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ENGLISH, FRENCH, AND POLISH CONCEPTUALIZATIONS OF STRATEGIC BUSINESS UNITS

The present paper is concerned with conceptualisations of Strategic Business Units (SBUs) that appear in a specific piece of business discourse – the Boston Consulting Group (BCG) matrix. More specifically, the authors analyse both the names and the language used to talk about the SBUs. The data for the research comes from three languages: English, Polish, and French, the first of which is the source language of the terminology, while the other two are target languages into which the terminology was rendered. Since the analysed phenomena are chiefly metaphors and metonymies, the theoretical framework was provided by the Conceptual Metaphor Theory and Conceptual Metonymy Theory.

1. Introduction

Business today is a global issue. But the methods of doing it are not invented from the scratch in each country – it is natural for business people to resort to specialist literature written in countries with more advanced economies and later implement this knowledge in their own country. However, it is not only specialist, business knowledge and terminology that are popularised in this way. What is also spread is a specific vision of reality and a set of culture-specific associations encoded in the source language.

The present paper focuses on a specific type of discourse – the language used in reference to four pieces of business reality – four types of *strategic business units* (SBUs) found in the BCG matrix. The data for this research come from three languages belonging to different language groups: Germanic, Romance, and Slavic. Beginning with an analysis of the terminology in English

– the source language of the matrix – the authors focus on French and Polish conceptualisations and connotations that these names evoke in the two languages, as well as the linguistic processes underlying them.

2. Strategic Business Units

A discussion of conceptualisations of the strategic business unit needs to begin with a characterisation of what it actually is. First of all, it is a unit that functions within a larger company and "has a separate mission and objectives" (Kotler et al. 1999: 97). A business unit can be distinguished on the basis of three characteristics: "(1) it is a single business or collection of related businesses that can be planned separately from the rest of the company; (2) it has its own set of competitors; and (3) it has a manager responsible for strategic planning and profit performance who controls most of the factors affecting profit" (Kotler 2002: 42). However, it is rather large companies, quire characteristic for American business, that are most easily divisible into separate business units. In the European literature of the subject, which is more focused on smaller-scale enterprises, the term SBU is often used in a different sense – it denotes "a company division, a product line within a division, or sometimes a single product or brand" (Kotler et al. 1999: 97). A good illustration of a large-scale American company and its division is General Electric, which once had as many as 49 SBUs (Kotler 2002: 42).

Dividing the company into strategic business units is usually the first major step, called *portfolio analysis*, in strategic planning – the management needs to be able evaluate "the products and businesses that make up the company" (Kotler, Armstrong 2012: 42). During the portfolio analysis, all SBUs of a company are classified according to a now-classic matrix devised and popularised by one of the leading consulting firms in the USA – the Boston Consulting Group (BCG). This growth-share matrix has two axes, each of which represents one factor for evaluating the businesses unit: the market growth rate and relative market share.

The market growth rate is measured on the vertical axis, and it "indicates the annual growth rate of the market" (Kotler 2002: 42). Relative market share on the horizontal axis "refers to the SBU's market share relative to that of its largest competitor in the segment" (ibid.) and it measures the company's strength in the given market segment. Because each factor is divided into two categories: high and low, the matrix is divided into four cells representing four types of units (fig. 1).

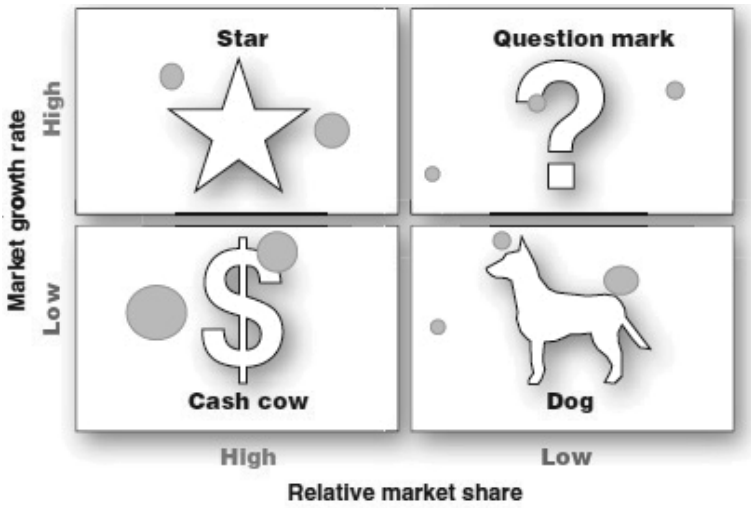

Figure 1. The BCG growth-share matrix (Kotler, Armstrong 2012: 43)

3. Figurative language in business

The linguistic background for the present analysis is provided by two theories stemming from the Cognitive Linguistics movement: the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff, Johnson 1980; Lakoff 1987; Lakoff, Johnson 1999; Kövecses 2010, etc.) as well as the Conceptual Metonymy Theory (Kövecses, Radden 1999; Panther, Radden 1999; Barcelona 2000; Dirven, Pörings 2002, Dirven, Mendoza Ibánez 2010, etc.).

The former of them sees metaphor as a means of structuring one concept in terms of another (Lakoff, Johnson 1980: 14) or, more specifically, as a set of systematic correspondences (or mappings) between two domains of experience (Kövecses 2015: 1). One of them is the target domain, which is more abstract, less directly experienced, less known, and thus the one that we wish to understand. The other domain, the source one, is typically more physical, more directly experienced, better known, and thus it is the one that is used to understand the target domain. What is characteristic for this theory is that is sees metaphor as a primarily mental phenomenon – the language is secondary (Lakoff 1993: 207). This means that metaphor originates in the mind and is consequently applied to motivate metaphorical linguistic expressions (Kövecses 2010: 4), e.g. the correspondences between the way in which a ship sails and a state functions underlie what can be formulated as the STATE IS A SHIP conceptual metaphor. Due to this metaphor, in turn, it is possible to produce such metaphorical expressions as e.g. "The House Budget ... will allow the state to withstand even the *stormiest weather*" (Grady 2007: 190).

As for the theory of metonymy, it has undergone a number of modifications within Cognitive Linguistics (Drożdż 2014). Some of the theory's basic assumptions come from Lakoff and Johnson (1980: 35-40), e.g. the fact that metonymy, just like metaphor, is a conceptual phenomenon, that metonymic mappings take place within one domain, and that metonymic concepts are systematic (forming conceptual metonymies) (cf. Lakoff, Turner 1989: 103-104). Another milestone in understanding the process of metonymy was the definition proposed by Radden and Kövecses (1999), which introduced two further notions to metonymy. First, Radden and Kövecses replaced the notion of domain with a more general and abstract notion of the Idealised Cognitive Model (Lakoff 1987). Second, they adopted one of the Cognitive Grammar observations (Langacker 1993) – that metonymy is a process in which one entity serves as the reference point for mental access to another entity (Radden, Kövecses 1999: 18-19) – a claim that is still valid today (cf. Panther, Thornburg 2007; Kövecses 2010: 171-193). Summing up this brief paragraph, one of the recent definitions of metonymy can be evoked: "metonymy is an asymmetric mapping of a conceptual domain, the source, onto another domain, the target. Source and target are in the same functional domain and are linked by a pragmatic function, so that the target is mentally activated" (Barcelona 2011: 52).

Concluding the section on figurative language, its presence in the language of economics needs to be mentioned. The use of metaphor in economics has a long history – it can be traced back as early as e.g. the medieval treatise *De Moneta* by Nicholas Oresme or the early modern work by Bernardo Davanzati's *A Discourse upon Coins*. However, the use of such language was not always accompanied by awareness of the applied figure of speech. Actually, systematic research of metaphor from the area of ESP started relatively recently – at the end of the 20th century (some noteworthy pioneers being e.g. Jeffreys 1982; Henderson 1982; Dudley-Evans, Henderson 1990; Mirowski 1990; Lindstromberg 1991; or Smith 1995), and in 1999 it was still considered to be "under-researched" (Cameron, Low 1999: 91). Together with the growing intensity of metaphor research, the area of ESP gradually received more attention (Charteris-Black 2000; Henderson 2000; Arabski (ed.) 2002, etc.), and now can be called a vigorously-developing area of study with a growing number of publications considering different aspects of the field (Koller 2004; Erreygers, Geert (eds.) 2005; Herrera-Soler, White (eds.) 2012; Mamet 2012; Drożdż 2012, to name but a few).

4. SBU conceptualisations

As can be seen in figure 1, each kind of SBU possesses specific properties and, in accordance with them, it is ascribed in English one of four names: *question marks*, *stars*, *cash cows*, and *dogs*. These are probably the most frequent terms that are used in reference to SBUs though, as shown below, by no means

the only ones. The subsequent subsections discuss the features of each SBU, their names, and their resultant reception in the three languages.

4.1. Question marks

Business units from the first category can be characterized as having only a small market share in a high-growth market (cf. Kotler 2002: 42; Lewis et al. 2007: 169, etc.). This is often the situation of businesses entering a market in which there is already a market leader, that is, businesses whose future is uncertain. On the one hand, if they manage to capture a big market share, they may generate considerable future profits. On the other hand, if they are not able to keep up with the market growth, they are likely to have low profits or even generate losses (Griffin 2012: 223).

In English there are several terms that can be used for this type of business, and each of them profiles different facets of the situation. First of all, Kotler and Armstrong (2012: 43) call such business *question marks* because, as they note, the company needs to "think hard about which question marks it should try to build into stars and which should be phased out". Similarly, Koch (2006: 254) notes that it is "a very good description of the business, since it has an uncertain future and the decision on whether to invest in the business is both important and difficult".

From the linguistic perspective, the term *question marks* seems suitable because it provides a rather straightforward access to the problematic situation in which the management is found: a situation in which they face dilemmas that they need to solve and, as a result, they ask themselves numerous questions. This name is also skilfully coined for it does not directly refer to difficult situations but it does so by means of a metonymic chain underlying it: THE PUNCTUATION MARK INDICATING A QUESTION FOR THE QUESTION and THE QUESTION FOR THE SITUATION THAT GENERATES QUESTIONS.

Another term that can be found in reference to this type of business unit is *problem children* (e.g. Okonkwo 2007; Linton, Donnelly 2009; West et al. 2010; Cant et al. 2006). This name highlights two aspects of the market context: first, the problematics of the situation, the gravity of the decision that the management is confronted with: to keep the business or not. As Withey and Lancaster (2007: 52) put it, "based on the available marketing information, marketing management must use its skill to decide whether such investment could be better employed supporting other SBUs". The second dimension that the name highlights is the metaphors upon which it bases. One metaphor, which is also well-established in business discourse, is COMPANIES ARE ORGANISMS (e.g. Koller 2004). The other metaphor is more specific – it refers to the relation between the company and its strategic business units: SBUs ARE CHILDREN. These metaphors are well exemplified in the literature while characterizing the business units: SBUs are "nurtured" (Vallabhaneni 2013: 227), "are being groomed as the next round of stars" (Thompson, Strickland

1990: 2), "develop successfully" (Cant et al. 2006: 562), and even develop their "full potential" (ibid.).

A still different name that is found in the literature for this kind of businesses is *cash hogs* (Lewis et al. 2007; Thompson, Strickland 1990; Choi 1997; Vallabhaneni 2013, etc.). This term profiles at least three facets of such an SBU – first, its need to be supplied with large amounts of resources, as the company has to spend lots of money on plant, equipment, personnel, etc. The second association comes from the verbal sense of the word: to hog means to "take or use most or all of (something) in an unfair or selfish way" (OD), and this highlights the privileged status of the *cash hog* in relation to other SBUs of the company. Although all SBUs need resources, financing, and attention, the *cash hog* takes most of them because it is more important for the management than the other SBUs. Finally, the purpose of having hogs cannot be neglected – they are primarily reared with the ultimate thought of slaughtering them, when they are big enough, in order to get their meat. In the business context, such a purpose evokes two ideas: of the desired business scenario of unit development – from cash-consuming *hogs* to cash-producing *cows*, and of a large amount of meat produced by the hogs – a large income that the SBU is expected to bring.

Specialists, while discussing the properties of such SBUs, note that dollars are needed "to feed the cash hogs" (Thompson, Strickland 1990: 2), that such businesses are "cash consuming" (Choi 1997: 55), or that they "consume high capital resources" (Okonkwo 2007: 135). These metaphorical expressions depict the units from two perspectives: on the one hand, the SBUs are hogs that need to be fed, on the other hand, the company is the one that feeds. This boils down to two complementary conceptual metaphors: SBUs ARE HOGS and COMPANIES ARE FARMERS.

The last term that is used in English for this type of units is *wildcats* (Pitts, Lagnevik 1998: 9; McDonald, Wilson 2011; Cant et al. 2006, etc.). It is a polysemous word – first, it refers to a specific type of wild cat (*Felis silvestris*) that is noted for its ferocity. Second, it is used in the general sense to any smaller member of the cat family. Finally, it is metaphorically applied to a person (typically a woman) who is hot-tempered or ferocious (OD). What these senses have in common is ferocity, which, in the business context, can be interpreted in two distinct ways: the first is that it may refer to the style of supplying the money to the business so that it can have a bigger market share: "to gain share, they'd probably have to be funded aggressively" (Kiechel 2010: 65). The other, even more probable option is that the business is metaphorically seen as an animal (SBUs ARE WILDCATS). In this case, the company needs to be ferocious to be able to handle the rivals in the market, "as competition may be more aggressive" (Okumus et al. 2010: 114).

As for the transposition of the term *question mark* into the French and Polish languages, both of them make use of the same punctuation mark to name this specific business unit: *point d'interrogation* in French (Jaccard 2010; Seni 2013) and *znak zapytania* in Polish (Kotler 1994; Kotler, Keller 2012; Porter 2010;

Michalik et al. 2011; Garbarski et al. 2006; Mruk et al. 1996, etc.). They base on the same metonymies that have been noted for English: THE PUNCTUATION MARK INDICATING A QUESTION FOR THE QUESTION and THE QUESTION FOR THE SITUATION THAT GENERATES QUESTIONS. Interestingly, both French and Polish, in contrast to English, apply also such terms as, respectively, *dilemmes* 'dilemmas' (Kotler et al. 2000; Van Dick 1991; Prades 2008; Brilman, Hérard 2011; Mayrhofer 2007; Vandercammen 2006), *questions* 'questions' (Villemus 2009), and *dylematy* 'dilemmas' (Stępniewski 2008; Skowron 2012, etc.). These, in turn, do not evoke the whole metonymic chain that was observed in the case of *question marks*, but base solely on the second of the metonymies constituting the chain: THE QUESTION/DILEMMA FOR THE SITUATION THAT GENERATES QUESTIONS/DILEMMAS.

In the two languages, the SBU has also names that stem from the SBUs ARE CHILDREN metaphor: in French it is *enfants à problèmes* (Ost 2000; Benaroya 2009; Krogerus, Tschäppeler 2012), and in Polish: *trudne dzieci* (Kotler 1994; Kielan, Pokora 2004; Michalik et al. 2011; Mruk et al. 1996, etc.). These expressions are literal translations of the English term which, just like in the original, emphasize the difficulty of the situation in which such businesses are found, and are based on the CHILD metaphor. However, only Polish specialists pushed the metaphor further and coined the neologism *zagadkowe dzieci* 'mysterious children' (e.g. Altkorn 2004; Czubała et al. 2006). This expression also follows the metaphor SBUs ARE CHILDREN. However, it combines the metaphor with the idea of mystery that the future of the business is cloaked in.

There is one more equivalent of *question marks* that can be found only in French, and it is the literal translation of *wildcat*: *chat sauvage* (McDonald 2004: 196). This expression shares two out of three senses of the English word: the name for a specific type of creature – Felis silvestris (LE), and the generic reference to the cat family (RD). And although particular members of the cat family can be associated in French with the feature of aggression, e.g. *tigre* 'tiger' (TLFI), the very expression *chat sauvage* does not seem to profile this feature. This is probably why this name has been criticized as totally inadequate and functionally mistaken, for it does not produce a similar effect on the French as the English term does on the English (Burcea 2011: 63).

4.2. Stars

The next type of SBUs is *stars*. These are *question marks* that have turned into market leaders (or at least have gained a reasonably big market share) in a rapidly growing market. However, *stars* do not necessarily generate profit, as the company may need to continue investing in them to keep up with the high market growth and fight off competition (Kotler 2001: 42).

The term star, being polysemous, evokes two kinds of entities. One of them, in the literal sense, designates "a fixed luminous point in the night sky which is a large, remote incandescent body like the sun" (OD). This kind of

conceptualization is visible both in the graphic representation (fig. 1), and the language that is used about such businesses, e.g. "stars are visible" (Vallabhaneni 2013:227). The other sense is more embedded in the contemporary world that is full of celebrities, actors and singers. As a metaphor, this name denotes "a very famous or talented entertainer or sports player" (OD). This sense is also profiled at the linguistic level: *stars* are said to "have a promising future" (Withey, Lancaster 2007: 51) and are "attractive" (Vallabhaneni 2013:227). Still, independently of the type of conceptualisation, we can see the emergence of another metaphor: SBUs ARE STARS.

In French, this kind of SBUs is named by means of as many as three terms: *stars*, *vedettes*, and étoiles. It should be noted that beside semantic differences each of these terms has a different frequency. The most popular notions are *stars* (Van Dick 1991; Prades 2008; Mayrhofer 2007; Vandercammen 2006; Jaccard 2010; Benaroya 2009) and *vedettes* (Simon 2007; Prades 2008; Jaccard 2010; Vandercammen 2006; Benaroya 2009), while the term étoiles (Seni 2013; Villemus 2009; Brilman, Hérard 2011; Prades 2008) is less frequently used. The first of them, *star*, is an English borrowing that means "célèbre vedette de cinéma" 'a famous cinema star' (RD). An extended sense of this term designates "personne très en vue" 'a very visible person' (RD). The same meaning can be also conveyed by means of a more familiar French term: *vedette*. As for the third notion, étoile, it primarily designates the physical entity (parallel to the concrete sense of the English term). At the same time, through extension, it can also be used in the metaphorical sense as "personne dont la réputation, le talent brillent" 'a person whose reputation or talent shines' (RD).

As for the Polish business language, the most popular term that is found in it is the direct translation of the English name – *gwiazdy* 'stars' (Kotler 1994; Kotler, Keller 2012; Porter 2010; Michalik et al. 2011; Garbarski et al. 2006; Mruk et al. 1996, etc.). Just as its English equivalent, it is polysemous and has both English senses, so its cultural associations seem to be virtually the same.

Beside *gwiazdy*, in Polish one more term can be found: *przeboje* 'hits' (Stępniewski 2008). This rather marginal notion introduces a new dimension to the business realm: "rzecz ciesząca się w jakimś czasie ogromną popularnością" 'a thing that has gained a great popularity at certain time' (SJP). Although its sense is quite different than the *star*'s – it profiles an object rather than a person (in Polish this term is often used in reference to e.g. songs that have become hits), the set of associations that it evokes is quite comparable to the one of *gwiazdy*: being popular and successful.

4.3. Cash cows

The next stage that well-prospering businesses are expected to go to is *cash cows*. These are businesses with the largest relative market share, often former stars, in a market that is not expected to grow substantially. What is more, because such established and successful businesses need less investment to hold

their market share, they produce (among others, due to economies of scale and higher profit margins) a lot of cash for the company. This money can be used to pay the company's bills and support its other businesses (Kotler 2002: 42).

The major English term that is used for such SBUs is *cash cows*, which introduces another metaphor: SBUs ARE COWS. This expression makes a reference to the cow, and probably one of strongest associations that people have with this creature is producing milk (the Oxford Dictionary enumerates it as the first purpose of keeping a cow). In the case of the business environment, the purpose of such a unit is also producing something, though this time it is money (which was probably exchanged for cash for mnemonic purposes – the ***c**ash **c**ow* is an instance of alliteration).

The language used to discuss such units reinforces the COW metaphor: SBUs are described as "strong" or "weak" (Thompson, Strickland 1990: 2), and they can be "maintained in a healthy status to sustain long-term cash flow" (ibid.). At the same time, the cow expressions indicate the presence of a metaphor that was mentioned while discussing *cash hogs*: COMPANY IS A FARMER, for what it needs to do is "milk profits" from *cash cows* (e.g. Boone, Kurtz 2013: 54). It should also be noted that metaphors can reach really deep in the cultural knowledge related to the cow – they highlight e.g. the appropriate intensity of milk flow: "the business produces strong cash flows" (ibid).

The COW metaphor sometimes overlaps another strong business metaphor – COLLECTING PROFITS IS HARVESTING, which results in interesting blends, e.g. "strong cash cows are not "harvested"" (Boone, Kurtz 2013: 54), or harvesting "is appropriate for weak cash cows" (Kotler 2002: 43). The reason is that the COW metaphor does not suffice in rendering appropriately all situations that this SBU may be in, e.g. withdrawing from such a business unit. This can be done e.g. by implementing the program of cost retrenchment (Kotler 2002: 43) which, for a short time, brings a strong cash flow from the given SBU. However, because it assumes a single, permanent action – it leads to the liquidation of the SBU – specialists do not call this strategy milking (probably because milking assumes a regular, repeated process). Theoretically, they might introduce a new metaphorical expression based on the COW metaphor that would render this idea, e.g. *slaughter cash cows*. Instead, they choose to name the process *harvesting*.

In the early versions of the matrix, *cash cows* were also called *gold mines*, which was "in many ways a better name" (Koch 2006: 253). This name highlighted two dimensions of the SBUs: that they "are very valuable and should be protected at all costs" (ibid.). For managers this meant that the profit generated by the SBUs can be immense – actually, a gold mine may bring profits that exceed all our expectations by far. Also, the SBUs – gold mines must be guarded against intruders and competitors.

As for French and Polish, the COW metaphor can be found in both of them, though in each language it is realized in a slightly different manner. First of all, the French equivalent is *vaches à lait* 'milk cows' (Kotler et al. 2000; Van Dick

1991; Prades 2008; Brilman, Hérard 2011; Mayrhofer 2007; Vandercammen 2006). This name bases on a well-established expression that is metaphorically defined as "personne qu'on exploite, qui est une source de profit pour d'autres" 'a person who is exploited, who is a source of profit for others' (RDL). What is more, its marketing sense has become so well-established that it can be found in a general French dictionary (RD): "produit dégageant une forte rentabilité" 'a product providing high profitability'.

In the Polish business language one name dominates for this type of SBU: *dojne krowy* 'milky cows' (Kotler 2005; Armstrong, Kotler 2012; Porter 2010; Altkorn 2004; Garbarski et al. 2006; Mruk et al. 1996, etc.). Beside instantiating the COW metaphor, it also encodes specific cultural information – it focuses on the process of drawing milk from the cow – *dojenie* 'milking'. Being an adjective, *dojny* 'lit. enabling milk-drawing' refers to a certain potential of the cow – the possibility of being milked. As a result, the Polish term does not directly evoke money or milk (as the English and French names), but it does so indirectly through the metonymy POTENTIALITY FOR ACTUALITY (Thornburg, Panther 1997; Panther, Thornburg 1999; Radden, Kövecses 1999, etc.). More specifically, in relation to this kind of SBU, this metonymy should be formulated as: THE POTENTIAL OF BEING MILKED FOR MILKING. At the same time, a more general metaphor for income can be formulated: MAKING PROFITS IS MILKING.

A different strategy has been adopted by Polish specialists rendering *gold mines* as *złote kury* 'golden hens' (e.g. Kaczmarek et al. 2005; Michalik et al. 2011), as the term activates a significantly different set of linguistic and cultural associations than gold mines. First of all, the notion *złote kury* represents a different conceptual metaphor: SBUs ARE HENS. At the same time, this phrase can be analysed as an instance of the *form-level metonymy* (Barcelona 2002: 324): A PART OF A FORM FOR THE WHOLE FORM, because the term *złote kury* does not mean "hens covered with gold" or "hens made of gold". The name is supposed to evoke the whole phrase – "kura znosząca złote jajka" 'the hen laying gold eggs', that is, the hen and gold eggs that it lays, and the whole set of associations that the whole phrase brings. Specifically – its definition: "źródło wielkich zysków" 'a source of large profits' (SFJP).

The expressions *gold mines* and *złote kury*, apart from the common motif of providing gold and, thus, ultimate wealth, reveal many differences. Gold mines evoke the United States and such states as California and Alaska, which once witnessed gold rushes and all that they brought: migrations of numerous people, new towns that were built for them, luck and hard work, gambling, cowboys, bands of outlaws, gun fights, fortunes made instantly, etc.

A different set of associations is triggered by "kura znosząca złote jajka" 'the hen laying gold eggs'. First and foremost, the term makes a reference to a different type of knowledge – a classical Greek fable by Aesop, whose works were popularised in Poland by Biernat z Lublina (1522). Also, in contrast to *gold mines*, which are associated with people obsessed by gold, and who are ready to

fight tooth and nail and even kill others either to get it or to protect it, the fable by Aesop teaches something different: moderation, being happy with the little income that we get, patience, care for what we have, and avoiding greed, for it can lead to losing one's wealth. As a result, in contrast to *gold mines*, the name *złote kury* ultimately evokes the need to care for SBUs and to be mindful of what may happen if we are too greedy or careless.

At this juncture, a certain discrepancy in rendering the Greek fable in the English language can be noted. The original creature that laid eggs was a goose, which can be still seen some translations (e.g. Aesop 1874) and in the proverb "*kill the goose that lays the golden eggs*" (OD). At the same time, in other translations (e.g. Aesop 2007), the goose was rendered as the hen.

In the French marketing language one can also find an expression parallel to *złote kury*: *la poule aux œufs d'or* 'the gold-egg hen' (Krogerus, Tschäppeler 2012: 16). Just like the Polish term, it makes a reference to Aesop's fable that was popularized in France by La Fontaine (1668-1693). Also, as in Polish, this expression means "la source d'un profit important" 'the source of substantial profit' (RD). However, it is not used as the French equivalent of the English term *gold mines*, but it appears as part of its definition: "Les Vaches à lait: ces 'poules aux œufs d'or' ont une grosse part de marché" 'Milk cows: these 'gold-egg hens' have a big market share' (Krogerus, Tschäppeler 2012: 16).

In Polish there is one more, marginal term that is used as an equivalent of *gold mines*: żywiciele 'breadwinners' (Stępniewski 2007). It is a name of a high level of schematicity, because those that feed can be both animals and people. Consequently, it needs to be classified as an instantiation of a very general, image schematic metaphor SBUs ARE LIVING CREATURES. At the same time, żywiciel profiles a less vivid set of cultural associations than e.g. *złote kury* – żywiciel is simply defined as "ten, kto dostarcza pożywienia; też: ten, kto kogoś utrzymuje" 'the one that provides food; also: one who maintains someone' (SJP). In other words, such an SBU provides what is necessary to live, which, in the business context, means that it provides the company and its other units with all that is needed for existence, that is, e.g. money.

4.4. Dogs

The last type of strategic business unit is called *dogs*. These "are businesses that have a very small share of a market that is not expected to grow" (Griffin 2012: 223). Typically, such businesses generate low profits or even losses (Kotler 2002: 42). As a result, two strategies are appropriate for them: *harvesting* (the same as with weak *cash cows*) and *divesting*. The former is about cost retrenchment, while the latter – selling or liquidating the business (ibid.). At the same time, some marketing specialists reduce these strategies to just one – "kill the dog" or "kill off any dogs as quickly as possible" (e.g. Errasti 2013; Saxena 2009; West 2010; Urban 2005, etc.). Actually, specialists provide even a metaphorical explanation why this should be so: "These SBUs need to be

killed or divested. Otherwise they will consume management time and scarce resources" (Saxena 2009: 234).

Although it may be surprising why business specialists have chosen the dog as the creature to be "killed" or "killed off", it becomes clear when one analyses the cultural associations that the English have in relation to the dog. And these associations are well illustrated in such expressions as: "dirty dog", "dog does not eat dog", "let sleeping dogs lie", "throw someone to the dogs", "meaner than a junkyard dog", etc. What these idioms have in common is that they evoke despicable, contemptible, or disreputable people, those who are cruel or eager to fight, enemies, evil, and something that might cause trouble (FD). Naturally, it does not mean that the dog is only associated in English with evil, as there are also expressions producing neutral or positive connotations, e.g. "top dog", "lucky dog", or "every dog has its day". Still, what the marketing term seems to profile is those negative aspects. And it is these associations that help to understand why the business units that the company needs to do away are called *dogs*.

The common element that can be noticed about French and Polish translations of this term is the difficulty in rendering the English set of connotations with the dog in the two languages. Consequently, specialists have applied a whole range of different techniques, one of which was literal translation. More specifically, this technique was only applied in Polish, because translating *dogs* as *chiens* is not possible in French (Temmerman 2011: 52).

One of the reason why this is so is that generally in French the associations with the dog are not as negative as in English. Naturally, there are expressions in which the dog is depicted in the negative light, e.g. the very noun "chien" means a contemptible person (RD). Also, the expression "de chien" 'of the dog', as in "avoir un mal de chien" 'have dog's pain', means to come cross many difficulties. Similarly, "caractère de chien" 'dog character', describes an execrable character, someone who is cantankerous, bad-tempered, quarrelsome, and angry (RDL), etc. Still, these characteristics do not qualify people as negatively as is the case of *dogs*, which was probably the reason why the literal translation was rejected in French.

In Polish the associations with the dog are similar to those in French, that is, there are expressions that depict dogs in the negative light, e.g. "łże jak pies" 'he is lying like a dog', which means "lie insolently", "wieszać na kimś psy" 'lit. hang dogs on someone', that is, 'to slander someone', or "ty psie!" 'you dog!' – 'a mean person', etc. (SFJP) (for a more detailed account of dog in Polish refer to Mosiołek-Kłosińska 1992). Still, it needs to be noted that they do not evoke as negative associations as dogs in English as there is also a considerable set of expressions depicting the dog as a pitiful creature (works hard, is beaten and maltreated, despised, may be very hungry, and finally dies all alone, poor, and forgotten (SFJP)), and as a creature possessing some unquestionable virtues (faithful, loves its owner, is satisfied with even small benefits, deserves its pay, etc. (SFJP)).

Still, despite such incongruities between the connotations of *dogs* and *psy*, the Polish business experts have adopted the latter term (e.g. Kotler 1994; Kotler 2005; Kotler, Armstrong 2012; Mruk 1996; Altkorn 2004; Michalik et al. 2011, etc.). What is more, today it is probably the most common name for this type of strategic business units. However, to understand this decision, one needs to take into consideration a more general economic situation that Poland was in at the time of introducing the term. Poland had just changed its economic system – from centrally planned to capitalist, and was going through the phase of very deep and dynamic market changes. This produced a situation in which there was no established terminological apparatus for the new economic reality and, in order to deal with the wave of incoming terms, specialists often had to resort to the easiest strategy of rendering them – literal translation. This, combined with a great time pressure under which many translations were made, resulted in such terms as e.g. *psy*. What might perhaps surprise today is that while in the first Polish translation of the monumental work by Philip Kotler (1994), the translator offered two equivalents for *dogs*: *psy* 'dogs' and *kule u nogi* 'ball and chain shackles', in translations of further editions of the work (Kotler 2005; Kotler, Keller 2012, etc.), the term *kule u nogi*, though undoubtedly more appropriate, was abandoned in favour of *psy*. Apparently, the term *psy* has become so common that the translator decided to stick to it despite the obvious discrepancies between the cultural associations of the dog in English and Polish.

In Polish business language one more name for *dogs* is used: *pieski* 'small dogs/puppies' (Porter 2010). By applying this diminutive form, the translator probably wanted to highlight one of the dimensions of the *dog* SBU – the fact that it has a small market share. However, both the definition of *pieski*: "mały pies; też: pieszczotliwie o każdym psie" 'a small dog; also: lovingly about any dog' (SJP), and its connotations: lovely and loving, playful, caressed, and sweet, make *pieski* unsuitable for SBUs that the management intends to get rid of (or even kill).

However, many French and Polish experts seemed to be dissatisfied with the direct translation of the term, and they have tried to render the idea of something unwanted, useless, and worthless, without referring to dogs. As a result, in French four alternative terms have been introduced: *poids morts* 'deadweight' (Kotler et al. 2000; Van Dick 1991; Prades 2008; Brilman, Hérard 2011; Mayrhofer 2007; Vandercammen 2006), *canards boiteux* 'lame ducks' (del Marmol 2014; Simon 2007), *parents pauvres* 'poor relatives' (Ost 2000), and *problème* 'problem' (Villemus 2009).

The first of them derives from the domain of transportation and is defined as "poids d'une machine, etc., qui diminue son rendement théorique" 'weight of a machine, etc. that diminishes its theoretical efficiency' (RD). In other words, it is a weight that imposes a certain limit on the efficiency of the given machine – over this weight the machine either stops functioning or functions less efficiently, which instantiates another metaphor: SBUs ARE DEADWEIGHTS. Actually, the expression *poids morts* has entered the general language, and in

the figurative sense it means "ce qui, par son inertie, ralentit ou fait obstacle au bon déroulement de quelque chose" 'something that, because of its inertia, slows down or creates an obstacle to appropriate functioning of something' (TLFI). Although this expression comes from a domain different than business, it accurately renders the role that a *dog* plays in relation to the company: due to the fact that such an SBU consumes the company's money without making profit, it reduces the company's efficiency.

The second French term, *canard boiteux* 'lame duck', designates "personne mal adaptée, inefficace" 'a person poorly adapted, inefficient' (RDL), which signals a still new metaphor: SBUs ARE DUCKS. What *canard boiteux* highlights is someone's low efficiency, someone's lack of ability to adjust to the requirements of the circumstances. Consequently, it is something or someone that we may no longer need or want, which is also one of the associations of *dogs*: it is an inefficient unit or a product that nobody wants (neither customers nor the company). This expression has become so common that it can be found also in general dictionaries – *canard boiteux* can be also used in the sense of "entreprise peu rentable" 'a company of small profit' (RDL) or "entreprise en difficulté" 'a company in difficulty' (RD).

The next figurative French term for *dogs* is *parents pauvres* 'poor relatives'. This is another metaphor stemming from COMPANIES ARE ORGANISMS, but it profiles a specific aspect of being an organism – the kinship between the company and the given unit: SBUs ARE POOR RELATIVES. This is an interesting metaphor, for in French *parent pauvre* is defined as "parent qui n'est pas fortuné et dont on ne fait pas beaucoup de cas" 'a relative who is not wealthy and who is disregarded' (TFLE). As a result, such a name indicates two important facets of such a unit: lack of resources (dogs do not normally generate profit), and (probably resultant) lack of attention from the management.

In French there is also a saying "*traiter qqn en parent pauvre*" 'treat someone as a poor relative', whose definition might be treated as a clue for the company management what to do with such a unit. The French treat such a relative "moins bien que les autres, le négliger" 'more badly than others, neglect him/her' (RD) and they neglect him/ her "notamment sur le plan financier" 'especially in the financial sphere' (RDL). In the business context that would mean that the management should neglect the unit and thus, stops financing it.

The last French term for *dog* is *problème* 'problem'. In French *problème* is understood as "difficulté qu'il faut résoudre pour obtenir un certain résultat; situation instable ou dangereuse exigeant une décision" (RD) 'difficulty that must be resolved in order to obtain a result; an unstable or dangerous situation requiring a decision'. Applying this name to a part of company was possible due to a metonymic extension that can be summarised as PROBLEMS FOR SBUs THAT POSE PROBLEMS. This name also quite accurately evokes a specific dimension of such SBUs, namely the fact that they bring problems to the management. And these are problems of at least two kinds – what to do with them: keep or liquidate, and how to do it: by harvesting or divesting.

As for Polish, two more, creative equivalents for *dogs* have been coined: *kule u nogi* 'ball and chain shackles' (Kotler 1994; Garbarski et al. 2006; Michalik et al. 2011) and *porażki* 'defeat/ failure' (Mruk 1996; Michalik et al. 2011). As for the former of them, it is based on the metaphor SBUs ARE SHACKLES. This metaphor introduces two dimensions to business discourse: first, it is the idea of imprisonment, for such shackles were used to limit prisoner movement. However, this seems to be the hidden dimension of the metaphor, because it would entail another metaphor: COMAPNY IS A PRISONER, which is unacceptable in the business context. Consequently, the highlighted dimension of shackles is the idea of physical restraint – they were used to limit the possibility of movement, they were impediments to free motion. In the case of the company, such SBUs are impediments to development and unrestrained business activity, for they need to be financed and looked after though they do not bring any profit in return.

The second term, *porażka* 'defeat/ failure', bases on a metonymic extension, for its basic senses are 'przegrana walka lub rywalizacja' 'a lost fight or competition' and 'poważne niepowodzenie' 'a serious failure' (SJP). Such a name applied for an SBU may be an extension of either of the senses, though motivated, in each case, by a different metonymy and highlighting different aspects of the given unit. The first of them bases on the metonymy DEFEAT FOR SBUs THAT HAVE BEEN DEFEATED, which profiles the market context – competing with other companies for a market share. And, because the SBU is a dog, it must have lost this competition. An extension of the second of the senses was possible due to the metonymy FAILURE FOR SBUs THAT HAVE FAILED. This, in turn, evokes the context of the company and its management that had certain hopes and expectations in relation to the given unit. Again, because the SBU was not able to meet them, it failed.

5. Conclusions

The present analysis allows for many different observations. The first of them concerns the number of terms applied for the SBUs in each of the three languages. It turns out that the number is not the same – in English *question marks* have as many as four names in total (with *problem children*, *cash hogs*, and *wildcats*); *cash cows* have two (with *gold mines*), while *stars* and *dogs* just one. This shows that establishing the most suitable conceptualisations and associations for business units was not an easy task, and it was most problematic for the SBUs entering the high-growth market. At the same time, this does not mean that the number of French and Polish equivalents of *question marks* was the highest. The name with the highest number of equivalents in Polish and French was *dogs* – four in each of the languages. In French this number was only matched by the equivalents of *question marks*. As for the names with the lowest number of equivalents, *cash cows* had only one in French, and *stars* – two in Polish.

Another observation concerns culture-specific issues of the names, as each of the languages carries certain connotations that are characteristic just for it, which are not present in the other two languages. In English culture-specific names are *cash hogs* and *gold mines*, in French: *poids morts* 'dead weights', *canards boiteux* 'lame ducks', and *parents pauvres* 'poor relatives', while in Polish: *kule u nogi* 'ball and chain shackles', *przeboje* 'hits', żywiciele 'breadwinners', and *porażki* 'defeat/ failure'. The discrepancies between them show cultural differences between the three languages and different associations that each language has in relation to specific elements of reality.

At the same time, one of such culture-specific terms, *dogs*, turned out to be the most problematic name to render in French and Polish. The connotations that the name carries in English are so different from French and Polish that, in an attempt to convey them, specialists in each language provided four terms. *Cash cows*, on the other hand, seemed to be the easiest term to render – it has just one equivalent in French and two major ones in Polish (the third one – żywiciele 'breadwinners' – is used marginally).

The next observation that needs to be made is that rendering specific terminology, even as precise as the business one, is not an easy task. However, several pathways can be indicated. First of all, literal translations can sometimes work, e.g. in the case of the Polish translation of *stars*, as the word has the same senses in both languages. Still, selecting the right term for literal translation may turn out problematic, as in French, where three units with senses comparable to *stars* are available.

The second noticeable tendency was a reference to similar types of experience with the given entity, e.g. *cash cows* remain cows in the other two languages, though each language profiles different aspects of the creature: *cash*, *lait* 'milk', and *dojenie* 'milking'. Similarly, *problem children* have been rendered as children, with each language profiling different properties of such children: *problèmes* 'problems', *trudność* 'difficulty', and *zagadkowość* 'mystery'. Also, due to the same level of literacy, all three languages base in their terminology on the same punctuation mark – question mark – and all that it provides, that is, the mental access to the situation in which questions are asked and to the problem that causes the situation. Though again, each language focuses on a different element of this metonymic chain.

The last trend was finding a culture-specific equivalent that significantly differed from the original name, as was the case with *gold mines*, which was translated as *złote kury* 'golden hens'. This strategy can be also seen in the translations of the term *dogs*: *poids morts* 'deadweight', *canards boiteux* 'lame ducks', *parents pauvres* 'poor relatives', *problème* 'problem', *kule u nogi* 'ball and chain shackles', and *porażki* 'defeat/ failure', where none of the equivalents makes a reference to the canine species.

Finally, a comment must be made about the figurative side of the names: two major SBU metaphors have been detected. One of them is SBUs ARE ANIMALS, which is both frequent in the matrix, and present in the remaining

two languages. The range of animals that provided SBU names is quite wide: dog, wildcat, cow, and hog in English, cow, duck, wildcat, and hen in French, and dog, cow, and hen in Polish. Actually, the number of animal names is so high that at some stage the Boston Consulting Group matrix was even called "the BCG zoo" (Karlöf 1993: 69).

The second most frequent metaphor is SBUs ARE FAMILY MEMBERS. What should be noted about it is that together with the previous metaphor it is an instantiation of the overarching COMPANIES ARE ORGANISMS metaphor, forming a specific kind of metaphorical hierarchy. What is more, it establishes a specific relationship between the company and its SBUs. In most cases, the given SBU is seen as a child: *problem children*, *enfants à problèmes*, *trudne dzieci*, and *zagadkowe dzieci*. However, the metaphor is further developed in French, where SBUs are treated as relatives or, more precisely, a specific kind of them – *parents pauvres* 'poor relatives'.

Concluding, what the analysis shows is that the terminology in question refers to very specific and well defined elements from business reality. However, to name them, different languages make use of both different lexemes and different cultural associations (leading, among others, to different metaphors and metonymies). As a result, despite obvious similarities, the SBU terminology reveals all kinds of language- and culture-specific differences.

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LE – *Larousse Encyclopedy* (http://www.larousse.fr/encyclopedie)
OD – *Oxford Dictionaries* (http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/)
RD – Rey-Debove, J., A. Rey (eds.). 2014. *Le Petit Robert: dictionnaire alphabétique et analogique de la langue française*. Paris: Dictionnaires Le Robert.
RDL – Rey, A., S. Chantreau. 1989. *Dictionnaire des expressions et locutions*. Paris: Dictionnaires Le Robert.
SFJP – Skorupka, S. 1989. *Słownik Frazeologiczny Języka Polskiego*. Warszawa: Wiedza Powszechna.
SJP – *Słownik Języka Polskiego PWN* (http://sjp.pwn.pl/)
TLFI – *Le Trésor de la Langue Française informatisé* (http://atilf.atilf.fr/)