

Sylwia WILKOSZ

University of Rzeszów
swilkosz@gmail.com

A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF POLISH AND ENGLISH IDIOMS CONTAINING WORDS FROM BIRD CLASS

Abstract: The principle aim of the article is to shed light on the differences between Polish and English idioms containing words from BIRD class. Among the illustrated examples some of the Polish instances include *mieć kaczy chód*, *głupia gęś* or *ptasi mózdzek* in comparison to their English equivalents. Additionally, the English cases concerning idioms outlined in the article involve *to take to something like a duck to water*, *to kill the goose that lays the golden eggs* or *to count one's chickens*, etc.

The article consists of three main parts. The first one presents a brief description of the phraseological unit in general as well as it constitutes an attempt to classify different types of the units and an abundance of the terminology connected with the phenomenon. Moreover, the next section explains in detail what exactly the term *idiom* denotes according to diverse authors, i.e. Seidl, Weinreich, etc. Furthermore, in the last part of the article the idioms with words from the class BIRD are analysed. Not only particular examples of the idioms are compared with their equivalents in another language but also the origin of the presented idioms is clarified. Finally, all the conclusions are listed in the summary.

Key words: idiom, phraseological unit, phraseology, bird, idiomacity.

Introduction

Like birds in the natural environment, metaphors are omnipresent in numerous, if not all languages as well as constituting an inseparable element of everyday speech. Metaphors not only enrich our discourse but also make it more vivid and comprehensible. Thus, the main idea of this article is to shed light on the differences concerning Polish and English idioms containing words from the BIRD class. On the one hand, considerable attention is focused on the Polish instances of

the phrases which are discussed in contrast with their English equivalents. Yet, on the other hand, the English examples of BIRD idioms are presented in comparison to their Polish translations.

Since the main focus of the article is idioms in addition to the fact that they constitute a specific type of phraseological unit, namely non-motivated phraseological fusion, the article starts with a definition of a phraseological unit. Moreover, the abundance of phraseological terms is briefly clarified. On top of that, apart from the definition of *idiom* itself, particular BIRD phrases, either in Polish or English, are exemplified and analysed.

General outlook on phraseological units and other phraseological terms

First of all, it is crucial to outline that in general the term phraseology comes from Greek, that is *phrases*, and it refers to ‘the way of speaking’. With reference to Bogacz (2011), the term mentioned denotes *a collection of phrases and idioms of a language* and we must add that it occurred in a Greek-Latin dictionary for the first time in the second half of the 16th century. Among numerous definitions suggested in OED the following two seem to be most relevant. With reference to this particular source, on the one hand phraseology can be viewed as a branch of lexicology devoted to both collecting and studying not only the expressions but also word combinations in a language. According to Bogacz (2011), this aspect can be referred to as theoretical phraseology, in contrast to linguistic phraseology, that is the expressions and word combinations in a language. The author further asserts that the phenomenon has been given a number of various names, most of which are derivatives of *idiom*, for instance *idiomatology* or *idiomacity*.

A phraseological unit constitutes the basic unit of analysis in phraseology, thus, it is essential to explain what it actually stands for. The term can be illustrated in accordance with both syntactical structure and semantic principle. As far as the syntactical criterion is concerned the term embraces two classes of expressions, the first one includes word-like units also labelled as semantic units, while the second group consists of pragmatic units, meaning sentence-like units, as implied by Bogacz (2011). Moreover, various scholars add even more headings within the field of phraseological unit in addition to both of the aforementioned classes that belong to it. For instance, among others the word-like units can be called nominations, as suggested by Glaser (1988) or composites, as Cowie (1988) advises, whereas sentence-like units can be termed functional expressions, after Howarth (1996), or set-groups, as Zgusta (1971) recommends, etc. Like both classes included within the concept of the phraseological unit also the latest one can be termed differently, for example phraseme (Melcuk 1988), word combination (Howarth 1996) or set-combination (Zgusta 1971), etc.

In line with semantic principle, phraseological units can be divided into motivated phraseological combinations or collocations, which means that their meaning can be inferred from their elements. Furthermore, partially-motivated phraseological unities whose meanings can be deduced by means of metaphor can be distinguished in addition to non-motivated phraseological fusions whose meanings cannot be found by knowing what their components mean. The last group is frequently referred to as idioms, pure idioms or, according to Rayevska (1979), unchangeable idioms.

Since the phenomenon of phraseological unit can be examined from different angles, yet another classification, namely structural arrangement, can be suggested. In regard to this point of reference, Rayevska (1979) points out verbal, adjectival, adverbial or nominal phraseological units. The three standards listed above do not fulfil all the possibilities, yet they constitute comprehensible classification of the term in question while presenting sufficient description at the same time.

However, when discussing the aspect of phraseological unit and various suggested classifications of it, one has to bear in mind that not only are none of the divisions limited in their boundaries but also that they constitute different approaches to the problem. Moreover, as Rayevska (1979:267) noticed:

Each of these, however, is not a completely isolated group, for it is sometimes impossible to draw a rigid line of demarcation between the given types. In a number of instances we find phraseological units of mixed nature which occupy an intermediate position.

All in all, the division of phraseological units and their further examination seem to be vital in order to distinguish them from free word-groups which, like phraseological units, are rather stable in terms of structure, yet in contrast to them they lack semantic unification, e.g. *to go by bus* or *to make a mistake* vs. *to make up one's mind*, meaning *to decide*, or *to go through something*, meaning *to examine something*, etc. Thus, it is easily observable that in contrast to two former examples the later instances of word-groups are not only structurally but also semantically bound. This leads to the assumption that they are not merely word-groups whose meaning changes when specific words are put together but they are phraseological word-groups with totally new meanings; as Antrushina et al. (1985) suggest, *the meaning of the whole word-group is something entirely new and far removed from the current meanings of constituents*. On the other hand, owing to the fact that speech in most languages is regulated by certain rules, for instance grammar or logic, the same author states that no construction in language is fully free, i.e. it is possible to talk about a *blue-eyed girl* but not about a *blue-eyed chair*. As Antrushina et al. (1985) clearly show, *free-word groups (...) are built up anew in the speech process whereas idioms are used as ready-made units with fixed and constant structures*. Additionally, since the last two examples mentioned above

cannot be interpreted on the basis of their constituent parts but as whole units, it can be assumed that they are idioms, at least according to some scholars, including Weinreich (1969) and Burkhanov (1998), and the definitions they provide. The explanation of an idiom constitutes the subject of investigation in the following section.

Among other authors also Antrushina et al. (1985) assert that the classification of the basic unit of analysis within phraseology regarding both semantic and structural criteria functions as the way of distinguishing a phraseological unit from a free word-group. Furthermore, the authors admit that such analysis is a highly complicated and rather problematic process.

This is probably the most discussed – and the most controversial – problem in the field of phraseology. The task of distinguishing between free word-groups and phraseological units is further complicated by the existence of a great number of marginal cases, the so-called semi-fixed or semi-free word-groups, also called non-phraseological word-groups which share with phraseological units their structural stability but lack their semantic unity and figurativeness (e. g. to go to school, to go by bus, to commit suicide). (Antrushina et al. 1985:177)

Definition of idiom

Just as the name of the branch of linguistics dealing with collecting and studying phrases in a language, that is phraseology, can be used interchangeably with the derivatives of idiom, for example idiomatology, also *phraseological unit* is frequently confused with *idiom*. As has been stated before, the phraseological unit functions as the superordinate term embracing different kinds of word-groups, including motivated or partially-motivated phrases in addition to phraseological unities or fusions. With regard to the semantic principle the latest ones constitute idioms or pure idioms also called unchangeable idioms, as suggested by Rayevska (1979). Thus, if *phraseological unit* creates a superordinate term, then *idiom* as a kind of phraseological unit can be perceived as a hyponym of the previous one.

Moreover, Antrushina et al. (1985) suggest that although both terms *phraseological unit* as well as *idiom* are perceived as more or less the same phenomenon by some scholars, they distinguish *idiom* as a kind of *phraseological unit*, adding to the view mentioned above. Thus, they *more or less* give the impression that the key terms examined do not necessarily mean exactly the same. What is more, the authors further explain that following the semantic criterion *idiom* denotes the phraseological unit whose meaning cannot be stated on the basis of the meanings of its components. In other words, this is a unit with completely transferred meaning. Like Rayevska (1979) also Antrushina et al. (1985) call this unit with entirely changed sense a phraseological fusion, i.e. pure idiom.

The latter authors also imply that phraseological fusions are demotivated, which means that the metaphor on which the transfer of meaning was based is not clear and comprehensible any more. This criterion places fusions in comparison to phraseological unities since the second term denotes a word-group whose meaning is in no way parallel to its elements. Yet, its sense can be understood and decoded from its constituents, owing to the fact that it is based on clearly understandable metaphor. This major difference between the two terms mentioned above means that unities are motivated.

As far as the structural criterion is concerned there are certain rules that contrast phraseological units, including idioms, with free-word groups. Among all the rules the restriction of substitution can be exemplified. It means that in the case of idioms none of the elements can be changed into another one, for instance if there is an idiom *as mad as a wet hen* meaning *crazy* the adjective *mad* cannot be substituted by *happy* or any other adjective. Another rule restricts idioms when it comes to additional elements; that is, no supplementary component can be attached to it. Regarding this fact it is not possible to say for example *as mad and crazy as a wet hen*. Moreover, Antrushina (1985) mentions the lack of grammatical variability when discussing idioms, which means that the idiom exemplified always occurs in the same form. Nonetheless, some exceptions to this rule are possible as the author claims presenting it with reference to certain idioms.

A shameful or dangerous family secret is picturesquely described as a skeleton in the cupboard, the first substantive component being frequently and easily used in the plural form, as in: I'm sure they have skeletons in every cupboard! A black sheep is a disreputable member of a family who, in especially serious cases, may be described as the blackest sheep of the family. (Antrushina 1985:180).

Yet, getting to grips with the terminology connected with idioms, a few definitions presented by various scholars seem to be worth examining. Owing to the existence of numerous phraseological classifications *idiom* can also be understood differently. Although the literature dedicated to phraseology brings out an abundance of terms within the field of study, Bogacz (2011) claims that *idiom* constitutes the term most widely used. In addition, the author adds that the meaning of an idiom cannot be deduced from the meaning of its parts, as stated previously, which establishes yet another common truth shared by numerous linguists. This widely accepted view can be found in van der Linden's (1989) explanation that *idiom is a non-compositional expression*. According to the scholar, idiom is a fixed structure, whose lexical or grammatical pattern cannot be changed and it functions as a whole.

Moreover, Weinreich (1969) adds that an *idiom is a complex expression whose meaning cannot be derived from the meanings of its elements*. However, on the basis of different works Bogacz (2011) suggests that to understand and apply the definitions provided one has to possess particular knowledge and be able

to distinguish idiomatic and non-idiomatic expressions. Thus, following Cruse (1986:37) who recommends the term *semantic constituent* to define an idiom, Bogacz (2011) explains it as *a word-group [which] may be classified as an idiom if it is lexically complex (i.e. consists of more than one lexical constituent), and at the same time it forms a single minimal semantic constituent*. Consequently, it needs to be pointed out that non-idiomatic expressions can be divided into separate semantic constituents and that each of them has its own distinctive meaning.

Some other sceptics, including Coulmas (1981), underline that in some cases the meaning of an idiom can be inferred from its constituent items, undermining at the same time some of the previous theories presented above. On the other hand, Coulmas' view confirms only the classification of phraseological units exemplified at the beginning of this section, namely the difference between both phraseological fusions and phraseological unities. Regarding this division, it is worth mentioning one more time that the instances of phrases whose meaning can be deduced from its elements constitute phraseological unities. This can be clearly seen in the example of the Polish phrase *mieć sokoli wzrok* (*to have an eagle eye*),¹ which is used about a person who has very good eyesight. One does not have to be a highly educated academician to understand the phrase, thus the name of the bird used in the phrase is widely known for its extraordinary ability to see from even a very long distance. In this particular example the literal meaning has been transferred from the bird to describe one of the characteristics of a human being. In other words, the bird's name in this phrase constitutes the source domain, whereas the human's eyesight is the target domain.

All in all, Bogacz (2011) draws a significant conclusion concerning the issue discussed that needs to be highlighted. In her view, whatever the approach or scholar, the most common definition of an idiom among both linguists as well as people who are not experts in this field is the one mentioned above. According to this, it is not possible to denote the meaning of the whole unit on the basis of its constituent parts and, in addition, they are not only unique to a given language but they also often do not have exact equivalents in other languages. This can be demonstrated in the example of the English idiom *to talk turkey*, which in Polish is explained as *mówić bez ogródek*, i.e. to speak honestly and openly, and it has nothing to do with a turkey, so it can be stated that the difference between these two languages is at the lexical level.

Furthermore, the fact that an idiom can be perceived as a unique phenomenon in a particular language can be justified by the fact that the term itself denotes 'private, own, peculiar' in the Greek from which the word comes. Thus, idioms constitute peculiar and original phrases commonly used in one language and not necessarily in another, meaning that what is understandable for a native speaker could be impossible for a foreigner to figure out.

¹ In the original version in Polish falcon is used instead of eagle.

Metaphor – a general outlook

As has already been mentioned on many occasions the meanings of idioms are based on metaphors, which constitute one of the types of meaning alterations based on transfer to another conceptual sphere. Lakoff (1992) states that *each metaphor is a structural mapping from one conceptual domain to another. When a metaphor is conventional, it forms a part of our everyday understanding of experience and is processed automatically, effortlessly, and without notice.* The scholar further emphasises that *the number of everyday conventional metaphors is very large, but most go unnoticed because they are so common and effortless.* This kind of mind-set finds confirmation in idioms, as the metaphors they are based on are not always clear to understand, as in the example *to goose up*, which means to increase the amount, size or quantity of something. Although in this conceptual metaphor, there is a correlation between a source domain element and a target domain element, i.e. *up* usually corresponds to *more*, it is still impossible to guess the meaning from the constituent parts of the phrase. In other words, the meaning cannot be discovered by a process of logical deduction only by knowing the word *goose* and *up*. Consequently, to use the idiom successfully requires certain knowledge not only from the speaker but also from the listener. Both sides have to know the phrase and its usage to fully understand it in a conversation. Owing to the fact that idioms are unique for particular languages it leads to the assumption that they constitute excellent indicators of certain features characteristic of a given nationality, country or a specific social group. On the other hand, in the case of the proverbial phrase *to kill the goose that lays golden eggs*, which denotes ‘to destroy a source of one’s wealth’ as exemplified by Górecka-Smolińska and Kleparski (2012), the meaning can be deduced from its parts. Thus, in this context the metaphor on which the phrase is based is quite clear to its user and does not require general erudition.

Since the main focus of the article is a comparative analysis of certain phraseological units containing different names of birds, it is noteworthy to mention the term *zoosemy*. The word has been coined to denote animal metaphors used to describe humans in addition to both their appearance and features of character. As Górecka-Smolińska and Kleparski (2012) claim that the first animal metaphors with regard to humans were found in Sanskrit, the ancestor of Indo-European languages, and the names of animals used in this sense were *goat* and *horse*. The authors state that *it is noteworthy that animal terms were employed in secondary senses with reference to HUMANS as early as in the era of Sanskrit described by the majority of linguists as the parent language of the Indo-European family* (Górecka-Smolińska and Kleparski 2012:51). It is not surprising that the first animal metaphors derived this early; after all, animals have always accompanied humans as they still do today.

On the basis of other linguistic works the authors outline the fact that the category MAMMALS used in secondary senses resembles people’s characters to

the greatest extent in comparison to other categories, which is reflected in the number of metaphors. Yet, another common category used to describe people is the BIRD class. So it can be pointed out that the popularity of a particular group or category depends on what human features can it reveal. Following this view, the authors exemplify ARACHNIDS as being not so popular as far as metaphors describing humankind are concerned, since the given group is the least similar to us. The two linguists further suggest that:

The inescapable conclusion which emerges from the study (...) is that people frequently refer to other people by applying names of those animals to which they are the closest and with which they are the most familiar (...). Apparently, human beings may be expected to be most frequently represented by the metaphorical expressions incorporating the names of domesticated animals since their closeness to people is both most evident and historically justified. (Górecka-Smolińska and Kleparski 2012:52)

In conclusion, metaphors help us to understand more complex concepts by the use of simpler ones, where the former constitutes a target domain and the later one is a source domain. Furthermore, animals have always accompanied humans, thus, animal metaphors seem to be a natural consequence of this harmonious coexistence. What is more, idioms with animal elements used to describe humankind are not accidental, since not all of the representatives of the animal kingdom possess relevant features.

Idioms in the English and Polish contexts

The following part is an attempt to present a meticulous analysis of English and Polish idioms with BIRD words. Not only will the meaning of certain idioms be presented, but also their use in sentences in addition to a comparison with their equivalents. The idioms analysed will contain only the instances of domesticated birds like *hen, chicken, duck*, etc. in addition to some examples of birds which are not domesticated, yet live in close proximity to people in city parks or forests, for instance *pigeon, stork, swan*, etc.

In their work, Górecka-Smolińska and Kleparski (2012) inform readers that zoosemic developments in English have been already studied by various scholars in addition to the fact that some of the research comes from the late 1920s. To a large extent the outcome of the research is that numerous animal features can be assigned to humans and that the number of animal metaphors reflects the resemblance between the two species. Hence, it can lead to the assumption that both animal metaphor and its use are not coincidental or unintended. Additionally, as far as BIRD metaphors are concerned, an abundance of their instances can be

observed in English and Polish idioms. As far as Polish phraseology is concerned, the two authors add that zoosemic transfer in Polish is quite similar to that in English, which means that the majority of zoosemic developments in the Polish language take into consideration the **BIRDS** domain next to **MAMMALS** which constitute a rich source of examples of animal metaphors presented in idiomatic expressions.

Domesticated birds

To begin with, certain idioms with either the names of birds or the hyperonym *bird* itself seem to be worth mentioning. Birds have always been associated with freedom, independence and their ability to fly, thus the phraseological unit *as free as a bird*, which in AID² (1994) is explained as ‘carefree’ or ‘completely free’, constitutes a natural consequence of people’s observation of the surrounding world. As a result of this thorough scrutiny, natural phenomena find a linguistic reflection. In other words, the expression can be used to describe a person’s attitude or behaviour as well as a state or situation in which a person is. The difference can easily be seen in the examples *The convict escaped from jail and was as free as a bird for two days* vs. *Jane is always happy and free as a bird* (AID 1994). In the first sentence the situation of a particular person is described, whereas, in case of the second utterance it seems quite obvious that the meaning of the idiom is rather ‘carefree’. Owing to the fact that like in the English context also in Polish culture birds evoke similar images, the phrase analysed has its Polish equivalent *wolny jak ptak*. Moreover, the English *bird’s eye view* also has a very close translation into *widok z lotu ptaka*. On the other hand, there are some negative aspects of birds’ life including their frequently small size or their fragility, as expressed in the Polish saying *po ptakach /po ptokach* when something is over. The dialectal version *po ptokach* became even more popular than the original one *po ptakach*. However, in this case Polish and English perception does not overlap and to express this idea in the English language one would say *it’s over and done with*. Adding to this pejorative perspective Polish *niebieski ptak*, used to describe a person who evades duties and responsibilities, is in English described as *adventurer* or *freebooter* and is in no way connected with bird metaphor. Thus, the lexical difference here is obvious.

These few instances above already emphasize the common view that in most cases idioms are not only unique to a specific language but also cannot be directly translated into another one. Hence, the sentence *Robert to niebieski ptak – zawsze szuka wymówek żeby wcześniej skończyć pracę* can be turned into *Robert is an adventurer – he always makes excuses to finish work earlier*. The sentence conveys

² Spears R. A., NTC’s American Idioms Dictionary (1994).

more or less the same meaning; that is, on the semantic level the sentences can be perceived as equivalents, yet on the lexical level the two examples differ regarding the idiomatic expression *niebieski ptak* translated into *adventurer* in English.

Other interesting examples of idioms with the hyperonym *bird* include *early bird* or *birds of a feather flock together*; both can be directly translated into Polish as *ranny ptaszek* and *ciągnie swój do swego*, respectively. The first of the two idioms denotes a person who literally likes getting up early and does it easily in addition to being hard-working, whereas the second one can be used to describe a specific kind of human relations. In other words the latter phraseological unit not only points out the social relation but also highlights the fact that people who have things in common want to spend time together. In this anthropocentric perspective one can clearly see that a characteristic of birds' life is transferred into people's life to illustrate our social networking in a picturesque way. As far as the former idiomatic expression is concerned, one has to bear in mind that it is a short form of the saying *the early bird catches the worm*, which in Polish goes *kto rano wstaje, temu Pan Bóg daje*. Unlike in the case of the idioms' short forms, which can be directly translated from one language into another showing both lexical and semantic equivalence, the original sayings have little in common concerning the structure or elements they are made up of. In the English version there is the word *bird* whereas in Polish interpretation there are no traits of animal metaphor. Instead, there is a reference to God, who distributes all goods to those who deserve it.

The number of fixed phrases including the lexeme *bird* or specific bird names signifies the quintessence of what people have thought about birds and how these creatures have been perceived. On the one hand, they are seen as an unattainable symbol of freedom, able to fly and observe the world from the heights, yet on the other hand there are numerous stereotypes based on their fragility, frequently small size or referring to their intelligence. The final feature, especially, often departs from the truth, for instance the *goose*, associated with lack of intelligence or even stupidity, is in fact a very intelligent bird, unlike the *owl* perceived by many as the symbol of wisdom. This common view also finds its expression in phraseology, for example in the English idiom *as wise as an owl* or in the Polish phrase *głupia gęś* used pejoratively to define a woman. Both phraseological units can be translated into the two languages in question, hence, to describe a knowledgeable person Polish speakers say *mądra sowa*, whereas English users say only *goose* to convey the same negatively loaded meaning as Polish *głupia gęś*. Consequently, it can be claimed that the phrases exemplified above are very alike in both languages; that is, in both of them the same birds are used to describe the same levels of intelligence.

Furthermore, when analyzing phraseological units including either the hyperonym *bird* or specific bird names, one has to bear in mind that these flying creatures are categorized with regard to folk or popular beliefs (Satkiewicz 2001:536). What is more, birds that are able to fly are often perceived in a better light than those who cannot, like domesticated birds, who constitute the specimen

of analysis in this paper compared to birds which are not domesticated, yet live near to people. As a result, birds like hen, goose, duck, etc. are usually seen as worse than wild goose, eagle or swan, which is reflected in phraseology as well. The explanation of this unequal attitude may be that not only birds but also farm animals in general have been domesticated by humankind, which indicates the superiority of the human race over animals (Kempf 1989:208). The majority of idioms that include the names of domesticated birds refer to such human features as stupidity, unreasonable thinking, cowardice or even calculation, for instance *goose*, used to describe a woman, *to chicken out* or *it's like water off a duck's back*, etc. Furthermore, the phraseological units discussed point out flaws of both appearance and age, for example *to be no spring chicken*, but also Polish phrases *brzydkie kaczątko* (an ugly duckling), *wyglądać jak zmokła kura* (to look miserable or to look like a drowned rat) and *kaczy chód* (to walk like a duck). As can be observed not all of the idioms listed, either in English or Polish, have exact equivalents, for instance the phrase *wyglądać jak zmokła kura* has the same form in English but there is *a drowned rat* instead of *hen*.

Additionally, such characteristics as aggression or pride can also be pictured by means of bird metaphors, as in *nadać się jak indyk* (to put on airs and graces), *dumny jak paw* (to strut around like a peacock) or *rzucić się jak szara geś* (to throw one's weight about). It is worth mentioning that the two features mentioned are attributed mostly to men and that only one phrase out of the three listed has an English substitute containing the same bird name. Ignorance is yet another human characteristic that can be emphasized via animal metaphor, for instance in the Polish language *kura domowa*, while in the English speaking environment the same idea is expressed by the lexical item *hausfrau*. The examples only underline what has already been stated: some phraseological phrases do not have direct equivalents; that is, in one language an animal metaphor is used to denote certain features, whereas in another one there are no traces of zoosemy in the same context.

Apart from the whole spectrum of negative features transferred from certain birds to describe humankind, there are also some positive characteristics observed. Most of them, though, include birds' abilities rather than characteristics, and are used to describe things more often than people. For instance in the sentence *Selling this company is like selling the goose that lays golden eggs*, a company is compared to a goose. Moreover, the Polish version of this idiom is a very close equivalent and the only difference is that instead of a *goose* there is *a hen laying golden eggs*.

Additionally, the idioms describing people's temperament or behavior include *to go off at half cock*, which means to be nasty, *to play ducks and drakes with somebody*, meaning to treat someone disrespectfully or *to cook somebody's goose*, in other words to get into a mess. The idioms presented have Polish equivalents, but they are not based on animal metaphors and they show differences on various levels,

for instance *być w gorącej wodzie kąpanym*, as the first one mentioned, does not contain a bird name in addition to the fact that in the Polish idiom there is the verb *to be* unlike the verb *to go*, as is in the English phrase. Although the second phrase can be easily translated into Polish, in this language it is not an idiom at all, which leads to the assumption that there are no equivalents when it comes to this particular phraseological unit. The last one presented in this paragraph can be interpreted as an informal fixed expression *urządzić kogoś*. As a result, it may be noticed that like in the case of the second example, the English idiom can be translated, yet in the Polish language the translations do not constitute idiomatic expressions. The number of such expressions either in one language or the other shows to what extent animals' lives overlap with humans' activity and also provides clear confirmation of the view that domesticated birds have been perceived in a rather negative way due to their submissive position in relation to humankind.

Semi-domesticated birds

Further examples include phrases with names of birds that are not fully domesticated, yet they live in quite close proximity to people, for instance in parks, forests or nearby lakes, etc. Among others, such birds include sparrow, pigeon, magpie, swan and raven. Observed for centuries, these flying creatures contributed to the growth in peculiar mythology in which some cultural aspects or people's beliefs can be found. For instance, in both cultures, English as well as Polish, *stork* is presented as a bird bringing children. According to the Online Etymology Dictionary this common belief comes from German and Dutch nursery stories in addition to the fact that these birds nesting on one's roof were often associated with good luck connected with family happiness. With regard to phraseological units containing the word in question this view finds confirmation in the English saying *to keep the stork flying* or *to keep the stork busy* and also the birth of a baby can be expressed as *a visit from the stork*. Although in the Polish language there are no idioms reflecting this popular mindset, the bird occurs in different expressions showing other valuable virtues. Some of them include *chodzić jak bocian*, directly translated into *to walk like a stork* and *stać jak bocian na gnieździe*, understood as *to stand like a stork in the nest*. Both of the phrases refer to behavior and they mean to act in a dignified manner.

Another bird with some positive connotations is the *swan*. It is usually associated with both physical and inner beauty, which is reflected in the phraseology of both languages examined. The phrases include the English *swan song*, in the Polish language known as *łabędzi śpiew* which denotes a final effort or burst of energy. Price (2011) explains that the phrase was coined regarding the belief that usually silent swans start singing beautifully at the end of their lives. As far as physical

appearance is concerned there is an idiom indicating positive connotations: *as graceful as a swan*, as in *Katie is a beautiful girl; she is as graceful as a swan* and the Polish phrase *łabędzia szyja*, translated as *a swan's neck*. The Online Etymology Dictionary also mentions *a black swan* which connotes with something extremely rare or even non-existent.

Like the two birds exemplified above phraseological units containing *pigeon* or its derivatives also often evoke such positive associations as harmonious and peaceful life together. Among others some of the phrases include *gruchać* or *żyć ze sobą jak para gołębików* (Eng. *to coo, to live together like a couple of pigeons*) as in *Godzinami gruchają jak dwa gołębki*. However, in the English language *to bill and coo* can be used about people to convey the same meaning, thus the sentence might sound *They bill and coo for hours*. In the example given above, the difference between the languages in terms of animal metaphors seem to be obvious; where there is only one word in the Polish language, in English there is an idiomatic expression instead. Nonetheless, among all the positively loaded expressions with *pigeon*, there are quite a few which generate rather negative figurative meanings, for example *a pigeon-eyed person* is a person intoxicated with alcohol, *a clay pigeon* is a naive person, *a stool pigeon* denotes a person, frequently a criminal, who cooperates with the police as an informer. Moreover, *to put / set the cat among the pigeons* is yet another phraseological unit, which means to do or say something that causes both trouble and anger.

Furthermore, idioms with birds that can be spotted in places where people live include ravens, magpies, sparrows or crows. Phraseological units with the birds listed usually symbolize various pejorative human characteristics, for instance *magpie* stands for relentless talkativeness as well denoting a person who likes collecting things. Unlike in the case of the second meaning, which is the same in both languages, as far as the first one is concerned, in the Polish version *crow* occurs instead in the same context, thus it is *krakać jak wrony*. Another example of animal metaphor with *crow* in the background is *wykrakać coś*, that is to predict something bad, though in this case it is not the bird itself on which the metaphor is based, but the sound the creature makes. What is more, to describe somebody's bad manners it can be said that someone *crowds about / over something*, meaning to brag about something, as in the sentence *Jane is crowing over her new job*. *Crow* also connotes with shame or humility, as in the idiom *to eat crow*, according to which a person feels ashamed due to the fact that they have to admit to being wrong. Stupidity constitutes another feature that can be expressed by an animal metaphor, namely *gapić się jak sroka w kość* (Eng. *to stare at something as a magpie at a bone*), as well as greed as in *złapać dwie sroki za ogon* (Eng. *to catch two magpies' tails*). Furthermore, the phrase *jeść jak wróbelek* (Eng. *to eat as little as a sparrow*) shows a small amount or quantity of food. *Sparrow* can also denote some positive traits like cunning or life experience, which also finds its linguistic expression in the idiom *stary wróbel* (Eng. *an old sparrow*).

In addition to the majority of negatively loaded idioms containing specific bird names, *raven* is perceived in a more positive light. In the Polish idiom *biały kruk* (Eng. *white raven*) the bird symbolizes something rare and unique, especially in the context of librarianship, meaning a very rare, thus valuable book. What is more, in this form the idiom is hardly ever used about people.

Summary

The paper shows many examples of how humankind draws a lot of knowledge from the world of birds and transfers this wisdom to their own life creating a vivid linguistic picture of the surrounding world. The better particular birds are known and the closer is their relationship with people, the greater is the number of phraseological units with birds' names. This can be emphasized by the fact that idioms containing names of domesticated birds cover a much larger part of the article than phrases with semi-domesticated birds. Consequently, birds like hen, duck, goose, etc. generate more phraseological units than idioms with swan, stork, raven or magpie.

In both languages examined huge similarity between the discussed phrases as well as between the connotations they evoke can be observed, for instance *łabędzi śpiew* and *swan song*, *selling the goose that lays golden eggs* and *sprzedać kurę znoszącą złote jajka*, *wolny jak ptak* and *as free as a bird*, *goose* and *głupia geś*, etc. In some cases the linguistic equivalence is in the proportion 1:1 as in *łabędzi śpiew* and *swan song* or *magpie*, interpreted as a person collecting things, in addition to the associations with *stork*. Nevertheless, people do not always assign correctly particular features to specific birds, which can be noted in the case of goose. For some reasons the bird is associated with a lack of intelligence, whereas in fact it is one of the smartest birds. Furthermore, there are some instances of phraseological units, either Polish or English, which can be somehow translated in one language or another, yet they do not have direct equivalents. This leads to the assumption that some of the birds have either various connotations in different cultures or they have no connotations at all. The examples include *to play ducks and drakes*, *to cook somebody's goose*, *a pigeon-eyed person* and the Polish phrases *rządzić się jak szara geś*, *stary wróbel* or *złapać dwie sroki za ogon*, etc.

Although phraseological units containing the hyperonym bird or other names of birds are quite numerous, the interest in using them does not reflect their number. Bearing the traces of both history and culture of a specific country they become rarely used or even extinct. No longer used in everyday speech, the phrases become archaic and finally forgotten, and they remain of interest mostly for linguists, etymologists or ornithologists. It is vital to mention that the attitude of speakers towards idioms and their use reflects, in a way, the fact that we escaped from nature. We changed our natural environment and we no longer live in a close

relationship with nature unlike our ancestors. Hence, the diminishing tendency of the use of animal metaphors seems to be a natural consequence of the changing world around us and its observation.

References

- Antrushina, G.B., Afanasyeva, O.V., Morozowa, N.N.** 1985. *English Phraseology*. Moscow: Vyssaja Skola.
- Bogacz, A.** 2011. 'Idioms, set-phrases, word-groups, phraseological units: on various ways of approaching the problem of English phraseology' [in:] *Historical Semantics Brought to the Shore* (eds) L. Körtvélyessy, D. Osuchowska, A. Włodarczyk-Stachurska. Chelms: Tawa.
- Burkhanov, I.** 1998. *Lexicography. A Dictionary of Basic Terminology*. Rzeszów: Wydawnictwo Wyższej Szkoły Pedagogicznej.
- Coulmas, F.** 1981. 'Idiomacity as a problem of pragmatics' [in:] H. Parret, M. Sbisá, J. Verschuere (eds) *Possibilities and Limitations of Pragmatics*. Amsterdam: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Cowie, A.P.** (ed). 1988. 'Stable and creative aspects of vocabulary use' [in:] R. Carter, M.J. McCarthy (eds) *Vocabulary and Language Teaching*. London: Longman.
- Cruse, D.A.** 1986. *Lexical Semantics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Fillmore, C.J., Kay, P., O'connor, M.C.** 1988. 'Regularity and idiomacity in grammatical constructions: the case of *let alone*' [in:] *Language*.
- Gläser, R.** 1988. 'The grading of idiomacity as a presupposition for a taxonomy of idioms' [in:] W. Hüllen, R. Schulze (eds) *Understanding the Lexicon: Meaning, Sense and World Knowledge in Lexical Semantics*. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer.
- Górecka-Smolińska, M., Kleparski, A.** 2012. *Feathered Creatures Speak: The Study of Semantic Evolution and Phraseology of Domesticated and Semi-domesticated Birds*. Rzeszów: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Rzeszowskiego.
- Howarth, P.** 1996. *Phraseology in English Academic Writing: Some Implications for Language Learning and Dictionary Making*. Lexicographica, Series maior 75. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer.
- Kempf, Z.** 1989. *Dwa aspekty wyrazów negatywnych dotyczących zwierząt. Język Polski*.
- Lakoff, G.** 1992. *The Contemporary Theory of Metaphor*. Cambridge University Press.
- Melcuk, I.** 1988. 'Semantics description of lexical units in an explanatory combinational dictionary: basic principles and heuristic criteria' [in:] *International Journal of Lexicography*.
- Price, D.** 2011. *Endangered Phrases*.
- Rayevska, N.M.** 1979. *English Lexicology*. Kiev: Vysca Skola Publishers (4th edition).
- Satkiewicz, H.** 2001. *Świat ptaków w polskiej tradycji językowej. Prace filologiczne*.
- Weinreich, U.** 1969. 'Problems in the analysis of idioms' [in:] J. Puhvel (ed) *Substance and Structure of Language*. Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Zgusta, L.** 1971. *Manual of Lexicography*. The Hague: Mouton.

Dictionaries

- Kłosińska, A. et al.** 2005. *Wielki słownik frazeologiczny PWN z przysłowiami..* Warszawa: Polskie Wydawnictwo Naukowe.
- Skorupka, S.** 1967. *Słownik Frazeologiczny Języka Polskiego*. t I – II. Warszawa: Wiedza Powszechna.

- Spears, R.A.** 1994. *NTC's American Idioms Dictionary*. (2nd ed.) Chicago, Illinois: National Textbook Company.
- The Oxford English Dictionary.** 1971. (vol. 1,2). J. Murray, H. Bradley, , Ch. T. Onions, W. Craigie and F.J. Furnivall (eds) Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Online sources

- Online Etymology Dictionary.** 2012 – 2015. Harper, D. (accessed on 25th March 2015).
- The Free Dictionary.** 2003 – 2015. Farlex, Inc. (accessed on 20th March 2015).
- Cambridge Idioms Dictionary.** 2006. (2nd ed.) Cambridge University Press.
- Dictionary of Idioms.** 1997. Ammer Ch. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company. (accessed on 25th March 2015).