

ESPERANTO PHRASEOLOGY

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ABSTRACT

The contribution deals with the phrasicon of Esperanto, i.e. the inventory of idioms, phrases, proverbs, catchphrases and other items of pre-fabricated speech that are stored in speakers' mental lexicon. On the basis of origins, Esperanto phraseology can be classified into three groups: First, many phraseological units have entered the language through various other languages. This group includes classical loan translations especially from the Bible as well as ad-hoc loans introduced by speakers from their mother tongues more or less spontaneously. Secondly, there is a group of planned, i.e. consciously created, phraseological units. They mainly go back to Zamenhof, the initiator of the language, who published an Esperanto Proverb Collection (*Proverbaro Esperanta*) in 1910. Thirdly, there are phraseological units which have their origin in the language and the cultural life of the speech community. The paper will show that the planned language Esperanto, with its agglutinative character, free word order and flexible word formation, possesses the prerequisites for creating stylistically appealing and catchy phraseological units. An analysis of literary and journalistic texts as well as oral communication in Esperanto reveals that its phraseology is widely used and that authors like to modify phrases and idioms according to the textual situation. The use of phraseological units proves that Esperanto is a living language. Phraseology can be considered a criterion for assessing the successful development of the planned language system from a project to a full-fledged language. It demonstrates the complexity of Esperanto culture.

KEY WORDS

planned language, Esperanto, phraseology, culture

CLASSIFICATION

JEL: O35

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INTRODUCTION

Planned languages (also called ‘universal languages’, or ‘[artificial] world auxiliary languages’) are language systems which have been consciously created according to definite criteria by an individual or a group of individuals for the purpose of making international communication easier [1]. Their number has probably already reached almost one thousand. The only planned language that has managed to effect the transition from a language project to a fully-fledged language is Esperanto, however. Its successful development is due to linguo-structural properties, but above all to extra-linguistic factors [2, 3]. Blanke [4, 5], who suggests a classification of planned languages according to their real role in communication, uses a scale of 28 levels to describe Esperanto’s transition from a language project to a language, from the “manuscript” (level 1) to a “language with language change” (level 28). Blanke [5; p.57] considers the existence of expressive linguistic means, including phraseological units, to be a criterion of a developed planned language.

PHRASEOLOGICAL UNITS IN ESPERANTO

DEFINITION

There are mainly five defining characteristics of phraseological units (PUs) [6]: a) polylexicality (i.e. they have multiple constituents), b) (relative) syntactic and semantic stability, c) idiomaticity (as a potential characteristic), d) lexicalization (i.e. as ready-made units of the lexicon they are not created productively by the speaker/writer, but reproduced), and e) stylistic and expressive connotations. These features can be verified for the phraseology of Esperanto. Furthermore, the majority of PUs in Esperanto are characterized by euphonic qualities (e.g. rhyme, rhythm, alliteration).

As for b), their stability, we have to consider that this is a relative criterion, i.e., PUs are variable within definite constraints. In Esperanto, the range of variation seems to be larger than in ethnic languages. Structural as well as lexical variants are found, for example:

froti la manojn/froti siajn manojn/froti al si la manojn [‘to rub one’s hands’]
demeti/levi la ĉapelon [‘to take one’s hat off/to raise one’s hat’]

They are generally accepted, due to the use of Esperanto as a foreign language in an international speech community. There is still a third type of variation – phraseological synonyms, where identical or similar contents are expressed by different expressions based on different images. Because of the various ethnolinguistic influences on Esperanto, the language is rich in synonyms. Compare, for example, the following Esperanto proverbs whose basic meaning is that ‘a trifling cause may have a serious effect’:

unu fajrero estas sufiĉa por eksplodigi pulvon (‘One spark is enough to make powder explode’),

pro najleto bagatela pereis ĉevalo plej bela (‘Because of a little nail the most beautiful horse perished’),

ofte de kaŭzo senenhava venas efiko plej grava (‘A trifling cause often has a very important effect’),

unukopeka kandelo forbruligis Moskvon (‘A one-kopek candle burnt Moscow down’),

de malgranda kandelo forbrulis granda kastelo (‘Because of a small candle a great castle burnt down’),

unu fava ŝafo tutan ŝafaron infektas (‘One shabby sheep will mar the whole flock’),

unu ovo malbona tutan manĝon difektas (‘One bad egg spoils the whole meal’).

CLASSIFICATION

There are different ways to classify phraseological units. The peculiarities of Esperanto as a planned language suggest a need for a classification of PUs on the basis of their origin. The following three groups can be distinguished [7]:

a) the quantitatively largest group is made up of those units that have entered the language through various other languages. These are loan translations, from Greek mythology and from the Bible, which today are some of the most widely disseminated proverbs (e.g. *Mano manon lavas* – cf. Latin *Manus manum lavat*). A unit such as *enverŝi oleon en la fajron* ('to add fuel to the flames') is known in European languages as well as in Chinese [8; p.93]. Furthermore, individual speakers more or less spontaneously introduce expressions from their native languages which may enjoy international currency (ad hoc loans). These may have the character of occasional formations showing striking similarities to their ethnolinguistic bases, as in the following examples¹:

- 1) *en 1867 Usono aĉetis de Rusio Alaskon por 7,2 milionoj da dolaroj. Multaj opiniis, ke tio estis mono ĵetita al la vento.* ("Monato" 4/96, p.22; Russian author) ('In 1867 the USA bought Alaska from Russia for 7.2 million dollars. Many people thought that this was money down the drain [lit. 'money thrown to the wind']'; cf. Russian *бросать деньги на ветер*).
- 2) *tiu batalo levis sian kurtenon per akuzoj pri falsaj insekticidoj, semoj, cigaredoj kaj vinoj.* ("El Popola Ĉinio" 12/90, p.23) ('This battle began [lit. 'raised its curtain'] with accusations of false insecticides, seeds, cigarettes and wine'; cf. Chinese *kai mu*).

This group of phraseological units developed, first, because of Esperanto's position as a means of communication in a second-language community which is in turn in permanent contact with a diversity of ethnic languages, and, second, because of properties of its linguistic structure favouring the adoption of foreign lexical material. There are obvious parallels to language-contact phenomena in bilingual speakers, as they have been described for the phraseology of various European languages (see, e.g. [9-11] on the impact of English on Polish, Spanish and German). Due to the use of English as an international means of communication today, for example, *in a nutshell* with the meaning 'to say sth. in a clear way, using few words' has found entry into many languages (cf. Norwegian *i et nøtteskall*, Dutch *in een nutshell*, Icelandic *i hnotskurn*, Finnish *pähkinäkuoressa*, and German *in einer Nussschale*), and it does not surprise anyone that a loan translation is also known in Esperanto (*en nuksoŝelo*), as the screenshot from an Esperanto corpus (<http://www.tekstaro.com>) illustrates (Figs. 1 and 2). The influences on Esperanto are much more international than on other languages, however.

b) The second group represents a peculiarity of planned language phraseology: the conscious creation of units. The majority of such 'planned' proverbs go back to Zamenhof, the initiator of the language, who published a collection of proverbs, the *Proverbaro Esperanta* ('Esperanto Proverb Collection') [12] in 1910 on the basis of a collection listed and compared in Russian, Polish, German and French by his father, Marcus Zamenhof. It contains units such as *Ĉio transmara estas ĉarma kaj kara* ('Everything beyond the ocean/far away is charming and dear') or *Neniu estas profeto en sia urbeto* ('No one is a prophet in their own little town'; = is recognized in their own land), which are very popular with Esperanto speakers today. Analyses, however, reveal that only a small part of the 2 630 units in this collection (about 7 %) can be considered common knowledge in the speech community. This shows the limitations of planned processes in a functioning planned language [13].

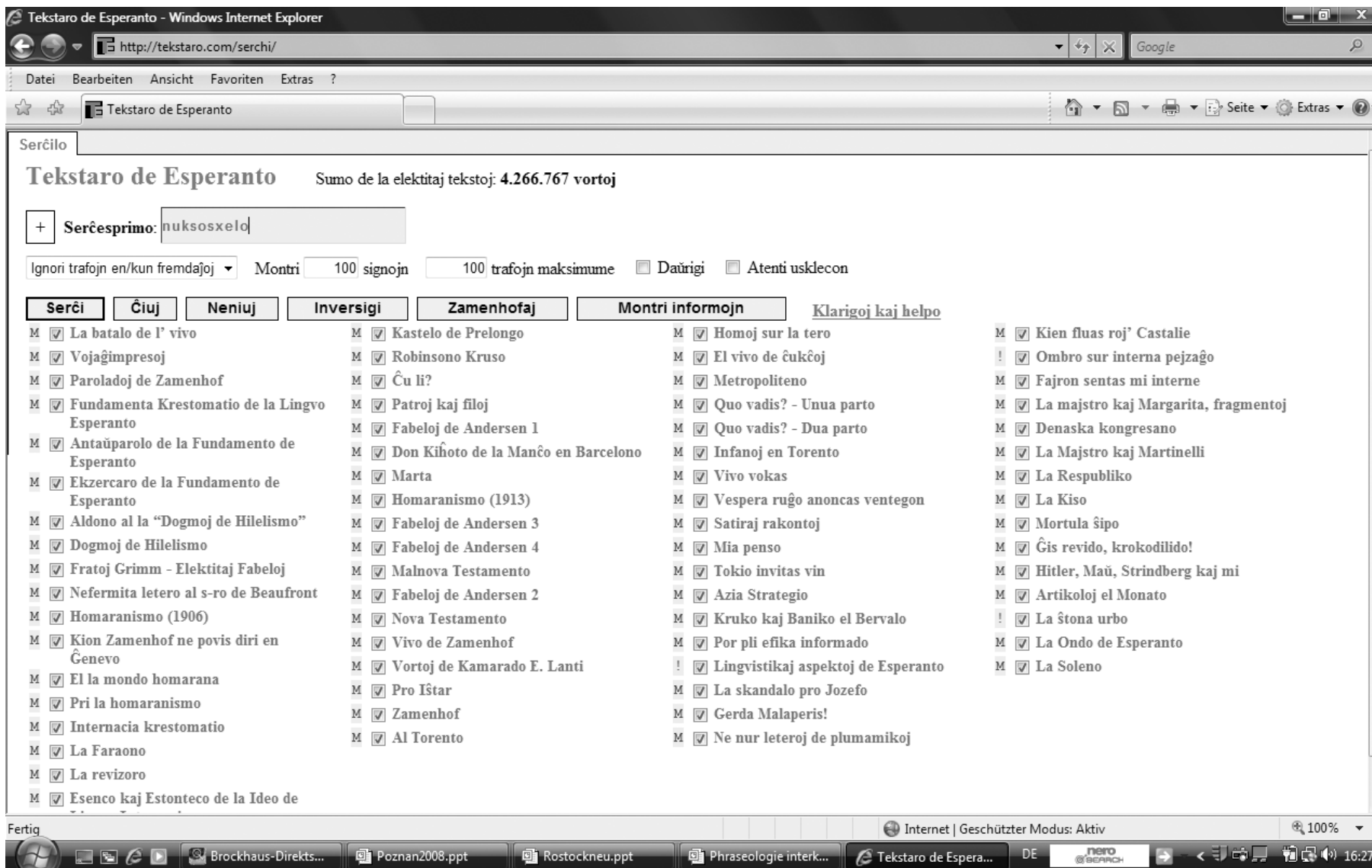


Figure 1. Screenshot from Esperanto corpus at <http://www.tekstaro.com>.

The screenshot shows a Windows Internet Explorer browser window with the address bar displaying 'http://tekstaro.com/serchi/'. The page title is 'Rezulto de priserĉo de la Tekstaro de Esperanto'. The search term is 'Serĉis: nuksoŝelo'. The results show 6 hits. The first hit is '1 trovo en Ombro sur interna pejzaĝo' with a snippet: 'nĉis sin perrande al ŝultro. Sopiro fermas min en nuksoŝelon. Pasio, tio estas la vorto. Mi timas ren'. The second hit is '1 trovo en Artikoloj el Monato' with a snippet: 's pli valora ol alia homo. Jen la homaj rajtoj en nuksoŝelo! Kiel afero de la fido!'. A highlighted text block contains: 'Do, tute principe — kaj por mi persone tio estas unu el la bazaj aferoj de mia fido je Dio — neniu homo el si mem, kvazaŭ herede, aŭtomate, denaske, l homo. Jen la homaj rajtoj en nuksoŝelo! Kiel afero de la fido!'. Below this is a button 'Pli da kunteksto'. The third hit is '1 trovo en La ŝtona urbo' with a snippet: 'akvositeloj estas pli malplenaj ol du sekiĝintaj nuksoŝeloj. Ĉu mi ne ripetadas al vi knabinoj, ke n'. The fourth hit is '3 trovoj en La Ondo de Esperanto' with a snippet: 'tablo, prilumata de pendlampo, plenas je ciferoj, nuksoŝeloj, paperetoj kaj vitreroj. Antaŭ ĉiu ludan omo, tondilo kaj telero, en kiun oni ordonis meti nuksoŝelojn. La infanoj ludas je mono. La ludmono e ĉi la kopekon. Ili trafas per manoj kraĉaĵojn kaj nuksoŝelojn, kolizias per la kapoj, sed ne trovas l'. The browser's taskbar at the bottom shows several open applications including 'Brockhaus-Dir...', 'Poznan2008.ppt', 'Rostockneu.ppt', 'Phraseologie i...', 'Tekstaro de Es...', and 'Tekstaro de Es...'. The system tray shows the date and time as 16:35.

Tekstaro de Esperanto - Windows Internet Explorer
 http://tekstaro.com/serchi/
 Datei Bearbeiten Ansicht Favoriten Extras ?
 Serĉilo Serĉo 1 x
Rezulto de priserĉo de la Tekstaro de Esperanto
 Serĉis: nuksoŝelo - ignoras trafojn en/kun fremdaĵoj - montras 100 signojn - montras maksimume 100 trafojn - ne uzas signetojn - ne atentis usklecon **Ŝanĝi**
Suma nombro de trafoj: 6. La mendita maksimumo estis 100.
1 trovo en *Ombro sur interna pejzaĝo*
 nĉis sin perrande al ŝultro. Sopiro fermas min en nuksoŝelon. Pasio, tio estas la vorto. Mi timas ren
1 trovo en *Artikoloj el Monato*
 s pli valora ol alia homo. Jen la homaj rajtoj en nuksoŝelo! Kiel afero de la fido!
 Do, tute principe — kaj por mi persone tio estas unu el la bazaj aferoj de mia fido je Dio — neniu homo el si mem, kvazaŭ herede, aŭtomate, denaske, l homo. Jen la homaj rajtoj en **nuksoŝelo**! Kiel afero de la fido!
Pli da kunteksto
1 trovo en *La ŝtona urbo*
 akvositeloj estas pli malplenaj ol du sekiĝintaj nuksoŝeloj. Ĉu mi ne ripetadas al vi knabinoj, ke n
3 trovoj en *La Ondo de Esperanto*
 tavolo, prilumata de pendlampo, plenas je ciferoj, nuksoŝeloj, paperetoj kaj vitreroj. Antaŭ ĉiu ludan omo, tondilo kaj telero, en kiun oni ordonis meti nuksoŝelojn. La infanoj ludas je mono. La ludmono e ĉi la kopekon. Ili trafas per manoj kraĉaĵojn kaj nuksoŝelojn, kolizias per la kapoj, sed ne trovas l

Figure 2. Screenshot from Esperanto corpus at <http://www.tekstaro.com>.

- c) The third group is made up of phraseological units which have their origin in the language and cultural life of the Esperanto community. These reflect communicative history, sociological characteristics, the speakers' collectively held ideals and aims, traditions, and Esperanto literature, as the following examples show:

esperanto – edzperanto ['Esperanto – husband-provider/matchmaker'],

Ne krokodilu! [lit. 'Don't be a crocodile!' = Speak Esperanto when amongst Esperanto speakers!; friendly admonition at Esperanto meetings as an expression of linguistic loyalty],

La nepoj nin benos ['Our grandchildren/descendants will bless us' – a quotation from Zamenhof's well-known poem *La Vojo*].

This type of PUs is especially interesting as these expressions can only be understood by Esperanto speakers on the basis of their sociocultural background knowledge. Therefore, they disprove the thesis that a planned language necessarily 'lacks culture' [14].

Since it is sometimes difficult to find out whether there is a model structure in one of the ethnic languages, the dividing lines between the three groups a), b) and c) may often appear indistinct.

CHARACTERISTICS OF PHRASEOLOGICAL UNITS

The grammar of Esperanto provides good opportunities to create pithy and catchy PUs, especially proverbs. Zamenhof, for example, made extensive use of a set of Esperanto correlatives, the so-called table-words. This is a closed subsystem that allows the completely regular formation of 45 pronouns and adverbs through cross-reference in a table [15]. Their use in proverbs results in parallel structures, including patterns such as *kiu(n) ... tiu(n)*, *kio(n) ... tio(n)*, *kie(n) ... tie(n)*, *kiam ... tiam*, *kies ... ties* etc.:

kiu kaĉon aranĝas, tiu ĝin manĝas ('The one who makes the mess [lit. 'prepares the gruel'] has to tidy it up [lit. 'eat it']'),

kion mi ne scias, tion mi ne envias ('What I don't know doesn't make me envious'),

kie regas la forto, tie rajto silentas ('Where power rules there the right is silent').

Another stylistic feature is emphatic word order. Syntactically, Esperanto belongs to the so-called SVO-type, to which the Romance, Germanic and Slavic languages belong. The existence of a marked accusative (-n) and various inflectional devices allows for great flexibility in word order. The most frequent type of stylistic inversion in Esperanto proverbs is the use of the direct object in front of the verb:

urson evitu, bopatrino ne incitu ('A bear avoid, a mother-in-law don't provoke'),

arbo oni juĝas laŭ la fruktoj ('A tree one judges by its fruits').

As epithets are normally placed before the noun, a change of this order is felt as emphatic:

kapo majesta sed cerbo modesta ('A majestic head, but a modest brain'),

amiko fidela estas trezoro plej bela ('A true friend is the most beautiful treasure').

In addition, we find verbs and adverbials in front position (e.g. *Ŝirigis fadeno sur la bobeno* 'The thread on the bobbin tore off'; = something went wrong; *Ĉe tablo malplena babilo ne fluas* 'At an empty table conversation doesn't flow'). Even the expected order of auxiliary and main verb can be switched:

pri gustoj oni disputi ne devas ('Tastes cannot be disputed'; unmarked word order: *oni ne devas disputi*),

kiu mordi ne povas, kisi ekprovas ('The one who cannot bite tries to kiss'; unmarked word order: *Kiu ne povas mordi, ekprovas kisi*).

Finally, we can find a combination of different types of stylistic inversion:

azenon komunan oni batas plej multe ('The common donkey is beaten most'; fronting of the direct object + inversion of epithet and noun),

murmuregas la urso, sed danci ĝi devas ('The bear grumbles, but it has to dance'; fronting of the verb + inversion of auxiliary and main verb – *sed ĝi devas danci*).

The rhythm of Esperanto proverbs often reminds us of equivalents in other languages:

Aliaj tempoj, aliaj moroj (*Other times, other customs*),

kiu groŝon ne respektas, riĉecon ne kolektas ('The one who doesn't care of the penny won't get rich'; cf. German *Wer den Pfennig nicht ehrt, ist des Talers nicht wert*).

Whereas the fixed word stress on the penultimate syllable can impose a restriction on the creation of euphonic proverbs in Esperanto, the flexible and productive word formation system (with word-category suffixes) can be employed to make them stylistically impressive:

inter lupoj krii lupe ('Among wolves cry like a wolf'; lit. 'wolf-ishly', *-e* marks adverbs),

langa vundo plej profunda ('A wound caused by the tongue [i.e. by words] is the deepest'; lit. 'tongu[e]-ish', *-a* marks adjectives).

Rhyme is the most conspicuous stylistic feature of Esperanto proverbs. The majority of rhyming proverbs are characterized by the traditional pure rhyme on the stressed penultimate syllable:

jen la tubero en la afero ('Here's the knot in the affair'; = There is a snag to it),

ne ŝovu la nazon en fremdan vazon ('Don't push your nose into so. else's affairs', lit. 'vase').

The characteristics described in this section make phraseological units, especially proverbs, pithy and catchy and assure their recognizability and memorability. It is because of these features that a mere allusion to a proverb is often sufficient to evoke the entire proverb.

THE USAGE OF PHRASEOLOGY IN ESPERANTO

PHRASEOLOGICAL UNITS AS TEXT CONSTITUENTS

A PU produces its full communicative effect only in a specific situational context. Extensive text analyses of different spheres of communication, including written and oral texts, illustrate the functions of PUs. They show that a PU is often much more than mere additional ornament enhancing a text. It constitutes textual meaning and develops textual coherence. This text-constituting function of PUs is based, more than anything else, on their complex structure. Since they are polylexemic (constituting word groups and sentences), isolated phraseological constituents can be reiterated to play a specific role in the text.

Sometimes a PU becomes the main element of the text structure. In the following example, an editorial in the journal *Esperanto* (6/2010, p.123), the phrase *esti en la sama boato* (cf. English *be in the same boat*) is of central importance to the message. It is used in the headline and in the final sentences of two of the paragraphs of the text. Furthermore it is playfully contrasted to another phrase, *Ni fosu nian sulkon!* (lit. 'We should dig our furrow', a traditional Esperanto motto), and, finally, the constituent *boato* ('boat') and other lexical elements from the same word field (e.g. *flosi* ['float'], *veli* ['sail']) are used in isolation to permeate the text and to intensify the metaphorical network. (Following the text the reader will find a literal translation.)

3) *Ni estas ĉiuj en la sama boato kaj devas noveme **kunveli***

Kiu laŭ vi estis la ĉefa problemo de UEA en la pasintaj 50 jaroj? Ĉu la puĉo en Hamburgo? Homaj bedaŭrindaĵoj. [...] Ĉu la malfrue alvenantaj Jarlibro aŭ revuo? Ni delonge lernis trateni tion. Ĉu la falanta membronombro? Jes, sed falas la membronombro ankaŭ en la landaj asocioj kaj en la lokaj societoj, kaj ne ekzistas specife universal-asocia solvo de ĉiunivela problem. Se ni problemas kune, ni solvu kune.

Por alproksimiĝi al la problemo, ni unue tuŝu la temon de Usono. [...] Usono estas hodiaŭ tio, kio estis hieraŭ Francio. Esperanto rajdis sur franca ĉevalo ekde Bulonjo, kaj estis atentata; se hodiaŭ reaktuala alvoko al Esperanto estus veninta el la usona kontraŭkulturo, ni estus nun en bona pozicio, kiel... la rokmuzika industrio. [...]

*Nun ekzistas potenco pli aktuala ol Usono: la reta mondo [...] Malaperis la tradicia rilato inter la mono, la loka sindediĉo de maljunuloj kaj la energio de la junularo. Kaj ni ne sukcesis, en la reta mondo, instali funkciantan maltradician kunligon inter tiuj faktoroj. En tiu malsukceso, ni trovas nin **en la sama boato**, kiel la monda muzika industrio; kaj ni devos lerni **kunflosi**.*

*Tio signifas iom ekskutimigi la retorikon de senlikva **fosado** (L estas likva konsonanto) kaj **sulkoj**, ĉar tiu retoriko respegulas tion, kio dividas nin kaj malhelpas solvon. En solida mondo de **sulkoj**, ĉiu emas rigardi sin mem la centro de la movado, ĝia plej grava parto. Ĉiu **fosas sian sulkon** kaj ne emas helpi **fosi** alilokajn **sulkojn**.*

*[...] oni devas iamaniere teni la Esperanto-movadon funkcianta kaj laŭeble kreskanta en Germanio, Usono, Japanio kaj samtempe loka kaj internacie. La demando estas, kiamaniere malplej dolore forlasi la **sulko-fosan** racion kaj kolektive fronti al la fakto, ke nun ni ĉiuj **estas en la sama, nova boato**.*

[...]

Sed ankaŭ en la nuna mondo, nur malrapide oni lernas lingvojn, aŭ konvinkas najbaron pri la lernado de Esperanto, aŭ vartas instituciojn kaj festivalojn tra la jaroj.

*Por plufari tion efike, por pluirigi la **boaton** de Esperanto, por konvinki la mondon pri la bezono pri lingva justeco, ni bezonas ĉiujn **boatistojn** kaj ili devas kunlabori inter si, estimi unu la alian, helpi unu la alian. Internaciuloj, landuloj, lokuloj kaj retuloj, ni ĉiuj faras ion utilan. Neniu havas en sia poŝo la sekreton por triumfigi Esperanton, sed se tio eblas, tio okazos nur se ni kunlaboros.*

*Fiere kaj kunlabore konstruu kun ni movadon de homoj kapablaj **kunveli**. Ni **velu** antaŭen kun kredo, fervor', kiel kantas Grabowski.*

'We are all in the same boat and have to sail together in a new way'.

What was the main problem of UEA [= *Universala Esperanto-Asocio* 'Universal Esperanto Association'.] during the past 50 years in your opinion? The putsch in Hamburg? Human weaknesses. The late arrival of the Yearbook or the journal? We have long since learnt to cope with this. The decreasing number of members? Yes, but the number of members is falling in the national and local associations as well, and there is no specifically universal-association solution to an all-level problem. If we have a common problem, we should solve it in a common way.

In order to approach the problem, we should first touch on the problem of the USA. [...] The USA today is what France was yesterday. Esperanto has been riding the French horse since Boulogne (= since the first international Esperanto congress in Boulogne-sur-Mer in 1905 – S.F.) and has gained attention; if today again a current appeal to Esperanto would

have come from the US counter-culture, we would now be in a good position, like [...] the rock music industry [...]

There is now a power that is more topical than the USA: the world of the Internet. [...] The traditional relationship among money, the local commitment of older people and the energy of the young has disappeared. And we have not managed, in the world of the Internet, to establish a new non-traditional connection among these factors. In this failure we find ourselves **in the same boat** as the international music industry; and we will have to learn to **float together**.

This means to a certain extent to breaking out of the rhetoric of dry ('liquidless') **digging** (L is a liquid consonant) and **furrows** [= in the original a play on words: *flosi / fosi* 'float/dig – S.F.], because this rhetoric reflects what divides us and hinders a solution. In a solid world of **furrows**, everybody tends to regard themselves as the centre of the movement, as its most important part. Everybody **digs** their own **furrow** and nobody likes to help **dig furrows** in other places.

[...] somehow we have to keep the Esperanto movement functioning and if possible growing in Germany, the US, Japan and also at the same time locally and internationally. The question is how to give up the **furrow-digging** approach while without causing as little pain as possible and collectively face the fact that we **are all in the same, new boat**.

[...]

[...] But also in today's world it is only slowly that we learn languages, convince a neighbour that it is worthwhile learning Esperanto, or foster institutions and festivals over many years.

To continue our work effectively, to drive **the boat** of Esperanto forward, to convince the world of the necessity of linguistic justice, we need all **boaters** and they have to cooperate with one another, respect each other, help each other. Those working on the international, national, local levels, on the Internet, we all do something useful. None of us has the secret in their pocket for the triumph of Esperanto; if it is possible, it will only happen if we work together.

Build up a movement with us, with pride and cooperation, of people who are able to **sail** with us. Let's **sail** forward with faith and fervour, as Grabowski sang.')

As this example illustrates, phraseological units can perform a structuring function: Proverbs and catchphrases are often found in recurrent positions, especially at the beginning and at the end of paragraphs. In an initial position a PU can provide a core reference for textual expansion. Authors like to take general truths expressed in proverbs as a starting point for their reports and arguments, as in the following examples: an article about youth riots in British cities, and an article about language instruction.

4) *Malstulta sezono*

Paul GUBBINS

Kiam vi legos ĉi tiujn vortojn, estos finiĝinta la tiel nomata stulta sezono. "Stulta sezono" nomas ĵurnalistoj – almenaŭ en Britio – la periodon, ĝenerale en aŭgusto, kiam mankas novaĵoj. [...] Tiam plenas ĵurnaloj, radio-programoj, per « stultaj », do malpli seriozaj raportoĵoj. Tertremo : Arbo falinta. [...]

Tamen la ĉi-jara stulta sezono [...] montriĝis oble pli malstulta ol en la pasinteco. Terglobe dominis novaĵ-bultenojn la ekonomia krizo. ("Monato" 10/2011, p.7)

('Non-silly season

Paul Gubbins

When you read these words, the so-called silly season will have finished. “The silly season” is what journalists – at least in Britain – call the period, generally in August, when newsworthy events are lacking. [...] Then journals and radio programs are full of “silly”, that is, less serious reports. Earthquake: A tree has fallen down. [...]

However, this year’s silly season [...] turned out to be a whole lot more non-silly than in the past. All over the world the economic crisis was dominating the news.’)

5) *La unua leciono*

Ĉiu scias la proverbon: “Unua paŝo iron direktas.” Sendube la unua E-leciono havas eksterordinaran signifon por la futuro de la loka lingvoinstruado (Internacia Pedagogia Revuo 3/1995, p.14).

(‘The first lesson

Everybody knows the proverb: “The first step decides the direction.” Without any doubt the first Esperanto lesson is of enormous significance for the future of the local language instruction.’)

When PUs mark the end of a text or paragraph, they can have the function of a comment, as with the passage of Zamenhof’s poem *La Vojo* in example 6), or they are used as an evaluative concluding signal, as in the book review in 7).

6) *Eĉ se oni devus labori vane dum kelkaj jaroj, ŝajnas al mi ke la rezultoj estos ĉiamaniere tre bonaj:*

“Eĉ guto malgranda, konstante frapante, Traboras la monton granitan.” (“La Gazeto” 6/1997, p.8).

(Even though we had to work in vain for some years, it seems to me that the results will be very good: “Even a little drop, constantly falling, pierces the granite mountain.”)

7) *Ju pli oni legas aŭ aŭskultas tiun eposan verkon, oni pli kaj pli konvinkigatas, ke ĝi estas gravega kontribuo al la monda literaturo. La temo estas universala, nome la situacio de la homaro en la tempo kaj en la kosmo. Ĝi estis parte inspirita de la verko Cantos de la usona poeto Ezra Pound, kaj ĝi memorigas min pri Canto General de la ĉiliano Pablo Neruda. Ofte grandaj mensoj simile pensas.* (“Esperanto” 3/2011, p.64)

(‘The more one reads or listens to this narrative poetry, the more one becomes convinced that it is a significant contribution to world literature. The theme is universal, it is the situation of humankind in time and space. It was partly inspired by the work *Cantos* by the US-poet Ezra Pound, and it reminds me of *Canto General* by the Chilean Pablo Neruda. **Often great minds think alike.**’)

Another peculiarity of phraseological occurrences in Esperanto communication is the frequent use of metacommunicative signals, which can be interpreted as an expression of the developed linguistic consciousness of Esperanto speakers. The authors introduce a comment on the sayings and proverbs they use; or they apply inverted commas as a means of indication. By doing so, they want to signal that a following or preceding passage differs from the rest of the text and has to be understood metaphorically, e.g.:

8) (...) *Kiel vi vidas, mia nomo estas la lasta sur la tagordo. Kiel la germanoj diras: La lastan mordas la hundoj. Do, verŝajne mi devos rezigni aŭ mallongigi mian prelegon.* (‘As you see, my name is the last one on the agenda. As the Germans say: The last is bitten by the dogs. Thus, perhaps I will have to withdraw or shorten my presentation.’) (Zagreb, 27 July 2001; oral example: German speaker)

- 9) *La doĵeno de ĉina esperantismo, Laŭlum, kompendias la ĉinan klasikan beletron en Esperanto: la vastecon de lia temkampo montras ke la E-tradukoj de klasikaj ĉinaj verkoj ampleksas jam 7 000 paĝojn, sed ke tio egalas, laŭ ĉina diro, al “nur unu haro de naŭ bovoj”.* (“Esperanto” 11/2010, p.231; The dean of Chinese Esperantism, Laŭlum, gathers together Chinese classical belles-lettres in Esperanto: the range of his thematic interests is such that the Esperanto translations of classical Chinese works already cover 7 000 pages, but that these correspond, as a Chinese saying goes, to only one hair of nine oxen.)
- 10) *La Akademio sub nova gvidantaro kompletigas unu jaron da agado, kaj kvankam eble estas tro frue por konstati ĉu “nova balailo bone balaas”, certe montriĝis (...)* (“Esperanto” 12/96, p.213; ‘The Academy under new leadership completes one year of work, and although it is perhaps too early to state whether “a new broom sweeps clean”, it has certainly been shown [...]’)

THE CREATIVE-INNOVATIVE POTENTIAL OF PHRASEOLOGY

It can be observed that Esperanto speakers have an inclination towards innovative language manipulations and punning. Greetings such as *Salaton!* (‘salad’), instead of *Saluton!* (‘Greetings’) or *Ĉu vi bone gedormis?* instead of *Ĉu vi bone dormis?* (‘Have you slept well?’) where the prefix *ge-* means the combination of male and female sex) can be often heard at Esperanto meetings; riddles such as *Kial ĝirafo neniam solas? Respondo: Ĝi havas kolegon* (‘Why is a giraffe never alone? Answer: It has a colleague / long neck; *kol-eg-o* can be interpreted as ‘neck’ + augmentative suffix *-eg*) circulate in Esperanto beginners’ courses. The dissertations by Lloancy [16] and Mel’nikov [17] provide a large variety of examples of this kind. According to Philippe [18; p.86], linguistic creativity presents one of the driving powers of language change in Esperanto.

As regards phraseology, the high percentage of modified PUs should be mentioned here. For example, *Veni, vidi, vici!* (‘coming, seeing, queuing’) can be often heard at Esperanto meetings, when speakers stand in line at a cold buffet, for example. In journalistic texts, for example in headlines, authors like to alter set expressions and proverbs according to the textual situation, resulting in, for instance, extensions with additional lexical elements referring to the topics discussed in the texts:

- 11) *Voĉoj de krianto en elekto-dezerto.* (“Monato” 10/2011, p.8; ‘Voices of a crier in the election-wilderness.’)
- 12) *Nur rektametode kaj ne flankiĝante.* (“Esperanto” 2/1992, p.37; ‘Only by the direct method and without turning aside.’)

The first text with the extension *elekto* deals with the election of the mayor of Tirana, the capital of Albania, while the second example alludes to a well-known Esperanto poem (*La Vojo*). The original line *Nur rekte, kuraĝe kaj ne flankiĝante* (‘just directly, bravely and without turning aside’) was changed to *Nur rektametode* (‘by the direct method’) in a text dealing with methods of language teaching.

In the same way, reading the title of a book review *Por ke romano estu klasika ...* (“Esperanto” 3/92, p.54; ‘For a novel to be classic ...’) an Esperanto speaker will associate Zamenhof’s famous slogan *Por ke lingvo estu tutmonda ne sufiĉas nomi ĝin tia* (‘For a language to be international, it is not enough to call it so’).

Furthermore, we find that titles of book reviews allude linguistically to the books they discuss, e.g.:

- 13) *Kredu nin, gejunuloj!* (‘Believe us, young people’; “Literatura Foiro” 2/94, p.19; allusion to *Kredu min, sinjorino* [‘Believe me, madam’], a classic of Esperanto literature)

- 14) *Ĉu li verkis sufiĉe?* ('Did he write enough?'; "GEJ-Gazeto" 5/81, p.35; allusion to a series of novels by J. Valano, whose titles share a similar construction, e.g. *Ĉu vi kuiras ĉine?* ['Do you cook the Chinese way?'], *Ĉu ni kunvenis vane?* ['Did we meet in vain?'])

Playing around with proper names is another popular device. In the example *Pli bone karoli piĉe ol paroli kiĉe* ("Esperanto" 4/91, p.73; 'Better like Karel Piĉ than talking kitsch') we find the modified version of the name Karel Piĉ, an Esperanto writer who was well-known for his deliberately abnormal language use. His first name becomes an adverb and his surname a verb in order to produce a chiasmus with *paroli kiĉe*. This example shows how far the manipulation of PUs can go. A phraseological basis is to be found only in so far as the reader remembers the formulaic structure, rhythm and rhyme as main characteristics of a proverb. As this example emphasizes, the linguistic characteristics of Esperanto, above all its agglutinative structure, free word order and flexible word-formation system, allow or even encourage particular creativity in everyday use.

It is, however, above all in literary texts that phraseological units are employed to evoke humour and that the connotative potential of PUs is most effectively demonstrated. PUs are used here to characterize literary figures (in the so-called linguistic portrait). Compare, for example, the slang expressions used by the protagonist in Trevor Steele's *Heroo de nia epoko* ('A Hero of our Time'; 1992), in contrast to the narrator's style in the last example:

- 15) *Kiel aŭtentika proleto li celis, ke liaj gefiloj ne devu "ŝovadi merdon", lia ŝerca aludo al la peza laboro de segejisto.* (p.66) ('Like an authentic proletarian he was determined that his children should not "shovel shit", his jocular allusion to a sawmill worker's hard work.')
- 16) *"Dolĉulino," li diris, ne flustrante, "se vi volas ĝisfreneze ludi trajnon kaj tunelon, venu poste al la Motelo Du Cedroj, ĉambro 9 kaj (...)." (p.83) ("Sweetie," he said, not whispering, "if you want to play train and tunnel till you are mad, come up later to the motel Two Cedars, room 9 and [...].")*
- 17) *"(...). Povra olda pisulo, li kakis la lastan fojon."* (p.85) ('[...] Poor old bastard, he shat for the last time.')
- 18) *Miaj gepatroj jam delonge vendis la butikon, iom loĝadis ĉe la vaporo humida marbordo, kaj transiris al sia Kreinto.* (p.78) ('My parents had sold the shop, lived for a time on the humid coast, and passed to their Maker.')

In his novel *Kredu min, sinjorino!* (1950), Cezaro Rossetti tells the story of a successful travelling salesman who is extremely eloquent, but not very particular about the quality of the products he sells. This is reflected by the protagonist's language, especially by his playful distortions and parodies of proverbs:

- 19) *Neniu jam bedaŭris renkonti Martin Vernon: vi vidos. Per la vortoj de Julio Cezaro, kiam li ĉarpentis la Trojan ĉevalon: Veni, vidi, vici, - la mondo estas nia ostro, kaj ni elprenos la perlon!* (pp.95-96) ('Nobody has ever regretted meeting Martin Vernon: you'll see. In the words of Julius Caesar, when he made the Trojan horse: Veni, vidi, vici, - the world is our oyster and we will take the pearl out of it.')
- 20) *Eĉ Kolumbo ne konstruis Amerikon en unu tago, sed detaloj estas ja nur detaloj: ne zorgu.* (p.97; 'Not even Columbus built America in a day, but details are only details: don't bother.')

In addition, the author chose proverbs as subtitles to announce the contents of individual chapters of his novel:

- 21) *Ne gutas mielo el la ĉielo.* (p.21) ('Honey doesn't drop from heaven.')

22) *Virina rideto pli kaptas ol reto.* (p.77) ('A woman's smile catches more than a net.')

23) *Petro rifuzas, Paŭlo ekuzas.* (p.79) ('Peter refuses, Paul uses.')

24) *Plej bone ridas, kiu laste ridas.* (p.203) ('He who laughs last, laughs longest.')

25) *Du botoj faras paron.* (p.226) ('Two shoes make a pair.')

An impressive example of a linguistic portrait based on proverbs can be found in Jorge Camacho's satire "La Majstro kaj Martinelli" (1993). Here the protagonist Georg Silber wants to gain literary glory with the help of the devil, also known as Professor Emèric Orszag. The latter makes extensive use of proverbs:

26) *Koncerne Kamaĉon, longe ŝtelas ŝtelisto, tamen fine li pendos, ĉar kiu kaĉon aranĝas, tiu ĝin manĝas, kaj kiu havas malican celon, ofte perdas sian propran felon!* (p.16) ('With regard to Camacho, though a thief steals for a long time, finally he will hang, as the one who prepares the gruel has to eat it, and he whose goal is malice often loses his own skin!').

As is typical of a satire, this linguistic portrait is greatly exaggerated and grotesque. The overuse of proverbs, which can be interpreted as a symbol of "experience in any situation" or "a monopoly on wisdom", provides a sharp contrast to the protagonist's elitist language use.

CONCLUSION

Research into Esperanto phraseology reveals many of the fundamental characteristics of the nature and function of planned languages. Among these characteristics are (1) evidence of both conscious and spontaneous factors in their evolution, (2) empirical data concerning their dynamic and independent development on the basis of a linguistic norm, and (3) an analysis of cultural features reflected in the languages. The development of phraseology proves to be an important criterion in establishing the transition from language project to actual language.

This investigation has revealed that Esperanto possesses a rich phraseology. This is due to the fact that this planned language has established a sufficiently large and differentiated speech community that uses it as an efficient means of communication in various spheres. The phraseology of Esperanto shares with other phraseologies the attribute of uniting both universal and culturally specific components.

REMARK

¹Examples are numbered consecutively throughout the text.

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