

Phraseological Picture of the World and Communication: Take “Carpe Diem” as an Example

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Abstract—Phraseological units are an integral part of the national linguistic culture. In the collective consciousness of native speakers, set phrases generate a phraseological picture of the world common to any language community. Individuals have their phraseological picture of the world integrated into the general one. The phraseological parameters of discourse and communication represent valuable material for innovative research in the field of communication aesthetics. Phraseological grammar and aesthetics correlate with the creative aspect of stable word combinations of national culture and worldview. The article considers some aspects of French phraseological communication and a picture of the world with due regard to ethnocultural and diachronic factors. A hypothesis is put forward that a specific phraseological unit (“carpe diem”) has a high degree of linguocultural activity in the modern French discourse and, accordingly, in the linguistic picture of the world. There are prospects for further cognitive-communicative research of the phraseological discourse.

Index Terms—linguistic world image, phraseological communication, semantic and symbolic dominants, linguoculture, discourse use

I. INTRODUCTION

Throughout their life activity and everyday communication, people need emotional and figurative phrases that enrich their language and speech. They are often the most accurate for a particular content, intention, and relationship that cannot be expressed by common words. Thus, variable combinations of words undergo phraseologization and, due to the rethinking of their meaning and numerous repetitions, acquire *the stability* of a phraseological unit.

The last few decades have been marked by an ever-increasing interest in semantic and linguocultural dominants in the sphere of national culture combined with the search for optimal communication and discourse algorithms. In this regard, phraseology and the phraseological picture of the world have an inexhaustible potential and become research

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objects for the global philological community (Cherkashina, 2010; Fedulenkova, 2019; Popova, 2005; Sedykh & Sopova, 2010).

According to several scholars, *the phraseological palette* is formed in the consciousness of native speakers and the linguistic and cultural community they are part of. Each individual has their version of this image integrated into the general linguistic picture of the world (Sedykh & Sopova, 2010; Vorotnikov, 2013).

Along with the term “linguistic picture of the world”, the article uses the concept of phraseological picture of the world to denote the totality of phraseological units that serve a specific national discourse and linguistic culture (Vinogradov, 1977).

The linguistic aesthetics of phraseology has repeatedly become the object of research and comprehensive discussion in the humanitarian and philological circles (Grishaeva, 2007; Medvedev, 2022; Ogneva et al., 2015; Vishnyakova, 2003; Zaika, 2000). However, this object is far from definitive and exhaustive explanations of its essential characteristics. The word as the main nominative unit of phraseology has a high aesthetic potential and is closely related to the concept of individual style embodied in everyday discourse and literary texts with the help of various means of aesthetic influence. The lexical level of language, in particular phraseology, has the greatest aesthetic resources (Komova & Garagulya, 2012).

Phraseological units in any national linguistic culture perform several functions related to the methods of identification, ideological models of reality reflection, and institutional and axiological characteristics of the linguistic world image.

Any linguistic picture of the world is directly related to the national specifics of a word. According to Alefirenko (2009), this is predetermined by objective and subjective factors:

“They are distinguished through comparing languages. The *objective* factor is understood as the values-based and semantic significance of natural and cultural realities that determine the uniqueness of the living space of a particular people. The *subjective* factor is characterized by the possibility of choosing different signs for the same realities, which are differently represented by the mentality of different ethnolinguistic communities.” (pp. 68-69).

A phraseological unit is perceived by communicants as a complex formation that has a holistic meaning and cannot be reduced to the sum of the meanings of its components. To use phraseological units in communicative acts, the intentions of the speaker/writer should be correctly recognized by the listener/reader. In other words, the information encrypted in such units of the indirectly derived nomination should be decoded by the addressee. The necessary condition for successful communication is the knowledge (both the addresser and the addressee) of a single cultural and linguistic code, which is the theoretical and empirical basis of this research.

The study aims at determining the mechanisms of functioning of the phraseological unit “*carpe diem*” within the French linguistic culture.

II. METHODS

The methodological basis of this article is the linguo-semiotic approach to the representations of phraseology in language and speech and the possibility of reflecting characterological parameters of the speaker’s personality in phraseological units and phraseological usage. The study uses theoretical provisions developed within the framework of linguistics and pragmatics of phraseological discourse.

Methods and techniques are predetermined by the research objective and tasks, as well as the specifics of the material. We used descriptive and introspective methods based on the reflective observation of colloquial speech, including the methods of establishing the identity of linguistic and characterological features. We also used the methods of rhetorical analysis and some elements of comparative and connotative synthesis of linguistic material.

Phraseological aesthetics should be studied not only within the framework of nominations but also as a phenomenon of communication. In this regard, all aspects of the aesthetics of phraseological culture are considered from the viewpoint of the fullness of communicative information (Kharchenko, 2010).

The most important element of this study is to analyze the use of nominees of phraseological objects in various types of modern discourse. In this connection, phraseological discourse is interpreted as an integral part of the conceptual space of the national language and communication (Pruvost et al., 2018).

The main positions of the methodology for studying the nominations of phraseological objects are categorical features that are distinguished at the level of the functioning of language units in discourse and communication. A phraseonym (the nominee of a phraseological object) becomes a part of a special discourse and often loses its connection with a specific person or object, i.e. its direct nominative function, ceases to be an expression of ultimate singularity, and begins to generalize and transform meanings. The phraseonym partially loses its connection with single concepts and acquires additional connotations.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Let us consider indirect derivatives in the French language and linguistic culture. The phraseological usage of modern French linguistic culture is characterized by an increased intensity of set phrases in various types of discourse, from everyday to scientific and technical (Sedykh et al., 2020).

The French phraseological unit “*carpe diem*” (literally, “seize the day”) turns out to be a maxim that came into the French language from Antiquity. The ancient saying is so popular in all types of French discourse that it begins to act as a certain life philosophy for representatives of the French Republic.

The Latin expression “*carpe diem*” literally means “to pluck the day”. The first meaning of the *carpere* verb (carpo, carpsi, carptum, carpere) is to tear, pluck, and collect. For example, *flores carpimus* = we pick flowers; *carpere fructus* = to pick fruit. There are similar meanings: *carpere escam* (to breathe, live); *carpere iter* (to go, set off). This verb originally belonged to the agricultural vocabulary (Grosheva, 2009). The phrase often develops in the following form: *quam minimum credula postero*, which means “trusting as little as possible in the next one”. The content of this sentence instructs the addressee to “enjoy today without worrying about tomorrow”.

In the modern French discourse, “*carpe diem*” is synonymous with the “*profite de la vie*” expression (“to enjoy life”), which correlates with popular “*profites-en*” (“take advantage of this”) or with its less popular counterpart “*profite (bien)!*” (Have a good one!). The *profiter* verb plays the main role in these sayings (to use, benefit, profit; grow, gain weight, strengthen), which is the vector of the basic ternary seme “benefit → advantage → profit”.

Modern French interprets this phrase as an invitation to enjoy the present moment devoid of worries about the future. The current semiotics of the proverb has its origin in the Epicurean philosophy that encourages the search for happiness by satisfying natural and necessary desires. The great optimist Epicurus claimed that the purpose of human life was to seek pleasure and avoid displeasure (in modern terms, “without fanaticism”), but with a clear awareness that this should be done in an orderly and reasonable manner to find *the golden mean* between the afore-mentioned displeasure and the supremacy of pleasure.

A historical and linguistic insight presents linguistic and cultural characteristics of the considered phraseological unit more vividly and substantively. Figure 1 shows the diachronic evolution of “*carpe diem*” in published works by various authors (Books Ngram Viewer, 2022).

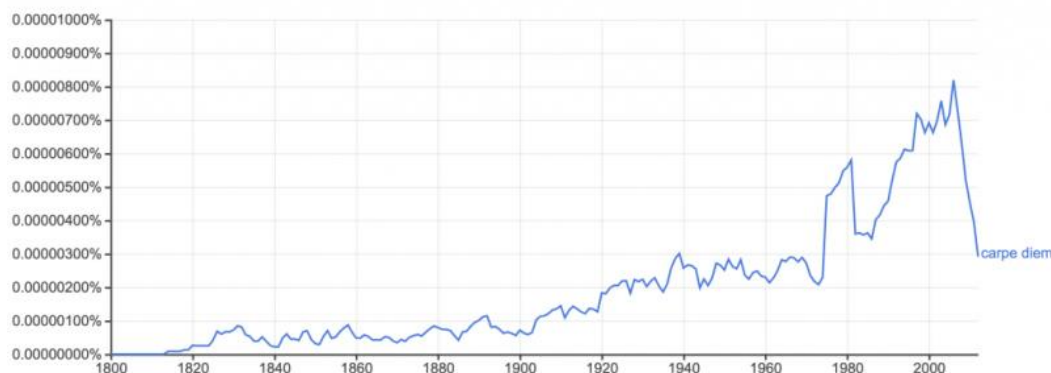


Figure 1 Diachronic Evolution of “*carpe diem*” in Published Works by Various Authors

The peak of the publication activity falls on the first decade of the 21st century. Moreover, the source notes the intensive use of this phrase in the Indo-European languages at the present stage. The earliest recorded evidence of the proverb in question is a collection of lyrical poems (“odes”) by Horace, a Roman (Latin) poet who lived in 65-8 BC. In the poem “To Leuconoe”, Horace addresses a woman, Leuconoe, and gives her advice on how to experience life.

“Tu ne quaesieris (scire nefas) quem mihi, quem tibi finem di dederint, Leuconoe, nec Babylonios temptaris numeros. Ut melius quicquid erit pati Seu pluri hiemes seu tribuit Iuppiter ultimam, quae nunc oppositis debilitat pumicibus mare Tyrrhenum, sapias, vina liques et spatio brevi spem longam reseces. Dum loquimur, fugerit invida aetas: **carpe diem, quam minimum credula postero**” (“You should not ask – to know is a sin – which end the gods have given to me, or to you, Leuconoe, nor should you meddle with Babylonian calculations. How much better to suffer whatever will be, whether Jupiter gives us more winters, or whether this is our last, which now weakens the Tyrrhenian sea on the pumice stones opposing it. Be wise, strain the wine, and cut back long hope into a small space. While we talk, envious time will have fled: **pluck the day, trusting as little as possible to the future**”) (Latine in translation, 2010).

In French, there is an identical root in the words associated with the concept “day”: *diurne* (daily), *quotidien* (everyday), but most importantly with the days of the week, for example, *vendredi* (Friday). The complete phrase, from which only part is taken by Horace, consists of the following language units: “*Dum loquimur, fugerit invidia: carpe diem, quam minimum credula postero*”, which translates as “while we are talking, time flies without favor; seize the day”.

In a nutshell, the thought of the great Roman poet can be conveyed as follows: to achieve happiness, one should live from day to day, and care only about the present, having no remorse about the past and no fears about the future. In particular, Horace insisted that life was relatively short, and every moment should be used to the fullest. One should live here and now (*his et nunc = ici et maintenant*).

Here are some examples of French literary discourse, whose speakers used the expression “*carpe diem*” (Table 1).

TABLE 1
 EXAMPLES OF THE USE OF THE EXPRESSION “CARPE DIEM” IN FRENCH LITERARY DISCOURSE

<p>« <i>Quand vous serez bien vieille, au soir, à la chandelle, Assise auprès du feu, d'évidant et filant, Direz, chantant mes vers, en vous énerveillant: "Ronsard me célébrait du temps que j'étais belle!"</i> »</p> <p><i>Lors, vous n'aurez servante oyant telle nouvelle, Déjà sous le labeur à demi sommeillant, Qui au bruit de Ronsard ne s'aïlle réveillant, Bénéissant votre nom de louange immortelle.</i></p> <p><i>Je serai sous la terre, et, fantôme sans os, Par les ombres myrteux je prendrai mon repos: Vous serez au foyer une vieille accroupie,</i></p> <p><i>Regrettant mon amour et votre fier dédain. Vivez, si m'en croyez, n'attendez à demain: Cueillez dès aujourd'hui les roses de la vie »</i></p> <p>(De Ronsard, <i>Sonnets pour H d'âne</i>, 1578)</p>	<p>“When you are truly old, beside the evening candle, Sitting by the fire, winding wool and spinning, Murmuring my verses, you'll marvel then, in saying, 'Long ago, Ronsard sang me, when I was beautiful.'”</p> <p>There'll be no serving-girl of yours, who hears it all, Even if, tired from toil, she's already drowsing, Fails to rouse at the sound of my name's echoing, And blesses your name, then, with praise immortal.</p> <p>I'll be under the earth, a boneless phantom, At rest in the myrtle groves of the dark kingdom: You'll be an old woman hunched over the fire,</p> <p>Regretting my love for you, your fierce disdain, So live, believe me: don't wait for another day, Gather them now the roses of life, and desiree.”</p> <p>(de Ronsard, 2004)</p>
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The idiom “*carpe diem*” is paraphrased in the last line of the sonnet of the 16th-century French poet Pierre de Ronsard. The text is addressed to his beloved (*H d'âne*), whose image is conveyed through the phytonymic figure of a rose, i.e. a flower that acted as a symbol of femininity and the feminine in the 16th century. Several centuries ago, the rose symbolized a knight-errant. Before setting out to perform feats in the name of his beloved (not so much his spouse), the knight received a rose from the object of his platonic desires as a sign of love and fidelity. Later, in medieval France, “floral games” were held for knight poets. The reward for winning the competition was a silver rose. The poet Ronsard was one of its winners (followed by Chateaubriand, Hugo, Vigny, etc.). In the poetic fragment under consideration, the rose as the most valuable relic is a symbol of the elusive day that should be cherished and enjoyed.

« *Voilà les dragons qui me traversaient la cervelle <...> j'ai trop de temps à vivre pour perdre ce peu. Horace a dit: "Carpe diem, cueillez le jour". Conseil du plaisir à vingt ans, delaraison à mon âge »* (« These were the dragons that flew through my mind <...> I had too little time left to live to waste that little. Horace says: 'Carpe diem: seize the day.' A counsel of pleasure at twenty, it is a counsel of common sense at my age ») (Châteaubriand, *Mémoires d'outre-tombe*, 1849-1850/2000).

From François-René de Chateaubriand's perspective, the phraseological unit calls for the rational use of the rest of life not for the sake of pleasure (as in the youth) but for the sake of a wise way of existence, involving a pragmatic disposal of the remaining time.

Let us consider three fragments of the artistic discourse of the contemporary French writer Pascal Quignard.

1. “*La vie frissonne de lumière sur fond de mort. Philostrate peignit un crâne de mort. C'est, à l'opposé des Vanités du monde vivant, un Carpe diem funèbre il s'agit de cueillir la fleur de ce qui va périr tout à la fois...*” (Life flickers with light in contrast to death. Philostratus described the skull. Unlike the Vanity of the living world, this gives the funeral meaning to the saying “Seize the day”, or collect the flower of what will die together with the rest of the world ...) (Quignard, *Le sexe et l'effroi*, 1994).

2. “*À la vérité, il s'agit d'un vers d'Horace. Ce vers est celui qui précède le Carpe diem de l'Ode XI Dum loquimur fugerit invidia aetas. Carpe diem quam minimum credula postero (Tandis que nous parlons le temps jaloux de toutes les choses du monde a fui. Coupe et tiens dans tes doigts le jour comme on fait d'une fleur. Ne crois jamais que demain viendra)*” (As we speak, time, jealous of all things in the world, has fled. Cut and hold the day in your hands like you would a flower. Never believe that tomorrow will come) (Quignard, *La Haine de la musique*, 1996).

3. “*Vivre l'entièreté de la journée d'un jour encore, telle est ma prière. Telle est ma simple prière. Vivre seulement un jour. Avoir encore le bonheur d'un jour. Passer encore sur cette terre seulement, en gros, douze heures de lumière, entre la gaieté et les irisations et les cris qui fusent dans l'aurore – et le ternissement, la douceur, l'obscurité, le silence crépusculaire et l'entêtement*” (Live the whole day, one more time, that is my prayer. This is my simple prayer. Live just one day. Feel the happiness of another day. Spend it on this earth, as a rough approximation, twelve hours of a bright day, between joy and a rainbow and screams that dissolve into the dawn; and withering, sweetness, twilight silence and plunging into darkness) (Quignard, *Une journée de bonheur*, 2017).

These three fragments by Quignard demonstrate the multidimensional semantics of the idiom under consideration. **The first episode** mentions the ancient philosopher Philostratus who described the findings of giant bones on the Greek islands and mainland. According to the legend, these skulls were filled with wine and contained two large buckets of Cretan wine. Philostratus believed that these skulls belonged to the “sons of the earth, i.e. hundred-armed giants with snake-like feet who entered into a struggle with the new gods (the Olympians) for domination over the world, and were crushed by volcanoes” (Kudelya, 2019, p. 54). The author referred to the content of Horace's phraseology, exploring the dark side of the famous poem. Paradoxically, the act of picking a flower kills the last (the moment), in such a way that, according to the great Greek, it is necessary to choose death for the triumph of life, to abstract from the temporal dimension of life and death, to live in full force outside of time, without fear of the future, without desires that push into

the future. It is necessary to sacrifice a flower to give more “life” to life itself. The brilliance of the fall brings a new surge of life.

The second fragment is a quote from Horace’s ode translated into modern French. Here is a citation that proves the words of Quignard who commented on the statement of the great representative of the golden age of Roman literature:

“*Carpe diem*”, Horace wrote boldly when Augustus asserted his tyrannical power and invented the empire. Horace lived in a cramped Roman street that had never been as densely populated as in those days. The smallest sickle is enough to grab a single day out of time, just like cutting off a single peony that grows in nature. Cut off the day! Castrate time! For example, cut this *Tuesday* as if it was this *peony*. With each dawn, the past throws new light into space. And none of them are repeated twice. All the mornings of the world are irrevocable. And no night is the same. Each night creates its own, unique background for the space. There are no two identical flowers, two identical dawns, two identical lives. Every moment needs to be said: You. To everything that comes, you need to say: Come in! Life is a brief moment of *recitation* which arises in each of its moments, radiates happiness at each occasion, and renews it. It is a joy that over time gets rid of adversity and fear, although it is not completely free from primordial sorrow. We can be more sensitive to everything it gives us: presence, light, flower, point, body, cry, jubilation (Quignard, *La barque silencieuse*, 2009).

The third episode represents a quasi-religious form of glorifying the happiness of everyday existence which is transformed into an artistic device for conveying an existential departure from life. This refers to the renewal of human existence through such a poetic figure as inversion which can be denoted by the semiotic slogan “death as the acquisition of a renewed life”. The author seems to tell the reader: “There is no death; it is just an artistic technique for creating new lives”. In this sense, “seize the day” acquires elements of constructively positive semantics.

The following episode reflects the ironic and egocentric attitude of the French themselves to the current state of mind of the French Republic through a sarcastic interpretation of the phraseological unit under consideration:

“...*Jem’explique: votre grand “Carpediem!” n’a-t-il pas effacé tout rapport à l’Histoire, comprise comme quelque chose qui nous dépasse en tant qu’individus prisonniers du hic et nunc. J’y vois l’une des raisons du triomphe a posteriori de cet “esprit de Mai” sourd aux périls dont tu parles, incapable de penser au-delà de l’immédiat, narcissique et conformiste. On croit plus à la grande épopée des grandes nations, des grandes idées et des grands hommes*” (Let me explain: does your great slogan “Seize the day!” fall out of the historical process, which is interpreted as something beyond our understanding as hostages of the famous **here and now**. In this phenomenon I see one of the reasons for the late triumph of the “spirit of May 68”, deaf to the challenges you mention, unable to overcome the narcissistic and conformist reality. No one else believes in the era of Great Nations, Great Ideas and Great People) (Glucksmann & Glucksmann, 2008).

To understand the implication of statements, we need a brief historical and sociological insight. The above-mentioned episode with the considered phraseological unit, whose pragmatic meaning is not entirely clear, requires an epistemological action. The author of the text – André Glucksmann, philosopher and essayist – at one time (2007) supported the election of Nicolas Sarkozy as the president. He believes that the events of May 68 were an anti-authoritarian movement for France with elements of a cultural and moral revolution, but were adopted by the left-wing parties (in particular, the Socialist Party) and narrowed its meaning within the framework of prejudices and conjectures.

After Sarkozy’s speech at one of the election rallies, where the future president promised that he would “eliminate the legacy of 68”, Glucksmann reacted with the following tirade in one of his essays: “Is Nicolas Sarkozy himself the heir of May 68?”. The essay was caustic and aggressive towards the over-liberal policies of the president, which suggested a return to the days of severe imperialism. In Sarkozy’s speech, the idiom “*carpe diem*” has a purely pragmatic meaning: *seize the moment and get rich*.

The above-mentioned episodes show that the French elite widely used and continues to use this phraseological unit in their discourse, which indicates its close semiotic correlation with the French mentality. One of the most important components of the French national mentality is the perception of everyday existence in a qualitative aspect, which is associated with the key national concept “*joie de vivre*”. This concept belongs to fundamental categories of the French mentality or philosophy of life. Its essence boils down to the desire of a person to use every moment of the passing life joyfully and in all manifestations, without becoming a hostage to one’s pleasures, living one’s life fully and interestingly.

Within the Indo-European linguocultural discourse, we should give examples of their active usage from modern pop culture. The first example is taken from the most popular Disney cartoon “The Lion King”. It actively uses an expression from the Swahili language “*Hakuna Matata*”. This phrase means “no problems” or “life without worries”. It can be semantically and semiotically correlated with the phraseological unit “*carpe diem*”. It seems that modern Horace tells us to leave all problems in the past, avoid bad thoughts, and live in the present moment with a smile.

The second example is taken from social networks that often use English vocabulary. The YOLO abbreviation (You Only Live Once) is essentially a shortened version of the phraseological unit “*carpe diem*” with the semantics of capturing the moment and distrusting the future. In modern teen slang, there is pragmatics associated with the above-mentioned viral quote. The speaker (a young man or woman) to some extent justifies their stupidity or strange and adventurous act: *Why the hell would you do that? – Because YOLO* (Modnye slova, 2022).

IV. CONCLUSION

The functioning of phraseological units within any type of discourse is studied based on the analysis of its expression means, with modeling the optimal structure of the inner self of an individual as a representative of a certain ethnic group. Belonging to a certain linguoculture, professional group, social category, or emotional type, all these factors set a certain phraseological format of communicative behavior and identify one's idiolect parameters in relation to one or another type of discourse: everyday, scientific, political, and business.

Thus, phraseological units can live a long ordinary life, transforming and acquiring additional meanings. The pragmatics of the national language culture plays an important role in the diachronic evolution of phraseological units due to connotative semiotics and the dominant vectors of developing the semantic and conceptual space of each linguistic culture. Regardless of the Latin origin, the phraseological unit *"carpe diem"* has its trajectory of semantic and semiotic development through the prism of the national worldview and models of communicative behavior enriched with additional meanings (often depending on a political situation and political correctness).

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