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LANGUAGE

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English, German, and Polish Phraseological Units Concerning Human Communication: Towards a Comparative Analysis[1]

Abstract. Phraseological units in various languages may be said to describe the same phenomena but emphasise different aspects of them. For instance, in English one can *lie through one's teeth*, however, one does not need teeth but eyes to lie in Polish (*kłamać w żywe oczy*) or the face in German (*jemandem glatt ins Gesicht lügen*). However, *speaking off the cuff* has hardly anything in common with its German equivalent (*aus dem hohlen Bauch heraus sprechen*), whereas the Polish equivalent (*mówić bez przygotowania*) is not even considered a phraseological unit. This article is an attempt at a comparative analysis of selected English, German, and Polish phraseological expressions concerning human communication with regard to both their degree of idiomaticity, in accordance with the typologies by Burger (2010) or Römer and Matzke (2005), and the represented equivalence type, based on classifications by Hessky (1992) and Laskowski (2003). One of the corollaries is that idioms rate first in both English and German, whereas Polish expressions are mostly semi-idiomatic and include zero-equivalent phrases. Furthermore, despite the fact that German and Polish belong to distinct branches of the Indo-European language family, the most frequent convergences have been observed in the case of expressions in this language pair (total equivalence), whereas expressions in language pairs German-English and English-Polish are mostly partially equivalent. Finally, the article touches upon the question of linguistic worldview and the origin of the convergences and divergences between the aforementioned expressions.

Key words: phraseology, contrastive phraseology, phraseological units, idioms, semi-idioms, idiomaticity, equivalence, linguistic worldview

[1] This article is partly based on the Author's BA thesis in Applied Linguistics at Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin, written under the supervision of Dr. Jolanta Knieja.

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> The limits of my language mean the limits of my world.
>
> – Ludwig Wittgenstein

1. Phraseology and phraseological units

Among linguistic resources facilitating a vivid and pictorial description of reality, there are phraseological units. In every language, phraseology preserves the history, experience, mentality, and behaviour patterns common in that languaculture: in short, it preserves the tradition of the culture's members (Bawej 2012, 175). Hence, research on phraseology provides insight into the conceptual system that derives from the experience of members of a particular languaculture and so reflects their linguistic worldview (cf. Pajdzińska 2001: 33, Szczęk 2013, 81).[2] The aim of this paper is to analyse selected phraseological units concerning human communication in three languages: English, German, and Polish, with regard to the types of idiomaticity and the degree of equivalence they represent in accordance with typologies put forward by Burger (2010), Römer and Matzke (2005), Hessky (1992), and Laskowski (2003).

The very term *phraseology* consists of two components: *phrase* and *-logy*. The former stems from the Greek words *phrázain* and *phrásis,* the meaning of which is 'to indicate, say, pronounce' or 'speaking, mode of expression,' whereas *-logy* derives from *logos* and refers to 'theory, doctrine, science' (Laskowski, 2003, 29). According to Römer and Matzke (2005, 7), the object of phraseology are "fixed groups of words that are stored as single words in the long-term memory" (*mental lexicon*), which with regard to various aspects "differ from words and free groups of words" (cf. Conrad 1984, 156).[3]

Nevertheless, phraseological units[4] as such still have not been unequivocally defined by linguists. Granger and Meunier (2009, 6) describe them in a very gen-

[2] The idea of language as a factor shaping human perception and worldview has been present for centuries in works of philosophers, anthropologists, sociologists, psychologists, and linguists. Traditionally ascribed to 18th/19th-century German philosophy (particularly to Hamann, Herder, and von Humboldt), and to the 20th-century American ethnolinguistics (especially to Sapir and Whorf), this concept dates back to ancient Greek philosophers, and re-emerges in the Renaissance (Luter) and the Age of Enlightenment (cf. Pajdzińska 2001: 33).

[3] In German: "die festen Wortgruppen, die wie Einzelwörter im Langzeitgedächtnis (im mentalen Lexikon) gespeichert sind" [die sich jedoch] "in verschiedener Hinsicht von den Wörtern und den freien Wortgruppen unterscheiden". All direct quotations of the German texts have been translated into English by the Author.

[4] In German referred to as *Phraseologismus*, in Polish as *frazeologizmy*; in English linguists use a variety of terms, such as: *phraseologisms, phraseological expressions, phraseological units,* and *phrasemes*, which will be therefore used interchangeably for the purpose of this article (cf. Cowie 2002; Meunier and Granger 2008, 2009; Arsenteva 2014; Ji 2010). It should be noted that both some English and Polish titles referred to in the "Primary source materials list" of this paper prefer the term *idioms*. Furthermore, some English linguistic dictionaries also prefer entries on

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eral way as: "the co-occurrence of a form or a lemma of a lexical item and one or more additional linguistics elements of various kinds which functions as one semantic unit in a clause or sentence and whose frequency of co-occurrence is larger than expected on the basis of chance." In turn, Doroszewski (1980, 171) defines them as a type of syntactic connection of word components, which differs from the free connections of word components. Yet another approach is represented by Conrad (1984, 201). He claims that a phraseological unit is a "firmly cohesive inseparable combination of word units, the overall meaning of which often does not equal the individual meanings of the separate words," whereas Kühnert (1986, 13) describes them as pictorial expressions that can be understood merely in a figurative way. Furthermore, Wotjak and Richter (1997, 7) propose a definition of phraseological units as "generic terms for a variety of multi-word combinations."

For the purpose of this article, Burger's (2010) and Römer and Matzke's (2005) typologies, referred to in the following subsections, will refer to phraseological units.

1.1. Burger's (2010) classification of phraseological units

As highlighted in Figure 1, Burger (2010, 43) distinguishes between three groups of phraseological units: structural, communicative, and referential ones. The first category encompasses word combinations which "establish grammatical relations" (e.g. *in Bezug auf* 'concerning'*, sowohl… als auch…* 'as well… as…'). In turn, communicative phraseologisms incorporate routine phrases aimed at defining, establishing, and finishing communicative acts (e.g. *Guten Morgen* 'Good morning'), *Ich meine* 'I mean'*, mit herzlichem Gruß* 'kind regards'). Representing the most complex group, referential phraseological units are divided into two sub-categories: nominal and propositional units. The latter ones function at the sentence or text level and refer to utterances about given objects or phenomena. This category comprises i. a. proverbs (*Morgenstund hat Gold im Mund* 'the early bird catches the worm'). Nominal units refer to processes and objects and are sub-divided in accordance with their degree of idiomaticity, namely into idioms, semi-idioms, and collocations (Burger 1998, 37, Laskowski 2003, 20). Defined by Burger as fixed word combinations, the meaning of which does not follow from the meaning of the particular constituents of the phrase, as all the constituents are to be understood figuratively, idioms have to be memorised and used as whole fixed units, e.g. *die Kastanien aus dem Feuer holen* 'to pull somebody's chestnuts out of the fire'*; an die große Glocke hängen* 'to shout something from the rooftops', etc. Unlike idioms, the meaning of semi-idioms can be deduced from the

idioms rather than on *phraseology* (including *Oxford Concise Dictionary of Linguistics* by P.H. Matthews). Nevertheless, the terms mentioned in the first sentence of this footnote will be used for the purpose of this article, as the typologies by Burger (2010) and Römer and Matzke (2005) refer to *phraseologims* as a generic term, whereas *idioms* are a subcategory thereof.

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meaning of one component of the phrase, which maintains its literal meaning (Palm 1995, 12), e.g. *einen Streit vom Zaun brechen* 'to start an argument.' In other words, only a part of the entire phrase has to be understood figuratively. In turn, collocations are fixed word combinations with a weak idiomaticity degree, whose meaning is not figurative but literal, e.g. *sich die Zähne putzen* 'to brush one's teeth,' *die Initiative ergreifen* 'to take initiative' (Sulikowska, Misiek, Sulikowski 2012, 23).

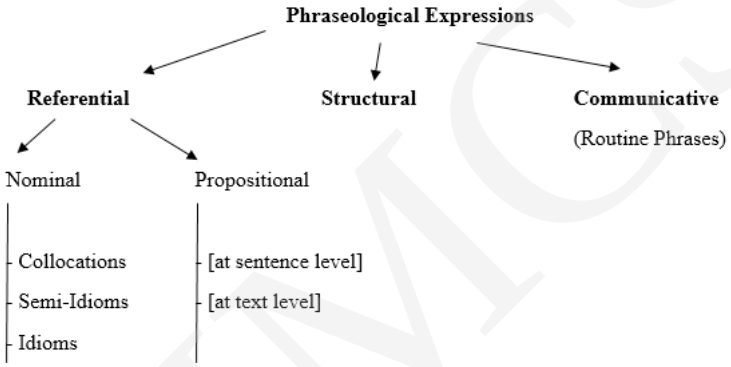

Figure 1: Burger's classification of phraseological expressions (2010, 43)

1.2. Römer and Matzke's (2005) classification of phraseological units

As may be inferred from Figure 2, Römer and Matzke arrange phraseological expressions into two groups: non-idioms, and idioms together with semi-idioms. Within the latter group, the following kinds of phraseological expressions are distinguished:

- **INPs**: (partly) idiomatic nominal phraseological expressions (German: *idiomatische/teilidiomatische nominative Phraseologismen*)
- **IVPs**: (partly) idiomatic verbal phraseological expressions (German: *idiomatische/teilidiomatische verbale Phraseologismen*)
- **SPs**: (partly) idiomatic sentential phraseological expressions (German: *idiomatische/teilidiomatische satzwertige Phraseologismen*).

INPs are defined as expressions that neither contain a verb nor can be classified as sentences; they can be marked as ([-] verb, [-] sentence). A good case in point are the following expressions in English, German, and Polish: *black sheep*, *das schwarze Schaf*, *czarna owca*. Unlike INPs, IVPs contain a verb, yet are not considered sentences ([+] verb, [-] sentence), for instance: *to have butterflies in one's stomach, Schmetterlinge im Bauch haben*, *mieć motyle w brzuchu*. In turn, SPs contain a verb and are regarded as sentences ([+] verb, [+] sentence), which is typical of proverbs, e.g.: *A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush*; *Besser ein Spatz in der Hand als eine Taube auf dem Dach*; *Lepszy wróbel w garści niż gołąb na dachu* (Römer and Matzke 2005, 193-195).

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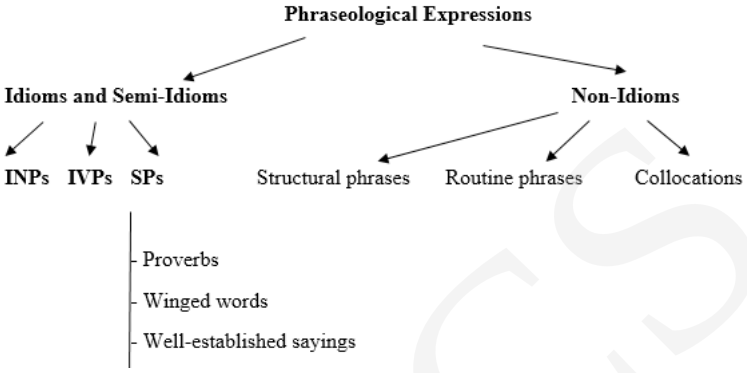

Figure 2: Classification of phraseological expressions by Agricola (1992), Burger (1998), Fleischer (1997) (in Römer and Matzke 2005, 193-195)

The second group of phraseological expressions encompasses non-idioms, including structural phrases (e.g. *in dieser Hinsicht* 'in this respect'*; sowohl… als auch…* 'as well… as…'), routine phrases (e.g. *mit herzlichem Gruß* 'kind regards'), as well as collocations, which are defined as connections of a number of words (ibid.).

1.3. The notion of equivalence

Equivalence can be defined as "equal positioning between the source and the target text (translation thereof)," and is of enormous importance in comparative studies, as it constitutes "a criterion of comparability itself" (Żmudzki 1991, 25). Gutschmidt (1982, 29) and Helbig (1981, 82) propose a definition of equivalence as a relation between components of one or more languages, namely, the accordance with lexical and grammatical meaning.[5] Pym (2014: 6) defines equivalence as a relation of "equal value" between a source text and a target text (translation thereof), and states that equivalence can be established on any linguistic level (form, function, etc.).[6] "Value" is understood here as "the same worth or function" (ibid.). Similarly, Nord (2018: 34) defines this phenomenon in the following way:

> 'Equivalence' is a static, result-oriented concept describing a relationship of 'equal communicative value' between two texts or, on lower ranks, between words, phrases, sentences, syntactic structures, and so on. In this context, 'value' refers to meaning, stylistic connotations, or communicative effect.

In terms of phraseology, linguists distinguish between total, partial, and zero equivalence (Hessky 1992, 65; Żmudzki 1991, 26). Hessky (ibid.) points out that total equiv-

[5] In German: "eine Beziehung zwischen Bestandteilen einer oder mehrerer Sprachen, nämlich die Übereinstimmung von lexikalischen und grammatischen Bedeutung".

[6] This is not to say that languages are the same, but that values can be the same (cf. Pym 2014, 6).

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alence is characterised by correspondence with respect to: denotative meaning, literal meaning, structure, syntactic functions, and connotations between phraseological units.[7] These expressions are the easiest to memorise by non-native-speakers (1:1 relation). In the vast majority of cases, it is the rarest type of equivalence and is regarded as an ideal case with respect to phraseological expressions in various languages (Laskowski, 2003, 133). Goławska (1999, 57) and Laskowski (2003, 133), who analysed Polish and German phraseological expressions (ibid.), state that this kind of equivalence rates second (46% in Goławska and 30.7% in Laskowski). Nevertheless, these results contradict both Figl's (2012, 112)[8] and Dobrovol'skij and Piirainen's (2009, 161) conclusions, who state that total equivalent phraseological expressions are exceptionally rare.

Described by Laskowski (2003, 134) as correspondence with respect to denotative meaning with a range of differences in structure, semantics, and pragmatics, partial equivalence obtains between expressions with the same communicative intention but with distinct "pictorial motives." This may cause considerable difficulties for language learners (e.g. *kill two birds with one stone – zwei Fliegen mit einer Klappe schlagen – upiec dwie pieczenie przy jednym ogniu*).[9] The largest group is represented by differences in both their structure and literal meaning (e.g. *aussehen wie ein Leiden Christi – wyglądać jak z krzyża zdjęty – to look dead beat*). One must also remember that in the case of contrastive analysis of phraseological units in various languages, there are significant differences with regard to specific elements of these languages (i. a. different valency and number of cases in English, German, and Polish), which consequently impacts the structure of phraseological expressions (Laskowski, 2003, 134-136).

It is estimated that the majority of phraseological phrases in various languages exhibit zero equivalence. Zero equivalence occurs when one phraseological expression fails to have its phraseological equivalent in another language (1:0 relation, e.g. *pull sb's leg – jdn veralben – nabierać kogoś*). This may be attributable to a number of factors, including the fact that the given reality and behaviour patterns are not present in a given language due to a number of historical and cultural reasons. Even though phraseological units can be described in or translated into another language, such expressions often lose their original expressiveness (Laskowski 2003, 135ff.). According to Goławska (1999, 57), this equivalence type amounts to 61.3% of the phraseological expressions that she had taken into account in her research.[10] Similarly, Laskowski (2003, 137) proved that 39.8% of the expressions he described are zero equivalent, which constitutes the largest group among his data.

In the following section, selected phraseological units regarding human communication in English, German, and Polish will be subject to comparative analysis with regard to the degree of idiomaticity and the equivalence type they represent.

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[7] Their syntax may be different, but this is due to language specificity (grammar), e.g. in the case of Polish and German (cf. Laskowski 2003, 130f.).

[8] Figl analysed English and German phraseological units in political speeches.

[9] "Pictorial motives" refer to images evoked by the expressions. In this particular example, they refer to: two birds, two flies, and two roasts, respectively.

[10] Goławska (1999) examined German and Polish phraseological expressions in German print media.

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2. Analysis: a comparison of data

2.1. Corpus: selected phraseological expressions

The following phraseological expressions with comparable meanings (36 triplets in English, German, and Polish, respectively, corresponding with the meaning in these three languages) were excerpted from the dictionaries and reference books referred to in the section *Primary source materials* and subject to comparative analysis.

The selection of phraseological expressions partly rests on the arrangement proposed by Bero (2012) and Łuniewska (2013), who have arranged a multitude of various phraseological expressions into a number of categories, including the one they call "Communication" (hence, the title of this article). However, a number of additional expressions have been added from the sources referred to in Primary Source materials. With English as the frame of reference for classification, the corpus can be sub-categorised into the following aspects (Table 1):

- expressions denoting speaking (nos. 1, 3, 7, 8, 13, 18, 19);
- expressions related to ears (2, 11, 28, 29);
- expressions related to words (22, 30, 32, 35, 36);
- expressions related to the tongue (9, 14, 15, 16, 24, 25);
- expressions related to cards (5, 17);
- expressions related to the human body (10, 12, 20, 23, 31, 34);
- expressions related to random objects (21, 26, 33);
- expressions related to direct or indirect acts of communication (4, 6, 23, 27).

The major aspect taken into account while gathering the material was a reference to various communicative situations, such as production (nos. 1, 3-10, 12-25, 27, 31, 33, 35, 36), reception (2, 11, 28, 29, 30), or attitudes towards communicative situations (26, 32, 34).

Table 1: The data analysed in this study

No.	English	German	Polish
1.	a little bird told me	das pfeifen die Spatzen von den Dächern	już wróble na dachu o tym ćwierkają
2.	to be all ears	ganz Ohr sein	zamienić się w słuch
3.	to shout something from the rooftops	etwas an die große Glocke hängen	roztrąbić coś na cały świat
4.	to call a spade a spade	die Dinge beim Namen nennen	nazywać rzeczy po imieniu
5.	lay one's cards on the table	die Karten offen auf den Tisch legen	wyłożyć karty na stół
6.	to beat about the bush	etwas durch die Blumen sagen	owijać w bawełnę
7.	to talk to someone face-to- face	mit jemandem unter vier Augen sprechen	rozmawiać w cztery oczy
8.	to speak off the cuff	aus dem hohlen Bauch sprechen	mówić bez przygotowania

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No.	English	German	Polish
9.	to have something on the tip of one's tongue	etwas auf der Zunge haben	mieć coś na końcu języka
10.	to get something off one's chest	sich etwas von der Seele reden	ulżyć sobie
11.	to prick one's ears up	die Ohren spitzen	nadstawiać uszu
12.	to open somebody's eyes to something	jemandem die Augen für etwas öffnen	otworzyć komuś oczy na coś
13.	to have no heart to say something	nicht das Herz haben, etwas zu sagen	nie mieć serca powiedzieć czegoś
14.	to lose one's tongue	jemandem verschlägt die Sprache	mowę komuś odjęło
15.	to hold one's tongue	den Mund halten	trzymać język za zębami
16.	to bite one's tongue	sich auf die Zunge beißen	ugryźć się w język
17.	to let the cat out of the bag	die Katze aus dem Sack lassen	odsłonić karty
18.	to talk the hind legs off a donkey	nicht auf den Mund gefallen sein	być mocnym w gębie
19.	to talk to a brick wall	tauben Ohren predigen	mówić jak do ściany
20.	to waste one's breath	sich den Mund fransig reden	strzępić sobie język
21.	to lose the thread	den Faden verlieren	zgubić wątek
22.	to take the words out of somebody's mouth	jemandem das Wort aus dem Munde nehmen	wyjąć komuś słowo z ust
23.	to make no bones about something	kein Blatt vor den Mund nehmen	mówić bez ogródek
24.	to get one's tongue around something	sich an etwas die Zunge abbrechen	łamać sobie język na czymś
25.	to have a sharp tongue	eine scharfe Zunge haben	mieć cięty język
26.	to lick somebody's boots	jemandem Honig ums Maul schmieren	podlizywać się komuś
27.	to hit the nail on the head	den Nagel auf den Kopf treffen	trafiać w sedno
28.	to go in one ear and out the other	zum einen Ohr hereingehen, zum anderen wieder hinausgehen	jednym uchem wchodzić, drugim wychodzić
29.	to listen with half an ear	mit halbem Ohr zuhören	słuchać jednym uchem
30.	to hang on one's every word	an jemandes Mund hängen	chłonąć czyjeś każde słowo
31.	to lie through one's teeth	jemandem glatt ins Gesicht lügen	kłamać komuś w żywe oczy
32.	to keep one's word	sein Wort halten	dotrzymać słowa
33.	to promise somebody the moon	jemandem goldene Berge versprechen	obiecywać komuś złote góry
34.	to be on everyone's lips	in aller Leute Munde sein	być na ustach wszystkich
35.	to get a word in edgewise	zu Wort kommen	dojść do słowa
36.	to put in a good word for someone	ein gutes Wort für jemanden einlegen	wstawić się za kimś

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3.2. Methodology

The phraseological expressions presented above have been subject to comparative analysis with regard to the degree of their idiomaticity, and therefore represent a given type of unit in accordance with Burger (2010) and Römer and Matzke (2005). They also represent various equivalence relations. The results of the comparison are presented below and are followed by conclusions. For reasons of space in this paper, only selected examples (representing various types of equivalence and idiomaticity) will be presented in the next subsection.

3.3. Comparative analysis of selected examples

Phraseological expressions from the list above are described in the order suggested in Table 1. As previously mentioned, the following examples illustrate various types of both phraseological expressions and equivalence relations.

No.	English	German	Polish
2.	to be all ears	ganz Ohr sein	zamienić się w słuch

These phraseological units can be qualified as nominal phraseological units, to be more precise, semi-idioms or semi-idiomatic IVPs, as their meaning is related to the sense of hearing. The English and German expressions can be classified as totally equivalent, the only difference being that the German phrase refers to one ear (*Ohr*), whereas in English plural form is applied (*ears*). With regard to their Polish counterpart, which refers to hearing, and not directly to ears, they are only partially equivalent. A further point is that the verb of the Polish expression (*zamienić się* 'to turn into, transform') differs significantly from the verbs in German and English (*sein*, *to be*).

5.	lay one's cards on the table	die Karten offen auf den Tisch legen	wyłożyć karty na stół

In this triplet, because the meaning of all three expressions cannot be deduced from the meaning of their components, they can be defined as idioms (idiomatic IVPs). With regard to the equivalence type, they can be qualified as totally equivalent, as they refer to the same pictorial association. It should be noted that the German phraseological unit includes an additional component (*offen*), which may indicate that persons laying their cards on the table want to do it openly, without concealing anything.

6.	to beat about the bush	etwas durch die Blumen sagen	owijać w bawełnę

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When based on the meaning of their components, the meaning of the Polish and English expressions is unclear, thus, they can be qualified as idioms (idiomatic IVPs). In turn, the German phraseologism includes a verb (*sagen* 'to say') that indicates the meaning of the whole, and therefore can be classified as a semi-idiom (semi-idiomatic IVP). All three phrases are partially equivalent with respect to one another. Having the same denotative meaning, they represent significant structural differences: they refer to the world of nature, but are based on different imagery (*bush*, *bawełna* 'cotton', *Blumen* 'flowers').

8.	to speak off the cuff	aus dem hohlen Bauch sprechen	mówić bez przygotowania

The English and German phrases, which contain a verb indicating their meaning, can be qualified as semi-idiomatic IVPs (semi-idioms). However, the Polish expression (lit. 'to speak without preparation') can be understood merely as a paraphrase of its English and German counterparts, which does not allow for qualifying it as idiomatic. Thus, the Polish phrase is at the zero-equivalence level relative to the German and English expressions, which are, in turn, only partially equivalent towards each other, as they refer to different pictorial motives (*Bauch* 'abdomen' vs. *cuffs*).

17.	to let the cat out of the bag	die Katze aus dem Sack lassen	odsłonić karty

The meaning of the three expressions in 17 can only be understood figuratively: they are idioms (idiomatic IVPs). The English and German expressions refer to the same pictorial motive,[11] thus, they are totally equivalent. Instead, the Polish equivalent refers to disclosing cards, which is a distinct image. Therefore, it is partially equivalent with regard to the corresponding phrases in English and German.[12]

31.	to lie through one's teeth	jemandem glatt ins Gesicht lügen	kłamać komuś w żywe oczy

In 31, all three phrases contain a verb that indicates their meaning (*to lie, lügen, kłamać*) and so are classified as semi-idioms (semi-idiomatic IVPs). The underlying pictorial motive exhibits only a rough similarity – the Polish phraseologism refers to lying straight into one's eyes (*w żywe oczy*), the English one refers to one's teeth,

[11] There is a similar phrase in Polish, *kupować kota w worku* 'to buy a cat in the bag'; however, it refers to buying something without prior knowledge of the purchase object.

[12] Triplets 5 and 17 represent phraseological expressions that may be semantically different in English and German, but can have similar equivalents in Polish (which refer to revealing one's cards).

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whereas the German one – to somebody's face (*ins Gesicht*). Moreover, the Polish and German expressions include additional components (*żywe* 'live, alive, living' and *glatt* 'smooth', respectively), whereas the English expression fails to mention the person being lied to (no counterpart to *jemandem, komuś* – 'to somebody'). Hence, these phraseological units are only partially equivalent, although it should be emphasised that the German and Polish expressions are significantly closer to each other with respect to the image they evoke.

33.	to promise somebody the moon	jemandem goldene Berge versprechen	obiecywać komuś złote góry

The meanings of the expressions in 33 can be concluded from the verbs (*to promise, versprechen, obiecywać*), and therefore, the expressions can be qualified as semi-idioms (semi-idiomatic IVPs). The German and Polish expressions are totally equivalent (1:1 relation), although the word order is different due to the specificity of their grammars (cf. Laskowski 2003, 130f). Nevertheless, the English phraseologism refers to a different image, the moon, and not to the "golden mountains," as it is the case in both Polish and German, and therefore this unit is only partially equivalent to the corresponding phrases in Polish and German.

3.4. Results

The results of the comparative analysis of the entire corpus (36 triplet expressions in English, German, and Polish, respectively) are presented below.

3.4.1. Types of phraseological expressions

Table 2: Quantitative results of the analysis: types of phraseological expressions. Names in brackets refer to Burger's (2010) terminology.

Phraseological Expressions	Number in total	% in total	EN	DE	PL
Idiomatic IVPs (idioms)	52	48%	55%	53%	36%
Partly idiomatic IVPs (semi-idioms)	45	41%	42%	41%	42%
Collocations	3	3%	3%	3%	3%
SPs (fixed phrases)	2	2%	0%	3%	3%

As demonstrated in Table 2, the largest group of the phraseological units examined are idiomatic IVPs (idioms; 48%) which amount to 53% in German and 55% in English. In Polish, in turn, the largest group is represented by partly idiomatic IVPs (semi-idioms; 42%). In other languages, this group rates second (42% and 41% in English and German, respectively). Collocations amount to merely 3% in all three languages. These phraseological expressions fall into nominative phraseological units in Burger's typology and to IVPs in Römer and Matzke's classification. Merely one

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expression in German (3%) and Polish (3%) can be classified as SP (fixed phrase), which corresponds to Burger's propositional category. Six expressions have not been classified because a phraseological expression has been identified only in Polish – those amount to 16% of the entire corpus.

3.4.2. Equivalence relations

Table 3: Quantitative results of the analysis: types of equivalence

Equivalence Type	Number in total	% in total	DE-PL	PL-EN	DE-EN
Zero	12	11%	17%	17%	0%
Total	46	43%	47%	36%	44%
Partial	50	46%	36%	47%	56%

As can be seen in Table 3, the largest group of the entire corpus are partially equivalent expressions (46%), followed by total equivalence (43%) and zero equivalence (11%). The same tendency can be observed in the Polish-English language pair: 47% partial equivalence, 36% total equivalence, and only 17% are zero equivalent. In turn, in the language combination English-German, partial equivalence rates first (56%), whereas 44% of the phraseological units are totally equivalent. 47% of the analysed expressions between German and Polish represent total equivalence, followed by 36% of partially equivalent and merely 17% of zero equivalent units.

4. Final remarks

First and foremost, it should be emphasised that the study described in this article covers only a very limited scope of phraseological expressions, thus, the results should be treated with caution. Further research on a larger scale should be continued in order to formulate more accurate and specific conclusions with regard to a comparative analysis of phraseological units between English, German, and Polish.

It is generally agreed that the meanings of phraseological units stem from experiences of the given language community as well as from observation of human behaviour; they symbolise the modes of thinking and lifestyles of cultural groups (Laskowski 2003, 90). According to Szczęk (2013, 84f.), differences between the phraseological units result from the "national specificity of the given language communities."[13] The similarities and differences in the area of phraseology may indicate parallel similarities and differences in linguistic worldviews entertained by different speech communities. On the side of similarities, we may be talking about universality of experiences with

[13] It must be emphasised that national communities are heterogeneous and involve a number of dialects, sociolects, etc. Also, the concept of "nation" is not unequivocally defined. Exploration of these issues are certainly worth pursuing but would go beyond the framework of this article.

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human communication. An important factor in, specifically, the Polish vs. German context (cf. Laskowski 2003, 90) may be the geographical proximity of these communities, as well as the intensity of political, economic, and military contacts (including conflicts and wars) between them.[14]

The results of this study reveal that among the selected phraseological expressions that pertain to human communication, idioms rate first in both English and German. In Polish, this category comes second and is preceded by semi-idioms. It thus appears that fewer expressions in Polish are understood in purely figurative ways.

The most frequent convergences have been observed in the German-Polish language pair: this may suggest that the linguistic worldviews of Polish and German speech communities, with regard to this particular aspect, seem to be convergent. A lower number of totally equivalent phraseologisms in other language pairs (Polish-English, German-English) suggests that they are semantically less transparent.

Another observation that can be made on the basis of the data analysed is the relative frequency of partial equivalence. This may be attributable to the fact that English, German, and Polish have different language systems. It is surprising, however, that English and German, being Germanic languages, do not exhibit greater similarity in this respect. The fact that Polish is Slavic language does not seem to play a significant role here. Having said that, more reliable conclusions could certainly be drawn from an analysis of a larger corpus of examples.[15]

It is crucial to note that zero equivalence appears only in language pairs with Polish. The expressions involved are not considered phraseological units. In other words, the same meaning may be conveyed by means of phraseological units in one language, and through their translation, description or paraphrase in another. However, as can only be expected(cf. Laskowski 2003, 135ff.), this often entails loss of the original expressiveness of a given unit. All English and German expressions analysed in this study have their phraseological equivalents in the other language, which suggests that the same semantic content regarding human communication (within a limited scope of this article) can be conveyed through phraseological expressions in these two languages.

As repeatedly, but justifiably, mentioned above, the findings of this study are based on a limited number of phraseological expressions. However, despite its limitations, it is hoped that the analysis will provide background for more in-depth analyses in the largely understudied area of comparison of English, German, and Polish phraseology.

[14] As mentioned above, this view requires further research based on a much larger database of phraseological units.

[15] A possible reason for this situation may be the relative distance and isolation of English with regard to German and especially Polish, compared to the proximity of German and Polish. However, this view would have to be correlated with the status of English as a lingua franca, a possible starting point for further research.

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