

Guy De Maupassant's Use of Phraseological Units in His Works

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Abstract. *This article examines the use of phraseological units in the literary works of Guy de Maupassant. Phraseological units—including idioms, set expressions, and colloquial phrases—play a significant role in Maupassant's realistic storytelling style. By analyzing selected examples from his short stories, the study explores how these expressions contribute to characterization, dialogue authenticity, and stylistic richness. Furthermore, the article touches on the challenges of translating Maupassant's phraseological expressions into English, emphasizing the cultural nuances embedded in his language. The findings highlight the importance of phraseology in enhancing literary meaning and reader engagement.*

Key words: *Guy de Maupassant, phraseological units, idioms in literature, French prose, stylistic devices, literary language, realism, translation of idioms, character speech, figurative language.*

Language in literature is not merely a means of communication—it is a powerful artistic tool that shapes narrative style, conveys cultural identity, and reveals the psychological depth of characters. One of the most vivid and expressive elements of language is the phraseological unit, commonly known as idioms or set expressions. These fixed combinations of words often carry meanings beyond the literal, embedding cultural references, emotional undertones, and stylistic nuances.

Guy de Maupassant, one of the leading figures of 19th-century French literature, is renowned for his concise narrative technique, sharp psychological insight, and realistic portrayal of society. His short stories reflect the speech patterns of different social classes, regions, and characters with striking accuracy. Phraseological units in his works serve not only to reflect natural spoken French but also to enrich the narrative with irony, humor, and emotional intensity.

This article explores the use and function of phraseological units in Maupassant's short stories. It examines how idiomatic language contributes to character development, enhances realism, and supports the author's stylistic choices. Additionally, it addresses the challenges of translating such expressions into English, as cultural and contextual meaning is often deeply embedded in the original idioms.

Through linguistic and literary analysis, this study aims to highlight the importance of phraseology in Maupassant's prose and to underscore its role in bridging language, culture, and literary art.

Phraseological units (PUs) play a vital role in literary texts by enriching the language, creating vivid imagery, and reflecting the cultural and emotional background of characters. In the context of Guy de Maupassant's works, these expressions mirror the spoken language of his time, thereby enhancing the realism for which his writing is widely recognized. Idiomatic expressions in literature often function beyond their lexical meaning—they reflect attitudes, emotions, and social backgrounds.

Maupassant uses PUs not as decorative elements, but as functional linguistic tools that support narrative tone, stylistic diversity, and character development. Their frequent use adds authenticity to dialogues, helps distinguish different characters, and allows the writer to subtly comment on society.

As a realist writer, Maupassant strived to depict life and human behavior as accurately as possible. One of the ways he achieved this was by integrating everyday French expressions and idioms into his characters' speech. His characters speak in a way that reflects their social class, regional background, and personal temperament.

For instance, in *"Boule de Suif"*, the speech of the lower-class characters contains more colloquial expressions and idioms, which contrast with the more refined or hypocritical language of the bourgeoisie. This contrast is both linguistic and ideological, revealing power dynamics and social tension.

Phraseological units in Maupassant's stories are often linked to individual characters, serving as tools of **characterization**. A character's use of certain idioms may suggest their background, education level, personality, or worldview.

For example, Madame Loisel in *"The Necklace"* is depicted as someone who constantly aspires to a higher social status. Her speech, often marked by dramatic or exaggerated expressions, reflects her dissatisfaction and longing. These linguistic choices enhance the reader's understanding of her motivations and internal conflict.

Phraseological units are deeply rooted in the culture and language they originate from. Translating them into another language—such as English—poses significant challenges. A literal translation often leads to confusion or a loss of meaning. Therefore, translators must find **equivalent idioms** in the target language or adapt the expression creatively.

For instance:

"Il ne faut pas vendre la peau de l'ours avant de l'avoir tué."

(*Literal: Don't sell the bear's skin before killing it – English equivalent: Don't count your chickens before they hatch.*)

Maupassant's idioms carry cultural references that may not exist in other languages, making faithful translation a complex task. Yet, this complexity underscores the richness of his writing and its close ties to the linguistic and cultural identity of 19th-century France.

In summary, Maupassant's use of phraseological units fulfills multiple functions:

- Adds **authenticity** to characters' dialogue
- Enhances **emotional and stylistic** expression
- Serves as a **cultural marker** within the text
- Presents **challenges and opportunities** for literary translation

By embedding these units naturally into his prose, Maupassant bridges the gap between spoken and literary language, offering readers a deeper, more engaging experience.

The analysis of phraseological units in the works of Guy de Maupassant reveals their significant contribution to the stylistic richness, realism, and expressiveness of his prose. Far from being mere linguistic ornaments, these idiomatic expressions function as powerful tools for conveying character traits, social identity, emotional states, and narrative tone.

Maupassant's ability to seamlessly integrate phraseological units into dialogue and narration demonstrates his deep understanding of spoken language and its literary potential. Through these expressions, he not only captures the nuances of everyday French speech but also builds a vivid, culturally grounded narrative world.

Moreover, the presence of such culturally specific idioms presents challenges for translators, emphasizing the importance of cultural competence in literary translation. Accurate rendering of

Maupassant's phraseological units into other languages requires not only linguistic equivalence but also the preservation of tone, context, and cultural meaning.

In conclusion, phraseological units are a key element of Maupassant's literary style, enriching his texts with authenticity, subtle humor, irony, and emotional depth. Their study offers valuable insights into the intersection of language, literature, and culture, and highlights the enduring power of idiomatic language in shaping narrative voice and reader engagement.

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