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Phrases in Time... ¹

*I had always assumed that cliché was a suburb in
Paris, until I discovered it was a street in Oxford.*
(Philip Guedalla)

Abstract: The text deals with clichés, in the sense of phrases everybody uses just because they are in fashion. The difference between phrase and enunciation, between text and discourse is the foundation of the claim made in this study. A phrase – any phrase – can have a semantic of its own and this makes it worth using in some contexts. In other words, the phrases get meanings in context. But the changing of contexts could make a perfectly acceptable phrase become not so acceptable. Or, contexts evolve and resuming former truths can have the most unexpected results. Some notorious phrases are discussed and proven out of date or simply inadequate. On the other hand, a well known phrase is saluted as happily enriched with a meaning which got lost over the years. When it comes to using phrases, we have discourses, and the meaning of any discourse is contextual. Clichés don't work well all the time.

Keywords: context sensitive meaning, phrase vs. enunciation, text vs. discourse, clichés

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