage (ibid.). How one’s language is thematically structured proves not to be paid as much attention to as lexis within particular topics, fluency and correctness. If we accept that mastery of a language encompasses one’s awareness of what is learnt and in what sense one’s interlanguage is structured and how it is unique, students’ ignorance of these issues puts them at a substantial disadvantage.

The formal control in question can be seen as a form of **reconstruction of how language users unconsciously act with language by combining its multiple components together**. An analogy can also be drawn here to our innate human tendency to rest on universal metaphors, as only long ago described by Lakoff and Johnson [11] The two authors were the first show how dependent we remain on general metaphors driving our everyday language, in which it becomes hardly possible to speak without employing them (e.g.

¹² In Larry Selinker’s understanding [20. P. 212].

¹³ As the authors note, the level of stability of people’s word choice is sufficiently stable to serve as an individual difference measure.

metaphors such as 'Happy is Up, Unhappy is Down', 'Argument is War', or 'Time is Money'). By discovering them, they have carried out a reconstruction, the character of which is similar to what the development of formal control over topics requires: the metaphors which "we live by", as the authors put it, serve as pillars upon which our entire language rests very much like conventional expressions constituting what we refer to here as directed utterances, the absence of which in our speech would be comparably detrimental.

The conscious consideration of conventional ways of speaking serving as directed utterances also shed some light on **quantitative aspects of successful language learning**, which adds to the highly personalized and emotional language experience and which may fail to be drawn on. What is meant here are aspects to do with numbers of language elements, time, pace etc. It is through training in the active use of conventional expressions that language learners develop the sense of success the earliest, especially beginners, whose familiarity with conventions can quickly be referred to in numerical or temporal categories (such as, for example, active knowledge of a given number of topic-related expressions, ability to speak about a subject for three minutes, etc.). Looking at students' mastery of language through such quantitative aspects may, however, be regarded by many as detrimental to their genuine language progress as counting words or measuring time may prompt students to be too much concerned about the quantity and too little about the quality of their familiarity with language elements. If however, the role of quantitative criteria is viewed as supportive to the qualitative ones, they contribute to students' sense of achievement. Here the direct relationship between (repetitive) language conventions and the personalness of language use can well be seen.

The powerful transition from the conventional to the personal discussed in this paper **can in all likelihood occur in any discipline in which language is applied** for the purposes of teaching and learning. One of the prerequisites of its occurrence is teachers' realization of the four educational domains "co-acting" in the case of every single utterance. This is to say that even if a student's oral capacity in a subject, from the cognitive point of view, is very high (i.e. s/he knows and understands particular issues), they will often choose not to speak due to being upset, tired or convinced it is worth doing so — that is they will refrain from speech for affective, psychomotor or world-view related reasons, respectively. On the other hand, the positive emotional load — generated, for example, by successful oral applications of language conventions, has the potential of compensating gaps in knowledge, energy or enthusiasm. In such a case a student will make the decision to speak without hesitation, without considering his or her weaknesses, and thus paving the way for the well-known phenomenon of a person learning through and thanks to uttering any subject matter.

Finally, what needs to be emphasized is that perhaps **the conventional-spontaneous link proves not to be one based on sequentiality but on permanent co-occurrence** instead. This is to say that what students (not only of language) naturally learn to say does not tend to and does not need to shift from repeated to authorial utterances, but rather continuously combine the two. **Conventional utterances, reproduced repetitively after others, somewhat paradoxically prove to become and be experienced as more "ours" simply thanks to being uttered by us** — possibly in part of, as Peacock notes, our human tendency of enjoying the rhythm and cadences of language even if we do not always understand every word [16. P. 34]. If not properly and early enough recognized, this phenomenon will not have its chance of exerting its natural positive effect on students, who, as a result, will be compelled to articulate novel subject matter only. As obvious as it may sound here, it is the element of conventionality of language that allows different language teaching methods to "blast off" with students. This common denominator appears, however, to be a characteristic not so much of the teaching techniques themselves as of students, who invariably need positive reinforcements and the sense of progress to move and to want to move forward.

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