Title: On dogs, cows, and donkeys : the use of animal metaphors in linguistic insults

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Chapter 8

On dogs, cows, and donkeys: The use of animal metaphors in linguistic insults

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The article provides a brief contrastive look at animal metaphors (zoosemes) and their application in the language practice of insulting. Animal metaphors constitute a significant theme used in verbal aggression. Also, certain animal categories, such as *dog*, *pig*, *donkey*, and *cow*, appear to be more universal vectors of dysphemistic qualities than others. Animal metaphors in English reveal strong dysphemistic tendencies, as indicated by a high ratio of dysphemistic zoosemes to animal metaphors in general. Therefore, further research into animal metaphors, alongside investigations concerning verbal aggression, appears to be worthwhile and informative.

Keywords: metaphor, zoosemy, insults, verbal aggression

1. Introduction

The topics of swearing, verbal aggression, and linguistic insults have only recently gained recognition as noteworthy subjects of proper linguistic analysis. Until very recently, as Jay (2000: 10) points out, these topics were considerably underestimated as a worthwhile academic pursuit. The recent years, however, have seen an increase in the amount of attention linguists have been devoting to these issues (cf. Jay 1992, 2000; Allan & Burridge 2006; Pinker 2008; Ljung 2011). It is now widely agreed that swearing is a natural linguistic phenomenon and that verbal aggression in humans is typically realized through violation of a linguistic taboo. Allan and Burridge (2006: 1) list the following culturally universal taboos:

1. Bodies and their effluvia (sweat, snot, feces, menstrual fluid, etc.);
2. The organs and acts of sex, micturition, and defecation;
3. Diseases, death, and killing (including hunting and fishing);

4. Naming, addressing, touching, and viewing persons and sacred beings, objects, and places; and

5. Food gathering, preparation, and consumption.

The aim of this article is to investigate another swearing-related theme which is commonly used in insulting, namely, animal metaphors (zoosemes). Animal metaphors used for human beings have been discussed, for instance, by Kiełtyka and Kleparski (2005) and Kiełtyka (2008, 2016). Zoosemy is presented therein in accordance with the Conceptual Metaphor Theory – as originally put forward by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) and Lakoff and Turner (1989) – which describes metaphor as a universal cognitive process involving systematic mappings between two distinct conceptual domains. Thus, in zoosemy, the source domain ANIMALS is used to access another target domain. The focus of my interest in this article is the use of animal metaphors for the category of HUMAN BEINGS. Thus, in the remainder of this article, whenever I refer to animal metaphor or zoosemy, I refer to this particular metaphoric mapping: HUMAN BEINGS ARE ANIMALS.

There are three main questions that this article sets out to address. Firstly, how significant are animal metaphors in English in relation to other themes of verbal aggression, such as scatology, sexuality, and invocations to the divine? This question will be addressed on the basis of a corpus of movie scenes featuring conflictive interpersonal encounters (Matusz 2015). Secondly, what is the level of universality of different categories of animals used in insulting? In other words, to what extent are different categories of animals used dysphemistically for human beings cross-culturally universal, and to what extent do they reveal culture-dependent peculiarities? Here, the analysis will be limited to the comparative data provided by Sacher (2012) and Miodek (2013, 2014a, 2014b). Thirdly, are animal metaphors used for humans predominantly dysphemistic? To answer this question, an assessment will be made of the ratio of dysphemistic zoosemes to the total set of English zoosemes. This problem will be addressed on the basis of Kiełtyka and Kleparski's (2005) list of domesticated animals from the classes of MAMMALS, BIRDS, and ARTHROPODS which are metaphorically employed for human beings in English.

The three questions are answered based on a significantly limited range of linguistic data. Nevertheless, it is hoped that the tentative analysis of animal metaphors proposed in this paper will highlight some meaningful observations that may be implemented for a more detailed discussion of dysphemistic zoosemes in the future.

2. Animal metaphors in linguistic insults

Jay (1992: 8) defines insults as verbal attacks on people which are carried out with a clear intention of harming them by invoking real or imagined charac-

teristics of the target(s). According to Allan and Burridge (2006: 79), to insult somebody is "to abuse them by assailing them with contemptuous, perhaps insolent, language that may include an element of bragging." Thus, insults constitute acts of verbal aggression, direct attacks on the face of the target. Insults may therefore be described as a bald on-record impoliteness strategy (Culpeper 1996: 356), that is, a situation where "the FTA [Face Threatening Act] is performed in a direct, clear, unambiguous and concise way in circumstances where face is not irrelevant or minimised," or – in Bousfield's (2008: 95) terms – a strategy which is designed to "*explicitly* attack the face of an interactant."

In insulting, the speaker may draw on different kinds of dysphemistic expressions. Allan and Burridge (2006: 79–85) enumerate the following common categories:

> Comparisons with animals that are conventionally ascribed certain behaviours:
> *bat, cat, fox, vixen, pig, cow, bitch, cur, dog, mongrel, louse, dove, hawk, coot, galah, chicken, turkey, mouse, rabbit, bull, ox, goat, ape, monkey, ass/donkey, mule, rat, snake.*

> Epithets derived from tabooed bodily organs, bodily effluvia and sexual behaviours:
> *asshole, prick, shit, fucker, poofter, arse-licker, cock-sucker, dipshit, wanker, whore, slut, slapper, slug*

> Dysphemistic epithets that pick on real physical characteristics that are treated as though they were abnormalities:
> *Fatty!, Baldy!, Four-eyes!, Short-arse! Weakling!*

> Imprecations and epithets invoking mental subnormality or derangement:
> *Airhead!, Silly!, Retard!, Moron!, Idiot, Cretin, Kook! Loony, Loopy, Nincompoop!, Ninny, Fool!, Stupid!, Halfwit!, Nitwit!, Dickhead!, Fuckwit!, Fuckhead!, Shithead!,*

> Dysphemisms involving sexist, racists, classist, ageist language:
> *mick, paddy, frog, kraut, hun, chink, jap, paki, polak, ayrab, towel-head, kike, coon, nigger, slope, gook, UFO,*

> Slurs on the target's character:
> *arsehole, asshole, bag, bastard, battle-axe, biddy, codger, crank, crone, cunt, dag, dick, dork, drip, dweeb, faggot, foggy, fuddy-duddy, fuss-budget, galoot, geezer, grommet, grot, grump, hag, nerd, pansy, per(vert), poof(ter), prick, queer, schmuck, scumbag, shirtlifter, sissy, slag, slob, slut, SOB / son of a bitch, tramp, twat, wanker, wimp, witch.*

It is the first of the categories presented above that is of particular interest in this paper. The dysphemistic use of animal comparisons arises from different features of appearance or behavior that certain animals are conventionally as-

cribed. Allan and Burridge (2006: 79–80) provide a number of explanations for the animal metaphors that they list. Hence, *bitch* is a nasty woman (or man) held in contempt, sometimes due to her promiscuous behavior. *Cow* and *sow* are typically used for an overweight, sometimes stupid woman. *Louse* denotes an irritating, unpleasant person who one wants to get rid of. *Monkey* is a foolish troublemaking individual, often a mischievous child. *Worm* and *toad* are used for people that one holds in despise.

Allan and Burridge's (2006) taxonomy suggests that animal metaphors are an important source of dysphemistic vocabulary employed in verbal aggression. This seems to be confirmed by Miodek (2013: 57), who, in his study of bird names as insults in German and Polish, cites the results of a survey he conducted among 78 German and 28 Polish respondents. In the questionnaire, the subjects were asked to state if they habitually used different bird names as insult terms. In German, eight words were analyzed (*Ente*, *Gans*, *Gockel*, *Hahn*, *Henne*, *Huhn*, *Küken*, and *Pute*), and in Polish, 11 lexical items were considered (*kaczka*, *kaczor*, *kaczątko*, *gąska*, *gęś*, *kogut*, *kura*, *kurczę*, *kwoka*, *indor*, and *paw*). The questionnaire among German subjects revealed that the terms that the subjects reported to use habitually included, in the decreasing order of frequency, the following: *Gans* (45%), *Pute* (35%), *Ente* (17%), and others (3%). The study among the Polish subjects resulted in the following data: *kaczor(y)* (40%), *gęś/gąska* (20%), *kura* (10%), *kurczę* (10%), and others (20%). What follows from Miodek's (2013) survey is that bird terms are a non-marginal category of German and Polish insulting, especially when the members of the category with the highest frequency are taken into consideration.

The present attempt at assessing the significance of animal metaphors as a theme of verbal aggression is based on a revised corpus of 103 contemporary English movie scenes compiled for a more in-depth analysis of insult terms in English (Matusz 2015). The film data consists of samples taken from 27 full-feature movies with realistic verbal aggression contexts and includes thrillers, horrors, action films with a number of situational comedies, and dramas. The full list of films is presented in Table 8.1.

Out of the films listed in Table 1, 103 movie scenes have been selected, featuring situations of verbal conflict between two or more interlocutors. One of the aims of this paper is to find out how many of these film scenes include animal terms used as insults. The results show that out of the 103 movie scenes, 27 samples include instances of dysphemistic zoosemes. This means that animal metaphors were present in 25.96% of the analyzed data. Taking into account the fact that insults may be realized by many directly taboo topics – such as imprecations involving sexuality, bodily functions, racial slurs, or hints at the target mental subnormality – dysphemistic zoosemes appear to be a non-marginal and significant theme used in insulting.

Table 8.1 List of full-feature films analyzed for verbal aggression scenes (Matusz 2015)

Alien: Resurrection (1997), J. P. Jeunet (dir.)	*Kill Bill* vol. 1, (2003), Q. Tarantino (dir.)
Anchorman: The Legend of Ron Burgundy (2004), A McKay (dir.)	*Kill Bill* vol. 2, (2004), Q. Tarantino (dir.)
The Big Lebowski (1998), J. Coen and E. Coen (dirs)	*Liar Liar* (1997), T. Shadyac (dir.)
Con Air (1997), S. West (dir.)	*Memento* (2000), C. Nolan (dir.)
Dumb and dumber (1994), P. J. Farrelly and R. L. Farrelly (dirs)	*Seven* (1995), D. Fincher (dir.)
Erin Brockovich (2000), S. Soderbergh (dir.)	*She's All That* (1999), R. Iscove (dir.)
Glengarry Glen Ross (1992), J. Foley (dir.)	*Sin City* (2005), F. Miller (dir.)
In the Loop (2009), A. Iannucci (dir.)	*There Will Be Blood* (2007), P.T. Anderson (dir.)
Jarhead (2005), S. Mendes (dir.)	*The Wrestler* (2008), D. Aronofsky (dir.)
John Rambo (2008), S. Stallone (dir.)	*The Wolf of Wall Street* (2013), M. Scorsese (dir.)

The animal terms present in the language data include – in the decreasing order of frequency – the following: *son*(*s*) *of* (*a*) *bitch*(es) (9 samples), *bitch*(*es*) (6 samples), (*pond*) *scum* (2 samples), *maggot*(*s*) (2 samples), *animal* (2 scenes), *horse* (1 samples), *cockroach* (1 samples), and *owl* (1 sample). All results with percentage ratios are shown in Table 8.2.

Table 8.2 Dysphemistic animal metaphors in corpus film data (Matusz 2015)

Animal terms	Number of zoosemic insults	Percentage of zoosemic insults
son(s) of (a) bitch(es)	9	33.33
bitch(es)	6	22.22
(pond) scum	3	11.11
pig(s)	2	7.41
maggot(s)	2	7.41
animal	2	7.41
horse	1	3.70
cockroach	1	3.70
owl	1	3.70
Total	27	100.00

A quick look at the results shows that the canine expression *bitch* in its different modifications constitutes over 55% of the animal insults present in the analyzed data. This suggests that the canine metaphor is a significant vector of insults. Therefore, a question which can be posed at this stage is about other particularly common animal categories employed cross-linguistically in insulting. This question will be addressed in the following section.

3. Cross-linguistic universality of dysphemistic zoosemic terms

The canine metaphor mentioned above appears to be one of the most important cross-linguistic trends present in dysphemistic zoosemes. *Dog* and related terms have strong negative connotations in many different cultures. Sacher (2012: 78-9) provides a number of dysphemistic canine expressions from around the world, here quoted in Table 8.3.

Table 8.3 Selected dysphemistic canine expressions (Sacher 2012: 78–9)

Language	Expression	English translation
Albanian	*Kak oudelic shoon!*	'You shit-eating dog!'
Arabic	*Ibn kalb!*	'Son of a dog!'
Arabic	*Bint kalb!*	'Daughter of a dog!'
Czech	*Syn psa!*	'Son of a dog!'
Dutch	*Kankerhond!*	'Cancer-dog!'
French	*Tête de chien!*	'Dog-face!'
German	*Dreckhund!*	'Filthy dog!'
Hindi	*Paagal kutha!*	'Mad dog!'
Indonesian	*Anjing kurap!*	'Ringworm-infested street dog!'
Italian	*Brutto cane!*	'Butt-ugly dog!'
Javanese	*Djancuk!*	'You fucking dog!'
Spanish	*¡Hueles a mierda perro!*	'You smell like dog shit!'
Tagalog	*Tae pagkain aso!*	'Shit-eating dog!'
Turkish	*Altmış köpeklerin Siz babası!*	'You father of sixty dogs!'
Turkish	*Kancik!*	'Dog bitch!'
Ukrainian	*Syn sobaky!*	'Son of a dog!'

Other examples of culturally universal dysphemistic animal metaphors include different mammals of the Bovidae family. *Dumb cow*, for instance, is a common insult in many parts of the world, especially for a female target (Table 8.4).

Table 8.4 *Dumb cow!* expletive in selected languages (Sacher 2012: 80–2)

Language	*Dumb cow!*	Language	*Dumb cow!*
Afrikaans	*Dom koei!*	Italian	*Vacca muto!*
Catalan	*Vaca tonta!*	Norwegian	*Dumme ku!*
Croatian	*Nijem krava!*	Portuguese	*Vaca burra!*
Czech	*Hloupá kráva!*	Romanian	*Mut vacă!*
Danish	*Dumme ko!*	Serbian	*Glupa krava!*
Dutch	*Domme koe!*	Spanish	*¡Vaca tonta!*
Finnish	*Tyhmä lehmä!*	Tagalog	*Pipi baka!*
French	*Vache bête!*	Ukrainian	*Nimyý korovy!*
German	*Dumme Kuh!*	Yiddish	*Behaimeh*
Hungarian	*Hülye tehén!*		

Another common type of animal insult terms comes from the family of Suidae. The pig insult is commonly used to refer to a dirty, disorderly, or obese man or woman and is present in many languages of the world, including, for instance, German *Du alte Sau!* ('You old pig!'), Italian *Sei uno vero porco!* ('You are a real pig!'), and numerous phrases denoting a fat pig: Albanian *Derr pista!*, French *Tu gros porc!*, Icelandic *Þú feitur svín!*, Norwegian *Du feit gris!*, Spanish *¡Chancha!*, and Swahili *Wewe mafuta nguruwe!* (Sacher 2012: 83–9).

Sacher (2012: 83–84) discusses also the category of *donkey* as another fairly universal animal swearing term. Different insult terms from this category include Arabic *hemaar*, Hindi *gadhā*, Persian *khar*, Turkish *eşek*, and Polish *osioł*.

A contrastive analysis of different animal terms used in insulting has been carried out by Miodek (2013, 2014a, 2014b). Miodek (2013) investigates the names for birds used as abuse terms in German and Polish. The German terms include *Ente* ('duck'), *Gans* ('goose'), *Gockel/Hahn* ('cockerel'), *Henne/Huhn* ('hen'), *Küken* ('chick'), and *Pute* ('turkey'). The Polish terms include *kaczka* ('duck'), *kaczor* ('drake'), *gąska* ('little goose'), *kogut* ('cockerel'), *kura* ('hen'), *kurczę* ('chicken'), and *kwoka* ('sitter'). A study of house animals as swearwords in German, Polish, and Spanish is undertaken by Miodek (2014a) and includes, for German, *Ackergaul* ('plowhorse'), *Bulle* ('bull'), *Dackel* ('dachshund'), *Esel* ('donkey'), *Ferkel* ('piglet'), *Hengst* ('stallion'), *Hund* ('dog'), *Kalb* ('calf'), *Katze* ('cat'), *Kuh* ('cow'), *Maulesel* ('mule'), *Ochse* ('ox'), *Pferd* ('horse'), *Rammler* ('buck'), *Sau* ('pig'), *Schaf* ('sheep'), *Schwein* ('swine'), *Stier* ('bull'), and *Ziege* ('goat'). Among Polish terms Miodek discusses *baran* ('ram'), *kozioł/cap* ('he-goat'), *byk* ('bull'), *osioł* ('donkey'), *prosię* ('piglet'), *ogier* ('stud'), *pies* ('dog'), *cielę* ('calf'), *kot* ('cat'), *krowa* ('cow'), *muł* ('mule'), *wół* ('ox'), *owca* ('sheep'), *świnia* ('swine'), *koza* ('goat'), *wieprz* ('hog'), *suka* ('bitch'), and *szkapa* ('nag'). Spanish terms include *burro* ('donkey'), *semental* ('stallion'), *perro* ('dog'), *vaca* ('cow'), *mula* ('she-mule'), *buey* ('ox'), *coneja* ('she-rabbit'), *cerdo* ('swine'), *cabra* ('zebra'),

cabrón ('he-goat'), and *perra* ('bitch'). Miodek (2014b) conducts a study of the terms for wild animals, fish, reptiles, and amphibians used as insults in German, Polish, and Spanish. The terms analyzed are presented in Table 8.5 with their English translation.

Table 8.5 Names of wild animals, fish, reptiles, and amphibians used as insult terms in German, Polish, and Spanish (Miodek 2014b)

German	Polish	Spanish	English translation
Wild animals			
Äffchen			'little ape'
Affe	*małpa*	*mono*	'monkey'
Bär	*niedźwiedź*		'bear'
Dachs	*borsuk*		'badger'
Elefant	*słoń*	*elefante*	'elephant'
Frettchen			'ferret'
Fuchs	*lis*	*zorro*	'fox'
Giraffe	*żyrafa*	*jirafa*	'giraffe'
Gorilla	*goryl*		'gorilla'
Hase	*zając*		'hare'
Hirsch			'deer'
Hyäne	*hyena*	*hyena*	'hyena'
Igel			'eagle'
Löwe	*lew*		'lion'
Marder			'marten'
Maus	*mysz/myszka*		'mouse'
Mäuschen			'little mouse'
Muffel			'mouflon'
Murmeltier	*suseł*		'marmot'
Nilpferd	*hipopotam*	*hipopotamo*	'hippopotamus'
Pavian			'baboon'
Ratte	*szczur*	*rata*	'rat'
Rhinozeros			'rhino'
Wiesel			'weasel'
Wolf	*wilk*		'wolf'
	miś/misiu/misiek		'little bear'
		ballena	'whale'
		foca	'seal'
		lince	'lynx'

Table 8.5 continued

German	Polish	Spanish	English translation
		loba	'she-wolf'
		tigre	'tiger'
		zorra	'she-fox'
Fish			
Aal	*węgorz*	*anquila*	'eel'
Fisch	*ryba*		'fish'
Hai	*rekin*	*tiburón*	'shark'
Hecht			'pike'
Hering			'herring'
Karpf			'carp'
Piranha			'piranha'
	leszcz		'bream'
	piskorz		'weatherfish'
		besugo	'sea bream'
Reptiles			
Blindschleiche	*padalec*		'slow worm'
Chamäleon	*kameleon*	*cameleon*	'chameleon'
Natter	*żmija*	*culebra*	'adder'
Reptil	*gad*		'reptile'
Schlange		*víbora*	'snake'
Amphibians			
Frosch	*żaba*	*rana*	'frog'
Kröte/Unke	*ropucha*	*sapo*	'toad'
Molch			'salamander'

In general, Miodek's (2013, 2014b) analysis confirms the claim of a significantly consistent usage of particular instances of animal insults across different languages. The analysis of bird terms employed as insults in German and Polish (Miodek 2013) shows that in both Polish and German, *Ente/kaczka* may designate a plump, typically female person who moves in an ungainly way. *Gans/gęś* is identified with a foolish or stupid person, as is *Pute/indyk* with reference to a man. *Gockel/kogut* in both languages has, predominantly dysphemistic, sexual connotations. *Henne/kura* may be used for a stupid, dull, often unambitious woman, as in the case of German *blöde Henne* or Polish *kura domowa*. Miodek's (2014a) study of house animals also shows strong resemblances between German, Polish, and Spanish. The terms for a dog (*Hund*, *pies*, and *perro*, respectively) in the three languages are commonly used for persons

of perceived or supposed negative characteristics. *Esel/osioł/burro* is used for a dumb, often stubborn individual. *Kuh/krowa/vaca* is typically employed for an overweight, often unintelligent woman. *Sau/świnia/cerdo* designates a nasty dirty and uncultured person. Both in German and in Polish, the terms *Kalb* and *cielę*, respectively, refer to an immature, inexperienced, possibly stupid person. In Polish and Spanish, the terms for an ox (*wół* and *buey*) refer – often dysphemistically – to a dim-witted, hard working man. Similarly, the study of wild animals, fish, reptiles, and amphibians as insult terms (Miodek 2014b) reveals significant similarities between German, Polish, and Spanish. *Elefant/słoń/elefante* is typically employed for a heavy or overweight person, as is *Nilpferd/hipopotam/hipopotamo*. *Affe/małpa/mono* is often used for a dumb or uncultured person. *Ratte/szczur/rata* is employed for a despicable, worthless, or off-putting individual. *Hyäne/hyena/hyena* is an unscrupulous, mean person, much in the same way as *Hai/rekin/tiburón* is in a business context. *Natter/ żmija/culebra* may designate a false, aggressive, or despicable man or woman, while *Kröte/ropucha/sapo* stands for a person who is stupid, ugly, or otherwise held in contempt.

Taking the above discussion into account, it is fair to say that certain categories of dysphemistic animal metaphors seem to be significantly universal across different languages. These include, for instance, *dog*, *pig*, *donkey*, and *cow*. Other commonly despicable animals are members of the category of reptiles or amphibians (e.g., *snake*, *frog*, and *toad*), or vermin, (e.g., *rat* and *worm*). These terms appear to be significant vectors of dysphemistic animal metaphors.

4. Cross-linguistic peculiarities of dysphemistic zoosemy

Although the main dysphemistic zoosemic categories appear to be fairly consistent across different languages, there are a number of cross-cultural peculiarities pertaining to animal metaphors. While certain categories of insults, such as bodily effluvia and illnesses, seem to constitute universally-recognized themes of disgust, animal metaphors – perhaps due to the lack of inherent biologically-based motivation for their revoltingness – reveal a higher degree of dependency on their cultural context. This claim can perhaps be best illustrated by providing examples of animal metaphors which, while positive in one cultural context, have acquired negative connotations in another one. In many Western languages, to call somebody a lion is to refer to their strength and bravery. This stands in contrast to Arabic, where, as Sacher (2012: 17) points out, *ibn il-labwa* ('son of a lioness') may serve as a formidable insult. In Hindi, *ullu* (owl) does not denote wisdom, but ignorance (Sacher 2012: 93). While *orzeł* (eagle) has strong positive connotations in Polish, in German, the term

Igel is often used dysphemistically for a mischievous, aggressive person, often a child (Miodek 2014b: 212). Miodek (2014a: 231) points out that certain terms of animals which have acquired a negative meaning in Polish and in German may be used in Spanish in a positive sense. Such is the case with *perro* (dog), which can be used for a clever, entrepreneurial person. Speakers of different languages naturally differ in the range of dysphemistic features they ascribe to particular members of the animal kingdom. While in German and Polish the terms *Ziege* and *koza* are often employed to refer to a stupid, underappreciated woman, Spanish *cabra* is used for a crazy person. German *Hirsch* designates a disorderly or stupid male. In Polish the term *jeleń* has acquired the meaning of a husband who has been a victim of cuckoldry. *Ratte* in German and *szczur* in Polish is a worthless, despicable person, while in Spanish *rata* designates an angry individual (Miodek 2014a, 2014b). Also, while *Bär/niedźwiedź* in German and Polish, respectively, is often used for a tall, heavy, clumsy man, the Turkish equivalent *ayi* is a considerable insult that refers to a rude person, mostly an ignorant male. Sacher (2012: 19) reports on a curious Chinese comparison *Nide muchin shr ega da wukwei*, which translates into English as 'Your mother is a giant freshwater turtle.' This expression evokes the idea of the target's mother sexual promiscuity and the possibility of her offspring being illegitimate, perhaps due to the visual similarity between a turtle's head emerging from its shell and a man's penis.

These discrepancies between terms in different languages may often depend on the immediate social or political context of their use. For instance, while in German the term *Ente* (duck) is used to designate a person with a wobbly walk, in Polish, the term *kaczka* has – for many speakers – acquired a secondary dysphemistic sense due to its phonological similarity to the surname of Jarosław Kaczyński, the chairman of a leading political party. At times, this secondary dysphemistic meaning may overshadow the original insult, as proved by the fact that in Miodek's (2013) survey of bird names as swearwords among Polish speakers, the term *kaczor(y)* was the most frequently reported term, with 40% report rate.

Certain peculiarities in using animal terms as insults may be connected with the general features of a given language. Miodek's (2014a, 2014b) comparative analysis of animal insults in German, Polish, and Spanish shows that while Polish and Spanish may have substantive compounds, in German there are a huge number of compounds with animal terms. Miodek (2014a) lists 92 such examples. Compounds with *Bulle* (bull) include, for instance, *Drecksbulle*, *Geheimbulle*, *Grenzbulle*, *Kammerbulle*, *Küchenbulle*, *Polizeibulle*, *Sexbulle*, *Sittenbulle*, *Bullenbeißer*. A total of 126 examples of animal compounds, including – among many others – *Aprilaffe*, *Angsthase*, *Finanzhyäne*, *Schmutzigel*, *Wühlmaus*, *Kanalratte*, *Blindfisch*, *Bankenhei*, *Giftnatter*, and *Dreckmolch*, are cited by Miodek (2014b). The process of compounding is much less productive

in Polish and Spanish animal insults. It is also important to point out that in German swearwords, it is possible to combine names of two different animals within one nominal compound, as in *Saubulle*, *Schweinhund*, *Bullenschwein* and *Sauigel*.

An interesting case is Chinese swearing, where many dysphemistic terms seem to rely on the mechanisms of language homonymy. Sacher (2012: 93–4) discusses the frequent use of puns in Chinese swearing practices. The word *niao* ('bird') rhymes with the word for penis. Thus, *niao* has turned into a euphemism for *fuck*. This has given rise to expressions such as *woniaoni!* ('fuck you!'), *niaohua!* ('bird talk / bullshit'), and *niaoren!* ('bird person / fucking asshole'). As Merlan (2006: 465) points out, this use of homonymy is a common practice of insulting employed in a number of Southeast Asian languages.

5. Dysphemistic and non-dysphemistic zoosemes

The preceding section highlighted a number of peculiarities concerning animal metaphors in different languages. While it is true that many animal metaphors are used dysphemistically in relation to people, some zoosemes may have a more positive or neutral character. As mentioned above, a good example may be the metaphor of *lion*, or Spanish *perro*, ('dog') employed for a clever, entrepreneurial person. Other terms may be used in a neutral descriptive way. A noteworthy question at this point concerns the relation of dysphemistic animal metaphors to non-dysphemistic zoosemes in general. The aim of this section is to try to assess the ratio of dysphemistic zoosemes to non-dysphemistic animal metaphors in English. In order to address this question, reference will be made to Kiełtyka and Kleparski's (2005) study of English zoosemy on the basis of domesticated animals. Kiełtyka and Kleparski's approach consists in creating a list of domesticated animal terms which at some point in the history of English have undergone some kind of zoosemic development. They enumerate 84 such terms from three distinct animal classes: mammals (70 terms), birds (22 terms), and arthropods (2 terms). The class of mammals consists of the following families/genera: Bovidae (10 terms), Ovis (7 terms), Suidae (8 terms), Equidae (20 terms), Canidae (15 terms), Felidae (7 terms), and Leporidae (3 terms). The class of birds comprises domestic fowl (12 terms), Meleagrididae (4 terms), and Anatidae (6 terms). The class of arthropods, in Kiełtyka and Kleparski's discussion, consists of one family, Apoidea, with two examples of zoosemic terms. My aim in referring to Kiełtyka and Kleparski (2005) is to assess the number of terms in each family which may habitually be used dysphemistically to refer to people in English. The results are summarized in Table 8.6.

Table 8.6 Dysphemistic zoosemes (DZ)/zoosemes (Z) ratio in English on the basis of Kiełtyka and Kleparski (2005)

CLASS	FAMILY/GENUS	MEMBERS	DZ/Z
Mammals			46/70
	Bovidae	**bull, bullock, cow**, maverick, **heifer**, buck, **calf, cattle, ox**, steer	7/10
	Ovis	**sheep, ram, wether**, lamb, **goat**, buck, kid	4/7
	Suidae	**pig**, gilt, **pork, swine, hog, sow**, boar, **shoat**	6/8
	Equidae	horse, jade, stallion, cob, foal, colt, filly, **mare, gelding**, mustang, **nag, stud**, thoroughbred, **tit, hack**, harridan, **donkey, ass**, cuddie, **mule**	9/20
	Canidae	**dog, whelp, cur, bitch, mongrel, mutt, hound, pup, puppy, tyke, houndsfoot, turnspit, hangdog, dogbolt, trundle-tail**	15/15
	Felidae	**cat, alley cat**, kitten, puss, **pussy**, pussycat, tabby	3/7
	Leporidae	**rabbit**, bunny, **cony**	2/3
Birds			10/22
	Meleagrididae	**turkey**, tom, poult, **gobbler**	2/4
	Anatidae	**(lame) duck**, drake, duckling, **goose, gander, gosling**	4/6
	Meleagrididae	**turkey**, tom, poult, **gobbler**	2/4
	Anatidae	**(lame) duck**, drake, duckling, **goose, gander, gosling**	4/6
Arthropods			1/2
	Apoidea	Bee, **drone**	1/2
Total animals			57/84

Table 8.6 shows all domesticated animal terms which Kiełtyka and Kleparski (2005) identify as possessing a zoosemic component. The bold print indicates those members which reveal clear dysphemistic qualities in English, that is, the terms which, when used in relation to people, may constitute insults. For instance, in the Bovidea family, the terms *bull*, *bullock*, *cow*, *heifer*, *calf*, *cattle,* and *ox* can habitually be used dysphemistically in relation to people. *Bull*, for instance, may refer to a huge or overweight individual, also to a police officer in US slang. *Calf* is a stupid, possibly young and inexperienced, sometimes meek individual. *Cattle* usually refers to a group of people in a dysphemistic way, and *ox* designates a foolish or stupid person. The **DZ**/Z ratio designates the relation of the dysphemistic zoosemes (**DZ**), that is, zoosemes with clearly dysphemistic qualities which can be employed in insulting in English, to the general category of zoosemes reported by Kiełtyka and Kleparski (Z). For example, in the Bovidae

family, seven out of the total of 10 terms can habitually be employed dysphe-
mistically to refer to people in insulting.

There are a number of observations which emerge from the above analy-
sis. Firstly, as Kiełtyka and Kleparski (2005) point out, it is the class of mam-
mals which constitutes the most significant source of human-related animal
metaphors. This may be explained by a comparatively high level of similarities
between the human being and other mammalian species, as opposed to, for
instance, the class of arthropods. Human beings are themselves mammals; thus,
different negative characteristics of people may perhaps be most successfully
linked to the perceived features of other mammalian species. Secondly, certain
families/genera of animals appear to be more popular vectors of dysphemistic
qualities than others. This may be measured by their DZ/Z ratio. In Canidae,
for instance, the ratio is **15**/15, which means that 15 out of 15 (100%) terms
reported by Kiełtyka and Kleparski as zoosemic may habitually be used for hu-
mans in insults. A comparatively high DZ/Z ratio can be observed for Suidae:
6/8 (75%). By contrast, the DZ/Z ratio for the family of Equidae is only **9**/20.
This means that only 45% of Kiełtyka and Kleparski's zoosemic terms reveal clear
dysphemistic qualities. Therefore, it may be assumed that different members of
the Caninae and Suidae families are better candidates for insult terms than the
Equidae family, whose members reveal more neutral or positive character. This
further supports the claim of some types of animals being more readily available
as source domains in dysphemistic metaphors. Thirdly, and perhaps most im-
portantly, the total DZ/Z ratio shows that the majority of zoosemic expressions
can readily be used dysphemistically for human targets. The study shows that
57 out of the total 84 zoosemes (i.e., 67.85%) listed by Kiełtyka and Kleparski
reveal clear dysphemistic qualities. What this indicates is that over 67% of all the
zoosemic terms for domesticated animals in English possess clear dysphemistic
connotations and can be used in insulting. This may imply that zoosemic terms
display a significant tendency for semantic pejoration.

6. Conclusions

Verbal aggression is a natural language phenomenon and, as such, constitutes
a proper and worthwhile subject for linguistic analysis. In humans, verbal ag-
gression typically takes the form of insulting, that is, "explicit [...] attack [on]
the face of an interactant" (Bousfield 2008: 95). Insulting may be performed
through the use of tabooed linguistic terms drawing on such topics as bodily
effluvia and body functions, invoking mental subnormality of the target, or dif-
ferent references to the interactant's race, age, ethnic background, etc.

However, among such swearing themes, animal metaphors prove to be a sig-
nificant source of dysphemistic vocabulary employed with reference to human

beings. A simple study conducted on the corpus of 103 contemporary English film scenes has shown that 27 samples (over 25% of corpus data) feature examples of dysphemistic zoosemes. This seems to be a considerable percentage, especially when one takes into account the range of taboo themes at the disposal of speakers of different languages. What emerges from the corpus examination is that some dysphemistic animal metaphors are more commonly used than others. The canine metaphor – *bitch*(*es*) / *son*(s) *of* (*a*) *bitch*(*es*) – was used in 15 instances (55.55%) out of the total of 27 dysphemistic zoosemic samples. The category of *dog* appears to constitute a significant source of dysphemistic animal metaphors in many languages.

It appears, therefore, that certain zoosemes are more commonly used in insulting than others. A simple cross-linguistic perspective – based on Sacher (2012) and Miodek (2013, 2014a, 2014b) – reveals that common animal insult terms include references to dogs, cows, pigs, donkeys, snakes, amphibians, and vermin. These themes can be observed in the insult repertoire of many languages around the world. The cross-linguistic universality of certain dysphemistic animal metaphors, however, leaves enough space for interesting inter-cultural peculiarities. Certain terms which reveal strongly dysphemistic qualities in some languages may have more positive connotations in others. Similarly, a given animal concept may cross-linguistically refer to different dysphemistic qualities. Also, insults in a particular language have to comply with the semantic and syntactic structures of the language, as exemplified by the richness of animal compound expressions in German, as opposed to Polish and Spanish.

Finally, it may tentatively be concluded that dysphemistic zoosemes constitute the majority of human-related animal metaphors. The present analysis of Kiełtyka and Kleparski's (2005) zoosemes of domesticated animals has demonstrated that as many as 57 out of 84 (67.85%) terms have acquired clear dysphemistic connotations. The zoosemes identified by Kiełtyka and Kleparski also have different levels of universality. For instance, the **DZ**/Z ratio for the canine family is 15/15 (100%). This means that all of the examples of the family of dogs provided by Kiełtyka and Kleparski (2005) may be applied as insult terms for people. For the Suidae and Bovidae, the ratio amounts to 6/8 (75%) and 7/10 (70%), respectively. In contrast, for the Equidae family, the **DZ**/Z ratio is only 9/20 (45%). This means that dogs, pigs, and cows are much better candidates than horses to be a source domain for insulting in English.

There are a number of research questions that emerge from the above discussion. Firstly, taking into account the limited range of linguistic material analyzed in this article, contrastive study of dysphemistic animal metaphors in English and other languages could certainly benefit from a wider range of linguistic data. Secondly, a more in-depth study of particular animal categories could reveal the motivating factors behind some concepts being more universal in insulting than others. Thirdly, a more representative language data could facilitate more

comprehensive research into the relation between dysphemistic zoosemes used in insulting and animal metaphor in general. Fourthly, it would be noteworthy to study the reasons behind the fact that animal metaphors constitute a significant category of insulting alongside other themes of dysphemistic and tabooed expressions. These and other questions will hopefully be explored in more detail by subsequent analyses of the problems pertaining to animal metaphors and verbal aggression.

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