Foreign Phrases

ad absurdum
(ad ab-sir'dum) [Lat.]: to the point of absurdity. "He tediously repeated his argument ad absurdum."

ad infinitum
(ad in-fun-eye'tum) [Lat.]: to infinity. "The lecture seemed to drone on ad infinitum."

ad nauseam
(ad noz'ee-um) [Lat.]: to a sickening degree. "The politician uttered one platitude after another ad nauseam."

aficionado
(uh-fish'ya-nah'doh) [Span.]: an ardent devotee. "I was surprised at what a baseball aficionado she had become."

annis mirabilis
(an'us muh-ra'buh-lis) [Lat.]: wonderful year. "Last year was the annus mirabilis for my company."

a priori
(ah pree or'ee) [Lat.]: based on theory rather than observation. "The fact that their house is in such disrepair suggests a priori that they are having financial difficulties."

au courant
(oh' koo-rahn') [Fr.]: up-to-date. "The shoes, the hair, the clothes—every last detail of her dress, in fact—was utterly au courant."

beau geste
(boh zhest') [Fr.]: a fine or noble gesture, often futile. "My fellow writers supported me by writing letters of protest to the publisher, but their beau geste could not prevent the inevitable."

beau monde
(boh' mond') [Fr.]: high society. "Such elegant decor would impress even the beau monde."

bête noire
(bet nwahr') [Fr.]: something or someone particularly disliked. "Talk of the good old college days way back when had become his bête noire, and he began to avoid his school friends."

bona fide
(boh'na fide) [Lat.]: in good faith; genuine. "For all her reticence and modesty, it was clear that she was a bona fide expert in her field."

bon mot
(bon moe') [Fr.]: a witty remark or comment. "One bon mot after another flew out of his mouth, charming the audience."

bon vivant
(bon vee-vahnt') [Fr.]: a person who lives luxuriously and enjoys good food and drink. "It's true he's quite the bon vivant, but when he gets down to business he conducts himself like a Spartan."

carpe diem
(kar'pay dee'um) [Lat.]: seize the day. "So what if you have an 8:00 a.m. meeting tomorrow and a full day of appointments? Carpe diem!"
carte blanche
(kart blonsh') [Fr.]: unrestricted power to act on one's own. "I may have carte blanche around the office, but at home I'm a slave to my family's demands."

cause célèbre
(koz suh-leb'ruh) [Fr.]: a widely known controversial case or issue. "The Sacco and Vanzetti trial became an international cause célèbre during the 1920s."

caveat emptor
(kav'ee-ot emp'tor) [Lat.]: let the buyer beware. "Before you leap at that real estate deal, caveat emptor!"

comme ci comme ça
(kom see' kom sah') [Fr.]: so-so. "The plans for the party strike me as comme ci comme ça."

coup de grâce
(koo de grahss') [Fr.]: finishing blow. "After an already wildly successful day, the coup de grâce came when she won best all-around athlete."

coup de main
(’man) [French] literally, hand stroke. Date: 1758. : a sudden attack in force

cri de coeur
(kree' de kur') [Fr.]: heartfelt appeal. "About to leave the podium, he made a final cri de coeur to his people to end the bloodshed."

de rigueur
(duh ree-gur') [Fr.]: strictly required, as by etiquette, usage, or fashion. "Loudly proclaiming one's support for radical causes had become de rigueur among her crowd."

deus ex machina
(day'us ex mahk'uh-nuh) [Lat.]: a contrived device to resolve a situation. "Stretching plausibility, the movie concluded with a deus ex machina ending in which everyone was rescued at the last minute."

dolce vita
(dole'chay vee'tuh) [Ital.]: sweet life; the good life perceived as one of physical pleasure and self-indulgence. "My vacation this year is going to be two uninterrupted weeks of dolce vita."

Doppelgänger*
(dop'pul-gang-ur) [Ger.]: a ghostly double or counterpart of a living person. "I could not shake the sense that some shadowy Doppelgänger echoed my every move."

ecce homo
(ek'ay ho'mo) [Lat.]: behold the man. "The painting depicted the common Renaissance theme, ecce homo—Christ wearing the crown of thorns."

enfant terrible
(ahn-fahn' tay-reeb'luh) [Fr.]: an incorrigible child; an outrageously outspoken or bold person. "He played the role of enfant terrible, jolting us with his blunt assessment."

entre nous
(ahn'truh noo') [Fr.]: between ourselves; confidentially. "Entre nous, their marriage is on the rocks."

ex cathedra
(ex kuh-thee'druh) [Lat.]: with authority; used especially of those pronouncements of the pope that are considered infallible. "I resigned myself to obeying; my father's opinions were ex cathedra in our household."

ex post facto
(ex' post fak'toh) [Lat.]: retroactively. "I certainly hope that the change in policy will be honored ex post facto."

fait accompli
(fate 'ah-kom-plee') [Fr.]: an accomplished fact, presumably irreversible. "There's no use
protesting—it's a *fait accompli.*"

**faux pas**
(foh pah') [Fr.]: a social blunder. "Suddenly, she realized she had unwittingly committed yet another *faux pas.*"

**Feinschmecker**
(fine'shmeck-er) [Ger.]: gourmet. "No, I don't think McDonald's will do; he's much too much of a *Feinschmecker.*"

**flagrante delicto**
(fla-grahn'tee di-lik'toh) [Lat.]: in the act. "The detective realized that without hard evidence he had no case; he would have to catch the culprit *flagrante delicto.*"

**glasnost**
(glaz'nohst) [Rus.]: open and frank discussion: initiated by Mikhail Gorbachev in 1985 in the Soviet Union. "Once the old chairman retired, the spirit of *glasnost* pervaded the department."

**hoi polloi**
(hoy' puh-loy') [Gk.]: the common people. "Marie Antoinette recommended cake to the *hoi polloi.*"

**in loco parentis**
(in loh'koh pa-ren'tiss) [Lat.]: in the place of a parent. "The court appointed a guardian for the children, to serve *in loco parentis.*"

**in situ**
(in sit'too) [Lat.]: situated in the original or natural position. "I prefer seeing statues *in situ* rather than in the confines of a museum."

**in vino veritas**
(in vee'no vare'i-toss) [Lat.]: in wine there is truth. "By the end of the party, several of the guests had made a good deal of their private lives public, prompting the host to murmur to his wife, ‘*in vino veritas.*'"

**ipso facto**
(ip'soh fak'toh) [Lat.]: by the fact itself. "An extremist, *ipso facto,* cannot become part of a coalition."

**je ne sais quoi**
(zhun say kwah') [Fr.]: I know not what; an elusive quality. "She couldn't explain it, but there was something *je ne sais quoi* about him that she found devastatingly attractive."

**mano a mano**
(mah'no ah mah'no) [Span.]: directly or face-to-face in a confrontation or conflict. "'Stay out of it,' he admonished his friends, ‘I want to handle this guy *mano a mano.*'"

**mea culpa**
(may'uh kul'puh) [Lat.]: I am to blame. "His *mea culpa* was so offhand that I hardly think he meant it."

**memento mori**
(muh-men'toh more'ee) [Lat.]: a reminder that you must die. "The skull rested on the mantelpiece as a *memento mori.*"

**modus operandi**
(moh'dus op-er-an'dee) [Lat.]: a method of operating. "*Her modus operandi* is to sugarcoat the truth so thoroughly that the news almost seems welcome."

**mot juste**
(moh zhoost') [Fr.]: the exact, appropriate word. "'Rats!' screamed the defiant three-year-old, immensely proud of his *mot juste.*"

**ne plus ultra**
(nee' plus ul'truh) [Lat.]: the most intense degree of a quality or state. "Pulling it from the box, he realized he was face to face with the *ne plus ultra* of computers."

**nom de guerre**
nom de plume
(nom duh ploom') [Fr.]: pen name. "Deciding it was time to sit down and begin a novel, the would-be writer spent the first several hours deciding upon a suitable *nom de plume.*"

nota bene
(nohtuh ben'nee) [Ital.]: note well; take notice. "Her postcard included a reminder, *nota bene,* I'll be returning on the 11 o'clock train."

persona non grata
(per-soh'nuh non grah'tuh) [Lat.]: unacceptable or unwelcome person. "Once I was cut out of the will, I became *persona non grata* among my relatives."

pro bono
(pro boh'noh) [Lat.]: done or donated without charge; free. "The lawyer's *pro bono* work gave him a sense of value that his work on behalf of the corporation could not."

quid pro quo
(kwid' pro kwoh') [Lat.]: something for something; an equal exchange. "She vowed that when she had the means, she would return his favors *quid pro quo.*"

sans souci
(saah soo-see') [Fr.]: carefree. "Their mood was definitely *sans souci.*"

savoir-faire
(sav'wahr fair') [Fr.]: the ability to say and do the correct thing. "She presided over the gathering with impressive *savoir-faire.*"

sic transit gloria mundi
(sick tran'sit glor'ee-uh mun'dee) [Lat.]: thus passes away the glory of the world. "Watching the aging former football quarterback lumber down the street, potbellied and dissipated, his friend shook his head in disbelief and muttered, ‘*sic transit gloria mundi.*'"

sine qua non
(sin'ay kwah nohn') [Lat.]: indispensable. "Lemon is the *sine qua non* of this recipe."

terra incognita
(tare'uh in-kog-nee'tuh) [Lat.]: unknown territory. "When the conversation suddenly switched from contemporary fiction to medieval Albanian playwrights, he felt himself entering *terra incognita.*"

tout le monde
(too luh mond') [Fr.]: everybody; everyone of importance. "Don't miss the event; it's bound to be attended by *tout le monde.*"

veni, vidi, vici
(veni vee'dee vee'chee) [Lat.]: I came, I saw, I conquered. "After the takeover the business mogul gloated, *'veni, vidi, vici.'""

verboten
(fer-boh'ten) [Ger.]: forbidden, as by law; prohibited. "That topic, I am afraid, is *verboten* in this household."

vox populi
(voks pop'yoo-lee) [Lat.]: the voice of the people. "My sentiments echo those of the *vox populi.*"

Wanderjahr*
(vahn'der-yahr) [Ger.]: a year or period of travel, especially following one's schooling. "The trio took off on their *Wanderjahr* soon after they graduated, to circle the globe by bicycle."

Weltanschauung*
(vel'tan-shou'ung) [Ger.]: a comprehensive conception or image of the universe and of humanity's relation to it. "His *Weltanschauung* gradually metamorphized from a grim and pessimistic one to a sunny, but no less complex, view."

Weltschmerz*
(velt'shmerts) [Ger.]: sorrow over the evils of the world. "His poetry expressed a certain Weltschmerz, or world-weariness."

**Zeitgeist**

(zite'guyst) [Ger.]: the spirit of the time; general trend of thought or feeling characteristic of a particular period of time. "She blamed it on the Zeitgeist, which encouraged hedonistic excess."

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