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## Periodic growth of phrasemes from a cross-linguistic perspective: Polish phraseology after the political transformation of 1989

**Abstract:** The paper discusses the phenomenon of a culture-related periodic growth of phrasemes, i.e. an intensive increase of their number, occurring within a definite period of time, and caused by some extralinguistic factors. It differs from the absolute growth of the number of phrasemes, connected with the realization of natural nomination needs, constant and not so intensive. A periodic growth is triggered by an important event in the history of a particular culture and it may be assumed that the culture-bound character of the units in question influences their cross-linguistic equivalence. The paper discusses the case of the periodic growth of Polish phrasemes coined after the political transformation of 1989. The periodic increase following this event was chosen for the analysis, since the change of the system influenced greatly all spheres of life in Poland, such as politics, economy, culture. The study aims to present the most important areas of their occurrence, to describe their linguistic properties, to discuss culture-related aspects of their coinage and use as well as to propose the English equivalents of the phrasemes from two fields: politics and economy, which allows for determining the periodic growth influence on cross-linguistic correspondence of this group of units.

**Keywords:** phrasemes; periodic growth; culture-boundness; cross-cultural equivalence

# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Aims

The general aim of the present study is to discuss a periodic growth of Polish phrasemes after 1989, analysing it from a cross-linguistic perspective.<sup>1</sup> The assumption can be made that in a comparison of two or more languages, one of key factors influencing interlingual equivalence of the units at issue may be whether or not they experienced the same turning point, which results either in the existence or in the lack of a simultaneous periodic growth of phrasemes in the two analyzed languages.

According to Chlebda (2001: 159), a periodic growth is caused by important events in the history of a particular language community and differs from an absolute growth, also called *constant growth*, which is caused by natural nomination needs, i.e. naming new phenomena in various areas, for example: technology, culture, social life etc. In the case of Polish phraseology, periodic growths accompanied such events in the history of Poland as the Martial Law and the transformation of 1989.

The latter was chosen, since the fact that the total change influenced all spheres of life and was strongly reflected in the language. New expressions started to function both in formal and informal varieties of language, constituting a phraseological disgllossia, typical of Polish, in which counterspeaking has a long tradition (Chlebda 2001: 160), mostly due to the influence of historical factors. Therefore, after 1989 many new units came into existence.

The specific aims of the present study are threefold: first of all, to analyse the phrasemes of the Polish language after 1989, with a special focus on the ones referring to politics and economy – two areas changed greatly as a result of the introduction of the new system. The second goal is to present the findings in a cross-linguistic perspective, by proposing English equivalents of the Polish units from these two fields and to conduct a linguo-cultural analysis of their equivalence. Finally, as English is chosen as a language of community which did not experience similar changes, the analysis will allow for determining the influence of the periodic growth of phrasemes on cross-linguistic equivalence on the example of the Polish units and their English equivalents.

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## 1.2 Research material

*Phraseology* is a term encompassing various reproducible word combinations. If understood in the broad sense, it “meets the criteria of ‘polilexicity’ and ‘fixedness’, whereas phraseology in the narrow sense requires the additional criterion of idiomacity” (Colson 2008: 193). It means that in the former case, collocations – “fixed word connections which show no or only very weak idiomatic transformations of meaning” (Burger 2007: 101), proverbs and formula-based texts are included in phraseology (cf. Filatkina 2007; Häcki Buhofer 2007). The latter approach requires the explanation of the term *idiomacity*. As observed by Moon (2003 [1998]: 6), idiomacity is “a phenomenon too complex to be defined in terms of a single property”. Therefore, Moon proposes three main factors: institutionalisation, lexicogrammatical fixedness, non-compositionality.<sup>2</sup>

As emphasised by Burger et al. (2007: 11), “it is not easy to come on a general, generic term to describe phraseological word connections”. In the present text the term *phraseme* will be used, which allows for the inclusion of reproducible expressions, including word-like and sentence-like structures (cf. Fiedler 2007: 28), such as idioms – prototypical units (Gläser 1998: 128), collocations and phraseological terms.

The Polish units meeting the above criteria were excerpted from various sources, such as works on modern phraseology, general dictionaries and dictionaries of phraseological units, as well as the corpus of the Polish language and the World Wide Web (See Section 1.3). The first group of sources mentioned comprises monographs and papers on the phrases coined after 1989. Apart from neologisms proper, such works contain neosemantisms as well as some units existent beforehand whose frequency increased significantly after 1989.

Among them the most important source is a monograph on new fixed expressions in the modern Polish language (Nowakowska 2005). It contains the analyses of the units which appeared in press texts published in the period from 1972 to 2000. They come from the collection of 30,000 neologisms compiled in Pracownia “Obserwatorium Językowe” Instytutu Języka Polskiego PAN, one of the

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<sup>2</sup> Institutionalisation is a process, as a result of which a word combination gains the status of a fixed expression. Lexicogrammatical fixedness is understood as “some degree of lexicogrammatical defectiveness in units” (Moon 2003 [1998]: 7). Non-compositionality is defined as follows: the combined meaning of the constituents does not equal the institutionalised meaning of the expression. Moon (2003 [1998]: 8–9) gives also three other criteria: orthography (a unit should be composed of at least two words), syntactic integrity (the expressions form syntactic or grammatical units), phonology (in ambiguous cases, intonation may be the factor determining whether a given expression will be interpreted as a compositional unit or a non-compositional one).

institution of the National Academy of Sciences in Warsaw. As for lexicographic works, one of the most important is a dictionary of more than 370 Polish words and fixed expressions describing phenomena from the field of politics after 1989 (Zimny and Nowak 2009).

The excerption of the above sources resulted in the creation of a corpus of nearly 300 phrasemes meeting the criteria established for the analysis. As many as 169 units refer to various phenomena from the world of politics. The remaining 127 describe the economic ones, a detailed discussion of which is presented in Szerszunowicz (2014).

### 1.3 Methodology

The reflection of the political transformation in phraseology is an example of the manifestation of the impact of a particular extralinguistic factor on the Polish language. By nature, it is difficult to do research on such complex phenomena by means of one methodology, therefore, several methods will be used for the present analysis.

The study, bridging research on phraseology and discourse analysis, is time-oriented and includes also elements of corpus linguistics. As observed by Naciscione (2010: 34), the first written record of a unit should not be treated as its origins. In the case of analysed material, some phrasemes name phenomena, which had not existed by 1989, so it facilitates the time allocation of such phrases. Although most expressions refer to elements of the new reality, there are also units which came into use after the transformation to name the phenomena from the communist past.

As for the time-oriented approach (cf. Wieruchoń 2010, 2011), it suits the general aim of phraseological studies, which is to document and analyse the importance and role of fixed expressions in discourse as well as the qualitative and quantitative changes of phrasemes in a given language within a specific period (Chlebda 2004: 73). The present study complies with the *little diachrony* concept in phraseological research (Chlebda 2004), which means that the datation of phrasemes is important for their inclusion in the research material. They come from the period of approximately five years following the transformation.

As the datation of the phrasemes in question is included in the consulted works only for some expressions, the corpus of the Polish language (*Narodowy Korpus Języka Polskiego* 2012), was used for the verification of the material. It contains over 1.5 billion of words and is searchable by means of two search engines (IPI PAN and PELCRA). The sources include classic literature, daily newspapers,

specialist periodicals and journals, transcripts of conversation as well as various short-lived and Internet texts.

Furthermore, the implementation of the consultation paradigm allows for extracting the actual behaviour of phraseological units collected from various sources (Sailer 2007: 1064–1065). Since fixed units tend to be underrepresented in corpora, the World Wide Web, which is not a corpus proper, yet offers information on actual use (Kilgariff 2004; Colson 2007: 1072), was also consulted and the WebCorp© tool was used for verification.

As it is assumed that a periodic growth is a manifestation of language-culture relations, with phrasemes as their exponents, expressing, embodying and symbolising cultural reality (Kramsch 2000: 3), the ethnolinguistic approach is adopted. It enables discussing the problem in a linguo-cultural perspective, which is necessary due to the culture-boundness of the units. A contrastive analysis of phrasemes is based on the methodological assumptions developed in contrastive idiom research studies (Dobrovol'skij 2011: 7–9). The relation of systematic equivalence between Polish units and their English counterparts is discussed by means of classifying them as belonging to one of four main types of cross-linguistic equivalents.

## **2 The analysis of linguo-cultural aspects of Polish phrasemes after 1989**

### **2.1 Linguo-cultural situation**

#### **2.1.1 Cultural background of political transformation**

A political transformation is a process of holistic character, since it occurs in all spheres of life. In 1989, revolutionary events, resulting from a critical political and economic situation, began in Poland, and then spread to other countries, such as Hungary, East Germany, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia and Romania.

The wave resulted in the fall of Communism in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. On 4<sup>th</sup> June 1989, in a partially free election, the Polish anti-communist party Solidarity won and the statehood transformation took place in the summer of that year. The transformation, which started in Poland in 1989, was the period of restoring independence and building democracy, connected with introducing reforms, many of which aimed at changing the Polish economy.

The main aim of such reforms was to create a modern market economy, which would be compatible with the economies of the countries of the European Union.

The transformation consisting in the changing a socialist economy – based on state ownership, central planning and centralized management – into a capitalist economy. It meant the adoption of new bases: private ownership, competition and free market.

### 2.1.2 Language changes

The political transformation and its consequences were reflected in the Polish language in many ways (Warchol-Scholtzmann 2009). First of all, political discourse changed greatly: up to 1989, the Communist Party had dominated the public sphere with its ritualised speech; then, instead of Newspeak, various ways of communications were possible in media. At that time new genres came into existence, for instance, the President's address and the press conference. Therefore, the role of improvisation in public speeches increased significantly.

It should be stressed that the first non-communist President, Lech Wałęsa, had a great impact on public discourse (Bralczyk 1990). Wałęsa, a graduate of a vocational school, was an electrician who worked in a shipyard. His style of communication, completely different from the one of the Communist Party dignitaries, was very popular with the vast majority of Poles (Zdunkiewicz-Jedynak 2008: 155). Wałęsa's idiolect was very rich in metaphors, idioms and sayings (Szerszunowicz 2011).

The period after 1989 was the time when certain tendencies started to be observed. One of them was colloquialisation of public communication, resulting in the saturation of texts with everyday words and phrases. In fact, it was the colloquial variety that became the basis for the development of the credibility of new public communication style (Zdunkiewicz-Jedynak 2008: 156). The informal language was accepted in press, on television and on the radio. It is worth adding that even vulgar expressions began to penetrate these spheres. This was a symptom of brutalisation of language, manifesting itself in the use of elements of low style and all kinds of discrimination means, such as labels, insults and anti-etiquette (Fras 2005: 95).

An opposite tendency to colloquialisation, an excessive use of scientific terms, was also common after 1989. The incorporation of specialised vocabulary, for instance, banking or stock exchange terminology, into one's speech was a sign of following the western public speech model, especially the American one (Zdunkiewicz-Jedynak 2008: 158). The ability to include many terms into public speeches was an important element of self-image creation of many persons, whose aim was to be perceived as competent by their audience. The academisation of

public language also resulted from the participation of experts and scientists in the preparation of political and media texts. In consequence, many scientific words and expressions enriched the standard variety of Polish.

Another important factor was the influence of English resulting to a great extent from the development of economy and more contact with foreign countries (cf. Warchoń-Schlottmann 2009). Some spheres of activity, such as marketing and advertising, had hardly existed in Poland. Therefore, so many loan words and phrasemes entered the language in the period following the transformation.

## 2.2 Polish phraseology after 1989

### 2.2.1 Areas of growth

As already mentioned, a political transformation results in changes in various spheres observed in a given community. It means the adoption of a new political system, which involves the introduction of a new organisation, i.e. new positions and functions, different forms of activity, other institutions etc. Briefly speaking, there was a need for a new language of politics (Afeltowicz 2002: 215).

Many units named new realia, for instance, for example, the first Parliament in the transformed system: *parlament/sejm kontraktowy* [the contract Parliament /Sejm] ‘first term of the Parliament in the Third Republic of Poland established after the first free election and the agreement of the Round Table’. It is worth adding that after 1989 there were numerous new phrases expressing the evaluation of the authorities and the way they ruled (Nowakowska 2005: 50), such as *sterować z tylnego siedzenia* [to steer from the back seat], while there were fewer newly coined expressions naming various forms of protests.

The second area, in which a rapid increase of new lexical and phraseological units is observed, is economy (Szerszunowicz 2014). With the introduction of free market and new rules of economic operation, new phenomena came into existence, such as: stock exchange, marketing, commercials. Among the units from that field many fixed expressions describe persons and groups established after 1989 (Nowakowska 2005: 51), for example, *biznesmen w białych skarpetkach* [a businessman in white socks] ‘a person who runs a company set up after 1989’, as well as phenomena and things, for instance, *spółka garażowa* [a garage company] ‘a very small company’. Moreover, there are many units describing illegal activities, such as *brudne pieniądze* [dirty money] ‘money from illegal business deals’. A big group is composed of units naming phenomena, processes etc. evaluated negatively by most people, one of which is the phrase *drenaż kieszeni* [pocket drainage].

Moreover, many phenomena needed to be named in other areas of human activities, which developed after 1989. It can be assumed that the units describing them can be treated as resulting from a constant growth. However, it is undeniable that the political transformation also had some impact of the development of the phrasemes.

Such areas are: technology, ecology and healthy lifestyle, which contributed such units as *naładować akumulatory* [to recharge batteries], *zielona szkoła* [green school] and *bomba witaminowa* [vitamin bomb]. One more area where an intensive growth of phrasemes is attested is mass culture: many forms of popular culture, especially media programs, were “phrasemogenic” (Chlebda 2001: 158), enriching the language with such phrases as *zwierzę telewizyjna* [television animal].

### 2.2.2 Linguistic aspects

The analysis of the units in question is aimed at revealing the repertoire of most commonly represented characteristics and relations of the units in question. In terms of semantic relations, the analysis shows that some notions are verbalised by strings of synonymous phrases. For instance, the meaning ‘a bribe’ is expressed by means of the following units: *mocny argument* [a strong argument], *korzyść majątkowa* [material benefit], *sponsoring rzeczowy* [material sponsoring], *dowód wdzięczności* [a token of gratitude]. Similarly, the notion of ‘to bribe’ can be communicated by using such idioms as: *dać komuś w łapę* [to give in somebody’s paw], *dolożyć górkę* [to give [somebody] more the upper way], *przemówić komuś do ręki* [to talk to somebody’s hand], *posmarować komuś łapę* [to smear somebody’s paw]. Most synonyms express meanings of phenomena evaluated negatively by the vast majority of language users.

Another relation, polysemy, is of particular interest, since many polysemous phrases tend to express culturally determined meanings. An illustrative example of a polysemous unit is the phrase *szafa Lesiaka*: originally, it was ‘the name of a piece of furniture in Urząd Ochrony Państwa [Office for State Protection] in Warsaw used by Jan Lesiak to keep documents proving so-called surveillance of the right wing on the basis of the 0015 instruction’.<sup>3</sup> Then, the phrase started to be

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<sup>3</sup> The instruction, issued on 1992, allegedly allowed the illegal surveillance of members of political parties and finding informants from the parties forming the opposition to the then Prime Minister Hanna Suchocka and President Lech Wałęsa. It was alleged that on the basis of the instruction a special operational task force of former communist officers was formed, which was led by colonel Jan Lesiak.



used to express the following meanings: ‘the symbol and proof of the right wing in Poland after 1989’, ‘the scandal created by the right-wing politicians in order to discredit the documentation of UOP and Służba Bezpieczeństwa (Security Service of the Ministry of Internal Affairs)’, ‘the proof of impunity of special services and inefficiency of actions of the Polish system of justice’.

It should be added that there are also units with both general and culture-specific meanings, for instance, the unit *młode wilki* [young wolves], naming ‘young persons who would do everything, even illegal things, to earn a lot of money’, ‘young persons who are very good at something’, and ‘young, energetic politicians from Unia Wolności, spectacularly successful’, or *opcja zero / zerowa* [zero option], meaning ‘forgiving somebody’s faults and beginning from scratch’ and ‘forgiving the communist authorities for their past deeds’ (Nowakowska 2005: 46–47). Relatively few units express two or more meanings, which are not culture-specific. One of such phrases is *raczkująca demokracja* [crawling democracy], which can be explained as ‘the initial phase of democracy’ or ‘distortion of democratic rules’.

In fact, a relatively big number of polysemous units results from the culturally conditioned changes of the meaning of the units in question. For example, at the beginning, the phrase *człowiek ze styropianu* [a man made of polystyrene foam] was used to name a striker. In the first decade after the transformation the expression *styropianowi kombatanci* [polystyrene veterans] was a very popular label. The idioms were motivated by the image of strikers sleeping or resting on polystyrene foam sheets (Zimny and Nowak 2009: 247). As the representatives of the opposition began to rule, the phrases started to be used in various contexts, also in texts containing a critical assessment of the former strikers’ actions, stressing their lack of experience and being naive. Therefore, before long the phrases acquired depreciative character and ironic markedness.

Moreover, some units, which had existed before, started to have a different range of reference. For example, the unit *pierwsza dama*, which is a calque of the English expression *first lady*, had been used rarely and only with reference to the wife of the President of the United States of America by 1989 (Nowakowska 2005: 25). After the political transformation, this phrase gained popularity and started to be used with reference to the wife of the President of Poland. It also describes a woman who occupies the highest position in a country (Mańczak-Wohlfeld 2010: 77).

Another phenomenon is the blurred meaning of units, often combined with semantic emptiness, especially common in political discourse. To illustrate it, the unit *grupa trzymająca władzę* [the group holding power] will be discussed. The phrase is also used in an abbreviated form – *GTM*, which is an acronym of the three components. Actually, the expression does not name a concrete phenomenon in reality (Zimny and Nowak 2009: 83). The idiom expresses such

meanings as: ‘business elite’, ‘political elite’, ‘corruption in the sphere of highest authorities’. In fact, the meaning is attributed to the phrase rather intuitively, both in the text production and reception processes.

Expressiveness is another common feature of the analysed phrases. In the case of the Polish new reality, many phenomena evoked strong emotions, which is reflected by the presence of expressive lexical constituents. For instance, there are units containing names of emotions, like *seans nienawiści* [a hatred performance], meaning ‘ruthless fight for power’. Other expressions contain a lexical constituent of strong emotional load, like the word *afera* [scandal], which is included in the structure AFERA + ADJECTIVE. The phrasemes *afera łapówkarska* [bribe scandal] or *afera korupcyjna* [corruption scandal] were originally used in media texts (Zimny and Nowak 2009: 22). Morphological means are also employed to create an expressive unit, which is observed in the phrase *republika kolesiów* [the republic of cronies], in which the plural form of the informal noun *koleś* occurs as carrier of depreciative markedness, signalled by the suffix -ś.

Variants may differ in expressiveness, as it is the case with the triplet *zasada teraz kurwa my* [now the fuck we rule], *zasada teraz kurde my* [lit. now shoot we rule] and *rule TKM* [TKM rule], the meaning of which is ‘a belief that political power in Poland is done for benefits of the authorities’ (Zimny and Nowak 2009: 261). In the first variant the word *kurwa* is a vulgarism, the less vulgar form of which is *kurde*, while in the last phrase, thanks to the acronym, its vulgarity is concealed.

Expressiveness often is connected with evaluative potential, which can be observed in the examples discussed above. The analysed idioms tend to express negative emotions and evaluation, as it is the case with *różowe hieny* [pink hyenas], a depreciative name for members of the Committee for Social Self-Defence KOR.<sup>4</sup> As some of the units can carry both positive and negative load, the role of the context may be crucial for the interpretation of the value the unit has. One of such phrases is *skazany na sukces* [sentenced to success], which means ‘bound to be successful due to one’s own talent, skills etc.’ and ‘bound to be successful due to influential family, acquaintances etc.’ It is the context that determines whether the evaluation expressed by the phrase is positive, or negative.

In the case of some units, their evaluative potential depends on the speaker: depending on his beliefs the unit can carry either positive or negative load. The Polish idiom *gruba linia* [thick line] illustrates this phenomenon. The expression was popularised by Tadeusz Mazowiecki, who included it in his exposé

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<sup>4</sup> The animal term *hiena* [hyena] evokes negative connotations and the colour name, *różowy* [pink], associated with faded red, symbolises a positive attitude to communists.

of 24<sup>th</sup> August 1989. Although, in Mazowiecki's speech, it meant 'starting a new period in the history of Poland', the unit with a substituted component, i.e. *gruba kreska* [thick stroke], was and still is used in many way: for instance, Lech Wałęsa and his followers understood it as 'forgiving and forgetting the communist past, an incentive to give up settlements with the past, vetting and decommunization'. There are various interpretations of the unit and it is used it in both positive and negative meanings by members of all Polish parties (Zimny and Nowak 2009: 82).

The stylistic markedness of the analysed units vary greatly, which results from a number of reasons: strong tendencies to counterspeak with the simultaneous creation of phrasemes used by the authorities, new possibilities and needs of public communication with a variety of party-styles and idiolects as well as more foreign influence. Many of the units in question are informal, humorous or ironic. In the sphere of politics, vulgar expressions are observed, too. Since media, especially press, was a source of new expressions, many of them can be labeled as journalese. Moreover, some phrasemes tend to carry scientific markedness. Foreignness should also be included in the stylistic repertoire of the units coined after 1989.

### 2.2.3 Origins, motivation and formation mechanisms

The analysed units differ in origins and motivations. Among them are innovations proper, i.e. unit which had not existed by 1989. Many of them are the names of elements of new reality, like the phrase *desant gdański* [Gdańsk landing force] and its variant *zaciąg gdański* [Gdańsk enlistment], coined at the turn of 1990 and 1991 (Zimny and Nowak 2009: 66), meaning 'activists of the Solidarity movement who after the transformation took the most important positions in the country'. Some of the nominations are primary names, but many are examples of additional naming, i.e. cognitively more complex expressions than the ones which exist in language to name a given phenomenon (cf. Dobrovolskij and Piirainen 2005: 18).

As observed by Frankowska (1994), the following ones are very common: POLITICS IS WAR / BATTLE (e.g. *wojna na górze* [war on top] 'ruthless war for power', *siedzieć okrakiem na barykadzie* [to be sitting astride on the barricade] 'to change views to benefit from the situation'), POLITICS IS THEATRE (*reżyser wydarzeń* [the director of events] 'the leader'), POLITICS IS GAME (e.g. *stosowanie uników* [doing sidesteps], 'avoiding doing something').

Analysing economic metaphors in political lexis and phraseology, Zimny and Nowak (2009: 329) stress that after the introduction of marketing rules in election campaigns, the metaphor POLITICS IS BUSINESS is well represented, with such

phrases as *opakowanie produktu* [product wrapping], meaning ‘the image of a politician’. There are also some expressions exploiting original imagery to verbalise culture-specific notions, for example, *pamięć niemowlęcia* [infant’s memory] ‘SLD members’ forgetting one’s own infamous past’.

Moreover, symbol-based type of motivation is observed. Several units employ the symbolic value of colours, whose names are carriers of “relevant cultural knowledge” (Dobrovol’skij and Piirainen 2010: 78), thus they are semantically autonomous. Since the beginning of the nineties the adjective *czarny* [black] has been used both in the singular (*czarny*) and the plural form (*czarni*), meaning respectively ‘a priest’ or ‘clergy’. This adjective sometimes describes politicians openly supporting the Catholic Church. From a linguistic point of view, it is an analogy of *czerwony* [red] – the blacks are the new reds, with strong influence on politics (Zimny and Nowak 2009: 61). The colour name is a component of several phrases, for example, *czarna reakcja* [black reaction] and *czarne niebezpieczeństwo* [black danger].

Attention should also be paid to proper names and their derivatives as phraseocreative constituents. The potential of anthroponymic formations is attested by the phrase *falandyzacja prawa* [\*falandisation (a gerund derived from the surname *Falandysz*) of law] ‘interpreting law on the verge of legality to justify someone’s actions’ (Kopaliński 1996: 86), and the expression *balceryzacja gospodarki* [\*balcerisation (a noun derived from the surname *Balcerowicz*) of economy] ‘negative social results of the policy of the Minister of Finance Leszek Balcerowicz, introduced to stabilise the Polish economy’.

Phraseological units of textual origins constitute another important group. An interesting example is the phrase *krewni i znajomi królika* [Rabbit’s relatives and friends], which comes from a pre-war translation of *Winnie-the-Pooh*, but gained the status of an idiom only in the first half of the nineties (Nowakowska 2005: 24). The phrase was used to name persons who are privileged to be given state positions due to their friendship with authorities. One of subgroups of winged words are expressions coined or popularised by Wałęsa (see Section 2.1.2), such as *plusy dodatnie i ujemne* [positive pluses and negative pluses] ‘drawbacks of positive aspects’ or *pokojowa wojna wszystkich ze wszystkimi* [peaceful war of everybody with everybody] ‘democracy’.

Moreover, many intra- and interlinguistic borrowings were incorporated, mostly due to the influence of extralinguistic factors. As for the former kind, as already mentioned, many legal and economic phraseological terms enriched the colloquial variety of Polish. One of them is the expression *klamstwo lustracyjne* [vetting lie], which means ‘a statement regarding one’s work for or cooperation with the security services in the years from 1944 to 1990’. It should be stressed that the intralingual borrowings are by no means limited to these two varieties

of Polish. For instance, many phrases were borrowed from sport jargon, which suited the new metaphoric perception of the reality.

As for interlinguistic loan phrases, the vast majority comes from English. They are very common in the areas, which had not existed or had not been developed in Poland by 1989. Many of them are observed in the language of economy, for instance: *łowca głów*, also *head hunter* or *head-hunter* (Mańczak-Wohlfeld 2010: 95). Among the loan phrasemes, calques dominate, for example, *biały kołnierzyk* [white collar] < *white collar worker*, with fewer semi-calques, also called hybrid borrowings (Fiedler 2014: 46–47), like *firma joint-venture* [joint-venture company].

Some phrasemes were created as a result of the derivation process, which comprises several kinds of relations. The first is the derivation of a new unit from the one which had been in use by 1989. For example, the phraseme *beton partyjny* [party concrete] originated from the expression *beton komunistyczny* [communist concrete]. Similarly, *być po drugiej stronie barykady* [to be on the other side of the barricade] was transformed into *siedzieć okrakiem na barykadzie* [to sit astride on a barricade] (Nowakowska 2005: 79).

Moreover, new phrasemes were derived from those created after 1989. For instance, the phrase *białoskarpetkowy biznes* was derived from the expression *biznesmen w białych skapretkach*, the unit *młode wilczyce* — from the idiom *młode wilki*. Some phrasemes gave rise to many new units, as it is the case with the phrase *gruba linia* [thick line] whose derivatives are: *gruba kreska* [thick line], *polityka grubej kreski* [thick line policy], *zwolennicy grubej kreski* [thick line supporters] and *przeciwnicy grubej kreski* [thick line opponents].

It is worth adding that the neosemantic unit *Okrągły Stół* [a round table] was very productive. Originally, it was a name of a piece of furniture produced by Zakłady Mebli Artystycznych in Henryków, which became a symbol of negotiations of communist authorities and the representatives of prodemocratic opposition, conducted from 6th February to 5th April 1989 (Zimny and Nowak 2009: 177).

The phrase motivated the unit *czerwony stolik* [a red little table] (Nowakowska 2005: 79), the variant of which is *czerwony podstolik* [a red little subtable]. The expression, employing the symbolic value of the red colour, means ‘the communist authorities participating in the talks’. If the phrase *okrągły stół* is spelt with small initial letters, the unit means ‘negotiations between parties which are in conflict or parties whose aim is to work on a common stand’.<sup>5</sup> After the transformation, it started to be used as a phrase with a slot, i.e. OKRĄGŁY STÓŁ + ADJECTIVE(S), OKRĄGŁY STÓŁ W SPRAWIE + NOUN or OKRĄGŁY STÓŁ + NOUN.

<sup>5</sup> This use of the phraseme had been attested by 1989. The unit, which comes from the legend of King Arthur, has a variant *konferencja okrągłego stołu* [round table conference].

### 3 Polish phrasemes coined after 1989 in a cross-linguistic perspective

#### 3.1 The notion of equivalence

Equivalence is one of the key terms both in literature studies and linguistic analyses, defined in various ways by many scholars (Dąbska-Prokop 2000: 68–75), representing different disciplines. Even if the notion of equivalence is limited to cross-linguistic studies, it is extremely complex, allowing for the adoption of various perspectives and the inclusion of the many parametres. In brief, interlingual equivalence can be defined as a relation of correspondence between a source language unit (a word, a sentence, a text etc.) and its target language equivalent.

It can be researched in two main perspectives, i.e. translational and systematic (Dobrowol'skij 2011). As for translational equivalence, it can be defined as a correspondence of a source language unit and its textual representation in the translation. It should be observed that the translation unit can be smaller than a multiword expression, equal to it, or bigger. Then, fixed expressions function in a text in various ways, for instance, creating an intricate net of meaning, with modifications, word play etc. It means that after a multiaspectual analysis of the text, the equivalent is chosen from many possible “candidates”, both phraseological and non-phraseological.

The latter kind, systematic equivalence, deals with correspondences analysed at the systematic level. The aim of determining a systematic equivalent of a particular unit is to find its counterpart in the target language, i.e. an element which can be treated as one showing resemblance to the source language equivalents in terms of semantics, preferably stylistics and other parametres. The systematic equivalents of the analysed Polish units will be discussed by presenting the four groups of their English counterparts.

#### 3.2 Systematic equivalents

##### 3.2.1 Absolute equivalents

Absolute equivalents, also called full ones, are phrasemes of the source language and their target language counterparts, which are identical with regard to their meaning and lexical-syntactic structure as well as imagery basis (Dobrowol'skij 2011: 7–8). In fact, it should be observed that such pairs tend to differ in some

characteristics, such as stylistic markedness or frequency. Therefore, the term *quasi-absolute equivalents* is more adequate to name such units (Fiedler 2007: 118).

It is the case with Polish borrowings from English, meeting the criteria of full equivalents, for instance, *szara strefa* ← *grey zone*, *plastikowe pieniądze* ← *plastic money*, *wyścig szczurów* ← *rat race*, *łowca głów* ← *head hunter*. The Polish units are marked with novelty, whereas the English phrases are neutral in this respect.

The fact that loan phrases are relatively common among the units describing economic phenomena contributed significantly to the big number of full equivalents among the expressions from the field of economy. The Polish units referring to politics have hardly any full equivalents in English. An example of full equivalents is the pair *zmiana warty* — *the changing of the guard*. The small number of such correspondences results from the culture-specific character of phrases describing phenomena of national importance. It is worth adding that it occurs that some equivalents have variants, belonging to different groups. One of such units is the Polish phraseme *biały kołnierzyk*, a calque from English, with two corresponding expressions, i.e. *a white collar* and *a white-collar worker*. The former meets the criteria of full equivalent, while the latter can be classified as a partial one. Moreover, there are equivalents forming a string of synonyms. One of such units is the phrase *partia obrotowa* [revolving party], also called *partia zawiasowa* [hinges party] and *partia piwotalna* [pivotal party]. The last of the listed units, *partia piwotalna* has an absolute equivalent in English, which is the expression *pivotal party*.

### 3.2.2 Partial equivalents

The second kind of cross-linguistic counterparts, partial equivalents, are the source language and target language units with identical or near-identical meanings, which do not fully correspond in syntactic and lexical structure and imagery basis (Dobrovol'skij 2011: 8). Since the differences tend to be subtle, the phrasemes bear strong resemblance to each other.

Similarly to the previously discussed group, borrowings from English are common. As already mentioned, the discrepancies, relatively insignificant in a contrastive perspective, can occur at various levels. They can concern the word order and/or the omission of some constituents, as it is the case with the Polish unit *pranie brudnych pieniędzy* [laundering dirty money] and the English corresponding expression *money laundering*. Although the units differ in these two characteristics, the imagery, which they employ, is identical, so it can be concluded that they show a high degree of equivalence.



The substitution of a component, influencing the imagery, but not changing it completely, is also attested in this group. An example of such partial equivalents is the pair composed of the Polish phrase *raj podatkowy* [tax paradise] and its English equivalent *tax haven*. It should be pointed out that the units belonging to partial equivalents differ in the degree of their correspondence.

### 3.2.3 Parallel equivalents

Parallel equivalents are defined as phrasemes of the source language and the target language expressions, which correspond to each other in the core meaning, but differ in the image component (Dobrovol'skij 2011: 8). In many cases both the unit and the cross-linguistic equivalent are of figurative character, which can be illustrated by the Polish and English units expressing the meaning 'an unreliable company': *firma krzak* [bush company] – *a fly-by night (company/business)*, or the sense 'candidates' promises which will not be fulfilled; meals for prospective voters offered by candidates': *kielbasa wyborcza* – *pre-election bread and circuses*.

As the above example shows, the two units can convey different imagery, which is common in the analysed material. For instance, the meaning 'a very small political party' is expressed in both languages in various ways. The motivation of Polish expressions relies on the image of the space which can be occupied by members of such a party: *partia kanapowa* [couch party] and *partia mieszcząca się w (jednej) windzie* [a party which a lift can hold], while the English expressions contain descriptive elements: *cosy party* and *fringe party*.

In many cases, one observes significant differences in stylistic value of the unit and its equivalents, as it is the case with the following Polish idioms and their English equivalents: *puścić kogoś w skarpetkach* – *to reduce sb to beggary*, *drobni ciulacze* – *small-time savers*. Whereas the Polish units are colloquial, their cross-linguistic counterparts belong to neutral expressions.

Therefore, it can be concluded that parallel equivalence is a gradable category. Slight differences can also be observed in the senses, which two equivalent phrases express. The Polish idiom *krewni i znajomi królika* [Rabbit's friends and relations] and the English unit *kith and kin* bear resemblance in terms of their semantics, but the Polish expression usually includes the element 'preferentially treated'. The contexts, in which it is used, tend to be connected with offering high positions.

The differences, observed for various parametres, influence the degree of equivalence. It means that the group of parallel equivalents is composed of units meeting the criteria of parallel counterparts, but varying in terms of



cross-linguistic correspondence. Certain units share many properties and are closer to partial equivalents equivalence, while others are prototypical parallel units, employing different imagery.

### 3.2.4 Zero equivalents

The last group is composed of zero equivalents – the source language phrasemes, which do not have target language equivalents in the form of fixed expressions (Dobrovol'skij 2011: 8). Some of them have single-word equivalents, while others have descriptive ones, i.e. free multiword combinations which convey the same meaning as the target language phraseme.

Adopting Dagut's approach (1981), the units, belonging to the category of cross-linguistic lacunae, can either express a meaning known to target language users, but not verbalised in the form of a fixed expression (language gaps), or their semantics is not familiar to the target language users (referential gaps).

In the analysed material, the referential lacunary units are common due to the culture-specific character of the phenomena, which they name. They are deeply set in Polish culture and a simple explanation of their semantics is not sufficient. For instance, the meaning of the phrase *druga Japonia* [second Japan] can be defined in a simple way as 'the vision of Poland resembling Japan in terms of economic growth', but, in fact, the interpretation of the paraphrase requires cultural knowledge regarding the economic situation of Poland (Szczsunowicz 2012), and, preferably, the origins of the unit, used by Lech Wałęsa who wanted to stress the contrast between the two countries.

It is worth adding that some of them make use of conventional metaphors comprehensible also in the English-speaking world, as it is the case with the figurative use of the name of the colour in the expression *czerwone pająki* [red spiders]. Yet, the unit has a more specific meaning: 'the Polish left wing after 1989'. Similarly, phrases which might seem to be transparent, like *złodziejska prywatyzacja* [thievish privatisation], express Poland-specific meanings and are rich in connotations.

## 4 Conclusion

Extralinguistic factors of great importance for a particular community may result in a periodic growth of the number of words and expressions. The political transformation of 1989 contributed to the development of Polish phrasemes, especially

in the fields of politics and economy. A big number of such units results from the event-related nomination needs in these areas. Moreover, to some extent, it can be caused by the tradition of counterspeaking, observed in the previous period. The analysed units tend to be complex in terms of semantics, stylistic markedness and evaluative potential.

In a Polish-English perspective, the majority of phrasemes do not have cross-linguistic phraseological equivalents (See Table 1). The fact can be explained by the lack of the event triggering the periodic growth in the target culture. In the analysed material, there is a relatively big difference between the units describing political phenomena and those naming economic ones. The value is much higher for the first group, which can be explained by the fact that the names refer to national realia, whereas among those from the sphere of economy there are many expressions naming objects, processes etc. which exist in many cultures.

**Table 1:** English equivalents of Polish phrasemes referring to economy and politics

Kinds of equivalents	English equivalents of Polish phrasemes	
	Economy	Politics
Quasi-absolute	27%	8%
Partial	14%	7%
Parallel	21%	19%
Zero	38%	66%

Moreover, the fact that relatively many analysed Polish units have English phraseological equivalents, either absolute, partial or parallel, is also related to the influence of English as a donor of phrases. Therefore, although the events of 1989 resulted in a periodic increase of the number of Polish phrasemes, they did not result in a creation of exclusively lacunary set of units. Other kinds of equivalents are represented as well, reaching relatively high numbers for the expressions from the field of economy.

To conclude, it can be said that it is difficult to predict how the periodic growth of phrasemes will be reflected in the degree of the interlingual correspondence of the units coined within the period. The case of the analysed Polish expressions and their English equivalents shows that the cross-linguistic equivalence of periodic-growth units is of extremely complex character due to the influence of many extralinguistic factors, which are not limited to the source culture.

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