

Negative polarity idioms in Modern English¹

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This paper examines the nature of negative polarity idioms (henceforward NPIDs), that is, idiomatic constructions which, because of their nature, always occur in the negative form and express a negative meaning. A dataset with 550 entries of these expressions was compiled. They were selected from general and specialised dictionaries as well as from several phrase and grammar books. They were then classified according to the type of negation expressed (clause or constituent negation), syntactic pattern, meaning and register or social language variety where they occurred. In spite of the problems and limitations found, it is shown that NPIDs can be described and systematised. The article concludes by highlighting the importance of negative polarity idioms as a central area within the general English polarity system.

1 Introduction

In the last few years considerable attention has been paid to the system of negation (Tottie 1991; Bernini and Ramat 1992; Acquaviva 1992; Haegeman 1993, 1995; Progovac 1992, 1994; Ojea 1994). However, NPIDs, that is, idiomatic constructions which, because of their nature, always occur in the negative form and express a negative meaning (eg *Rome was not built in a day*) have generally been neglected. Jespersen (1917) devotes some pages to NPIDs, but he is more interested in explaining their meaning and emphasising their intensifying character than in analysing them in great depth. Bolinger² (1977), on his part, shows that there are important restrictions in the use of *not*-negation and *no*-negation in idiomatic constructions, with a high preference for *no*-negation.³ Some years later Tottie (1991) confirms Bolinger's hypothesis; her quantitative analysis, however, does not go any further than this. Bosque (1980) includes a brief study of some of these expressions in Spanish, but he is especially concerned with coming up with a serious proposal which may provide a sound explanation for idiomatic constructions within a general theory of transformational linguistics⁴.

It is my objective then to concentrate specifically on idioms with negative polarity and to examine them in close detail from both a semantic and a syntactic perspective. In earlier research on negation⁵, I pointed out the existence of a fairly large number of NPIDs as defined above, that is, expressions that are always construed in the negative form. This means that their positive counterparts are either very rarely used or do not seem to fulfill their communicative purpose. This is the case, for example, with example [1]:

[1] Butter wouldn't melt in his mouth.

According to the system of polarity, [1] is undoubtedly negative; it is in fact a clear instance of sentence or clause negation, because the scope of negation extends over the whole clause and meets all the syntactic requirements to be considered as such (Klima 1964).⁶ In addition to that, the meaning conveyed is also negative. Its transformation to the positive (*? Butter would melt in his mouth*) is grammatically possible – no rules are broken – but is never used like that, at least in general standard English.

Apparently, the existence of NPIDs is not exclusive to English but common to some other languages, such as Spanish, Galician, French, German, Portuguese, Italian and so on (Price 1962; George 1970; Gaatone 1971; Bernini and Ramat 1992). However, this does not mean that perfect equivalents may be found across different languages. In fact, some NPIDs may pose serious problems for translation. Consider, for example, [2]:

[2] It's no use crying over spilt milk.

The literal equivalent in Spanish, 'No vale la pena llorar sobre leche derramada', may convey the general idea expressed in the English structure, but the communicative value and force are missing. In standard Spanish nobody would say that. The structure would have to be replaced by expressions such as 'A lo hecho, pecho' or 'Agua pasada no mueve molino', which do not always show negative polarity.⁷

The number of NPIDs in both English and Spanish is relatively quite high if compared with the number of idiomatic constructions existing in both languages; it constitutes about five per cent of the total according to my estimates. Savaiano and Winget (1991) list in their glossary of Spanish idioms about 2,000 instances. Ninety-three of them are NPIDs; this is equivalent to 4.65 per cent. Cowie, MacKin and McCaig (1983) include a total of 6,600 English idioms. 400 were found to show negative polarity, that is, six per cent of the total. Similar figures are detected in both Sánchez-Benedito (1977) and Seidl and McCordie

(1978). It is important to mention, however, that the majority of idioms may show both positive and negative polarity:⁸

[3a] It's raining cats and dogs.

[3b] It's not raining cats and dogs.

[4a] Peter beat about the bush the other day.

[4b] Peter didn't beat about the bush the other day.

In spite of this, it is true that some idiomatic expressions show only positive polarity, that is, they are positive polarity idioms (PPIDs) in contrast to the already defined NPIDs:⁹

[5a] I could kick myself.

[5b] * I couldn't kick myself.

[6a] He has a way with children.

[6b] * He hasn't a way with children.

In some cases, the distinction between NPIDs and PPIDs is not clear-cut; that is, there is sometimes no correspondence between the syntactic structure of the idiomatic construction and the meaning expressed by it:

[7] There is nothing to it.

[8] Don't say that you're going for a walk in this wretched weather!

[9] I couldn't agree more.

[10] Don't tell me they are not home yet!

Examples [7] – [10] are syntactically negative, but the meaning implied is clearly positive. In fact, [7] and [8] are similar to intensifying affirmatives. The opposite case, that is, idiomatic forms which are syntactically positive although semantically negative, can also be found, but they seem to be fewer in number:¹⁰

[11] It's too good to be true.

[12] It all turned out very badly.

2 The study

For this paper, a dataset of 550 entries of NPIDs was compiled. Although my intention at the very beginning was to come up with a complete and exhaustive glossary of all the NPIDs existing in modern English, I soon realised that it was

going to prove a very difficult and time-consuming task. So it was deemed advisable to restrict this preliminary analysis of NPIDs only to a highly representative sample.

The expressions analysed in the survey were selected from general and specialized dictionaries, *Cambridge Dictionary* (CAMD), *Cambridge Word Selector* (CAMWS), *Collins Cobuild English Dictionary* (CCD), *Collins Cobuild Dictionary of Idioms* (CCDI), *Collins English-Spanish Dictionary* (CESD), *Larousse Dictionary* (LA), *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* (LDCE), *Oxford Dictionary of Current Idiomatic English* (ODCIE), *Partridge's Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English* (DSUE) and *The Penguin Dictionary of English Idioms* (PDEI), as well as from several phrase and grammar books (Wood 1964, 1977; Sánchez-Benedito 1977; Seidl and McMordie 1978; Savaiano and Winget 1991; Apperson 1993). These data sources can be considered as the most relevant and up-dated in the existing literature; they contain innumerable idiomatic expressions. Thus, each of the entries listed in these works was first studied manually. Once the NPIDs were singled out and compiled, a data-base was devised that contained all the key features criterial for their study and classification. These properties can be stated as follows:

- a) *Source*. Here the dictionary, or any of the other reference works from which the NPID entry had been extracted, was stated.
- b) *Type of negation expressed*: clause or constituent negation. Within clause negation, a further distinction was made, when possible, between *not negation* and *no negation* instances.
- c) *Syntactic pattern/structure*. This was represented by categories such as NP, VP, AdjP, AdvP, Clause (henceforth, cl.), infinitive (henceforth, inf.), etc.
- d) *Meaning*. A careful explanation of each of these expressions was provided.
- e) *Spanish version*. The corresponding form in Spanish was given. An asterisk (*) indicated the existence of problems for the translation.
- f) *Semantic category*. NPIDs were classified according to a series of labels as explained below on the section devoted to the semantic features of NPIDs.
- g) *Register*. In most cases, the reference sources used mentioned the kind of context where the NPIDs occurred. When necessary, this information was contrasted and complemented with informal questionnaires administered to native speakers of English, who were asked about the degree of formality of the lexical constructions studied.
- h) *Example(s)*. One instance, at least, of each expression was collected. It was sometimes necessary to leave room for more than one single example, as some of the units surveyed presented different syntactic structures.

- i) *Other*. This was reserved for supplementary remarks or observations worth mentioning. Special indication was made when some of these NPIDs served to intensify a particular quality and/or were proverbs or catchphrases.

Although different characterizations of the notion *idiom* are found in the literature (Sánchez-Benedito 1977; Bosque 1980; Sornig 1988; Gläser 1988; CED; LDCE; Crystal 1991; Gramley and Pätzold 1992; Trask 1993; Asher 1994; etc), the definition provided by Fernando and Flavell (1981) was adopted, as it is very operative, clear and comprehensive. According to these authors, an idiomatic construction, to be considered as such, should have the following five properties: (i) its meaning is not the compositional sum of its constituents; (ii) it is a unit that either has a homonymous literal counterpart or at least individual constituents that are literal, although the expression as a whole would not be interpreted literally; (iii) it is transformationally deficient in one way or another; (iv) it forms part of a set of expressions in a given language; and (v) it is institutionalized. The first three attributes are the most relevant while the last two are secondary ones.¹¹ Witness the following syntactic unit:

[13] Don't put all your eggs in one basket.

Firstly, its meaning ('not to rely exclusively on one particular decision or action for success') is not clearly the sum of the meanings of its constituents. Secondly, a possible equivalent, such as 'Try several things at once and leave yourself an alternative if one of them fails', can effectively convey the same idea. Thirdly, it constitutes a fossilized chunk and functions in the language as a unit; that is, it is not liable to alterations of any kind, and if we insert or add any new word, the meaning of the expression changes completely.

[13a] * Don't put (quickly) all your eggs in one basket.

[13b] * All your eggs are not put in one basket.

[13c] * There are no eggs to put in one basket.

[13d] * It is eggs what we put in one basket.

Finally, this unit can be easily classified within the group of idiomatic constructions of the language, as it shares with them a series of grammatical and lexical properties.

The first part of the research was concerned with the syntax of the NPIDs, while the second was devoted to the analysis of their semantic content. Attention was also paid in the third section to the register or social language variety where they occurred.

2.1 Syntactic features of NPIDs

As regards the syntactic features of these idiomatic phrases, I started by classifying them according to the type of negation expressed. A distinction was first made between clause or sentence negation and local, subclause or constituent negation; secondly, within clause negation, a contrast was drawn between *no negation* (section a in Table 1) and *not negation* (b in Table 1). As discussed in the literature on the subject (see in particular Tottie 1991, Chapters 6 and 7), there is a series of obligatory morpho-syntactic, paradigmatic and contextual constraints that condition a certain type of negation over the other. However, there are also cases where both types of negation may be perfectly possible (c in Table 1) and even cases where the selection of one of these two negation types is not governed by any applicable factor (d in Table 1).

Table 1: NPIDs classified according to the type of negation conveyed

TYPE OF NEGATIVE	N
Clause negation	532
a <i>no</i> negation	116
b <i>not</i> negation	73
c both <i>not</i> and <i>no</i> negation	16
d does not apply	327
Constituent/Subclause negation	18

2.1.1 Clause negation

The predominance of *no negation* over *not negation* in the NPIDs under analysis clearly confirms previous studies (Bolinger 1977; Tottie 1991), and it may support the hypothesis that the selection of this variable could be related to the notion of register or, to be more precise, to the degree of formality of the language being used. Therefore, the use of *no negation* would be linked, in principle, with more informal varieties than *not negation*. Nonetheless, further research should be conducted to confirm this finding.

The idiomatic and lexicalised status of NPIDs is reflected, at the syntactic level, in the fact that the great majority of them can be defined in terms of a few, fixed syntactic patterns. Thus, nine main paradigms were identified. The ele-

ments in brackets in the following structures denote that they are either not obligatory or exclusive. This means that several combinations of units may be found within the same construction type. Three examples of each type are given as an illustration:

I NP + VP (*have*) + *not*¹² + (*got*) + (NP) / (inf. cl.) / (PP)

[14] I haven't got a clue. [NP+ VP (*have got*)+ *not*+ NP]

[15] The council didn't have a leg to stand on. [NP+ *not* + VP (*have*)+ NP]

[16] He hadn't a bean. [NP+ VP (*have*)+ *not*+ NP]

II NP + *not* + VP (lexical verb) + (NP) + (PP) + (...-ing) / (inf. cl.) / (wh. cl.) / (PP) / (AdvP)

[17] I don't know him from Adam. [NP+ *not*+ VP+ NP+ PP]

[18] That theory does not hold water. [NP+ *not*+ VP+ NP]

[19] Money doesn't grow on trees. [NP+ *not*+ VP+ PP]

III (NP)/(CI) + *be* + *not/no* + (AdjP) / (NP) / (PP) / (wh. cl.) / (AdvP) / (PP)

[20] She is no great shakes. [NP+ VP (*be*)+ *not*+ NP]

[21] As a director, he is not in the same street as Mr. Brown. [NP+ VP (*be*)+ *not*+ PP]

[22] It's no chicken feed. [NP+ VP (*be*)+ *not*+ NP]

IV *not* + VP + (NP) / (PP) / (CI)

[23] Don't put all your eggs in one basket. [*Not*+ VP+ NP+ PP]

[24] Don't pile on the agony. [*Not*+ VP+ PP]

[25] Don't cross a bridge until you come to it. [*Not*+ VP+ NP+ CI]

V *there* + VP (*be*) + *no/not* + (NP) / (NP) / (PP) / (-ing cl.)

[26] There's no smoke without fire. [*There* + VP (*be*)+ *not*+ NP+ PP]

[27] There's no shortcut to success. [*There*+ VP(*be*)+ *not*+ NP]

[28] There's no fool like an old fool. [*There*+ VP(*be*)+ *not*+ NP+ PP]

- VI NP + VP [mod. (*will*) + *not*+ Vb] + (NP) / (PP)
- [29] He/She won't bite you. [NP+ [VP (*will*)+ *not*+ Vb]+ NP]
- [30] That argument will cut no ice with me. [NP+ [VP (*will*)+ *not*+ Vb] + NP+ PP]
- [31] You will not make old bones. [NP+ [VP (*will*)+ *not*+ Vb]+ NP]
- VII NP+ VP [mod. (*would*)+ *not* + Vb]+ (NP) / AdjP) / (PP) / inf. cl.
- [32] I wouldn't want to be in his shoes. [NP+ [VP (*would*)+ *not*+ Vb]+ Inf. cl.]
- [33] He would not hurt a fly. [NP+ [VP (*would*)+ *not*+ Vb]+ NP]
- [34] They wouldn't lift a finger to help you. [NP+ [VP (*would*)+ *not*+ Vb]+ NP+ Inf. cl.]
- VIII NP + VP [mod. (*can*) + *not* + Vb] + (NP) / (PP) / (NP)
- [35] You can't get a word in edgeways. [NP+ [VP (*can*)+ *not*+ Vb]+NP+ PP]
- [36] I can't stomach him. [NP+ [VP (*can*)+ *not*+ Vb]+ NP]
- [37] You can't teach an old dog new tricks. [NP+ [VP (*can*)+ *not*+ Vb]+ NP+NP]
- IX NP + VP [mod. (*could*) + *not* + Vb] + (NP) / (AdvP) / (PP) / (-ing)
- [38] I couldn't care less. [NP+ [VP (*could*)+ *not*+ Vb]+ NP]
- [39] You could not see them for the dust. [NP+ [VP (*could*)+ *not*+ Vb]+ NP+ PP]
- [40] She couldn't believe her eyes when she saw what happened on the bus. [NP+ [VP (*could*)+ *not*+ Vb]+ NP]

In fact, these nine patterns can even be reduced to six, since, in the last four, the distinctive element is a modal verb, notably, *will*, *would*, *can* or *could*. This means, then, that the last four structures could be easily made into a single group.

In terms of frequency, pattern II seems to be the most common, followed by III with the verb *to be* as central element. NPIDs introduced by existential *there*-constructions are the least frequent ones.

Table 2 shows the frequency of the different syntactic patterns of the NPIDs identified. A miscellaneous group labelled 'Other' has been included to accom-

modate those idiomatic expressions which did not follow a specific pattern or showed a high complexity.

Table 2: Frequency of sentence negation patterns

SYNTACTIC PATTERN	N
I (<i>have</i> + <i>not</i>)	54
II (NP + <i>not</i> + lexical verb)	124
III (<i>be</i> + <i>not</i>)	112
IV (<i>not</i> + Vb)	51
V (existential <i>there</i> constructions)	38
VI (modal verb)	107
VII Other	46

Furthermore, it is important to mention that 125 examples, that is, 22.5 per cent of the total, were found to have an intensifying or emphatic function. This communicative value of negation is very rarely mentioned in the literature discussed so far. Most of the previous emphatic structures can be classified under patterns I and II:

- [41] There's no point in his entering for that scholarship; *he hasn't a cat-in-hell's chance of gaining it*. [NP + VP (*have*) + *not* + NP]
- [42] '*I haven't got the foggiest idea* what you are talking about'. [NP + VP (*have*) + *not* + NP]
- [43] When she was told that her father was dying, *she never turned a hair*. [NP+ *not* + VP+ NP]

In contrast, 15 NPIDs, that is, about 2.7 per cent of the total contained a passive structure (see Appendix 1).

- [44] 'Most people favour one or the other party'. *I wouldn't be seen dead in a ditch with either of them*'.

The low number of passives may be related to the fact that the majority of the NPIDs recorded were connected with speech, the medium of expression where

the frequency of passives is scarce (Svartvik 1966; Palmer 1987; Biber 1991). Furthermore, passive constructions are more common in formal language, and, as will be shown below, a small proportion of the NPIDs studied could be classified as such.

Apart from this, some of the NPIDs expressed a certain degree of comparison or contrast between two ideas. Quite frequently, those semantic notions were expressed at the syntactic level by means of a comparative or antithetical construction. Such comparative constructions occurred on twenty-two occasions; that is, they constitute four per cent of the total (see Appendix 2).

[45] 'What is one to do? *One must not be more royalist than the king.*

Finally, seventeen instances (3.9 per cent) containing parallelistic structures were also found (see Appendix 3). The majority of these consist in two syntactic units which are fully or partially contrasted. Consider [46]:

[46] It's not what you do, it's the way that you do it.

This divergence can be reduced to two directives and, in some cases, alternatives or options are presented by means of *neither* or *nor*. The two examples that follow illustrate the two phenomena just described:

[47] Waste not, want not.

[48] Neither a borrower nor a lender be, for a loan oft loses both itself and friend.

In this respect, NPIDs share certain formal features with other types of idioms, sayings, catchphrases, proverbial expressions and gnomic utterances in general, as they often exhibit rhetorical devices like parallelism, antithesis, use of full or partial rhyme, etc.

2.1.2 Subclause/Constituent negation

As mentioned above (cf Table 1), only 18 examples of NPIDs were found to show constituent negation. Broadly speaking, the frequency of constituent negation in modern English is significantly lower than that of clause negation. This may be explained by the fact that the occurrence of this negative type is generally restricted to cases of affixal negation¹³ (eg 'disagree', 'moneyless', 'untrue') and to a reduced set of negated syntactic structures, namely, content disjuncts, gradable adverbs and prepositional phrases (eg 'Not surprisingly, they did not tell the truth'; 'They work not far from us'; 'It was a house with no lights on').

The peculiar syntactic nature of these constructions is probably responsible for the even lower number of local negatives reported in the study. Furthermore, it is necessary to point out that some of the examples below, such as [51], [53], [55], may be considered marginal as regards degree of idiomacity. According to Fernando and Flavell (1981) and ODCIE, these expressions should be analysed as *semi-opaque phrases*, *restricted collocations* or *semi-idioms*, as they combine one constituent with a transferred meaning and one with a literal meaning. On this occasion four main paradigms were identified:

I - *no/not* + PP

[49] This tale comes near to being a masterpiece. *Not for nothing* was the author a sometime winner of the grand Prix de la Nouvelle.

[50] They are getting married, and *not before time*.

II - *no/not* + NP

[51] He did it in *no time*.

[52] ‘We got him *not a moment too soon*,’ the surgeon told me, ‘the appendix was badly perforated’.

[53] Under no circumstances, would we prepare to contemplate *no-go areas* in the United States.

III - *not* + inf.

[54] Peggy showed off her new dancing steps and Walter, *not to be outdone* in a matter of entertaining visitors, his prowess at handstands, cartwheels and backward somersaults.

IV - *not* + AdvP

[55] ‘Surely Jenny wouldn’t lie over a trifle like that.’ ‘*Not much* she wouldn’t. Lying’s second nature to her.’

V - morphological/affixal negative: noun + suffix

[56] I’m afraid he’s a dull, *colourless* man.

[57] Ordinary people are at the mercy of *faceless* bureaucrats.

Table 3: Number of times constituent negation patterns of NPIDs occur

Syntactic pattern	N
<i>no/not</i> + PP	7
<i>no/not</i> + NP	6
morphological negation	3
<i>no/not</i> + inf.	1
<i>no/not</i> + AdvP	1

As can be seen from the above table, the syntactic pattern [+ PP] is the most common followed by [+ NP]. Examples of morphological negation are recorded only on three occasions, two of them involving suffixation (*-less*) and one prefixation (*-un*).

2.2 Semantic features of NPIDs

As regards the semantic classification of the NPIDs of the dataset, the criteria and labels established by the *Penguin Dictionary of English Idioms* (PDEI) were on the whole followed; minor changes were made when necessary. Despite the limitations of a classification of this nature,¹⁴ this typology was adopted as it contains a total of thirty-three general categories including up to 260 subclasses. Moreover, to my knowledge, it is the only dictionary or glossary of idioms that uses this approach, since the large majority of them list idiomatic expressions in alphabetical order.

After a detailed analysis, the NPIDs selected were organised into twenty-six main categories: *mind, body, places, animals, work and occupations, food, time, life and death, money and valuables, numbers, school and education, illnesses and ailments, clothes, elements, weather, games and sports, trees and flowers, names, language, monarchy and Parliament, relations, tools, furniture and household articles, colours, weapons and other*. These were, in their turn, subdivided into 125 subclasses. As can be seen, the main categories cover a wide variety of activities, notions and objects directly related to the every-day life of English speakers and they are frequently linked to sociocultural values. Notice, for instance, the expressions ‘Peter is not my cup of tea’, ‘One must not be more

royalist than the king’, ‘Dog doesn’t eat dog’, ‘A watched kettle never boils’, which reflect aspects directly associated with English society, ie the importance attached to tea, animals and the monarchy. Their translation across languages will present serious problems, given the idiosyncratic nature of some of these constructions.

Table 4 presents the semantic classification of the NPIDs studied and the number of instances of each type. In addition, Appendix 4 gives a detailed account of each of the general semantic categories distinguished and of their subclasses.

Table 4: Semantic classification of NPIDs

SEMANTIC CATEGORY	N	EXAMPLE
1.- Mind	108	[58] Oysters? <i>I can't bear the sight</i> of them.
2.- Body	51	[59] I shall say what I think of him and <i>make no bones</i> about it.
3.- The world and its places	44	[60] ‘He got that job through influence, not on merit – what are you looking at me like that for? It’s true, isn’t it?’ ‘Of course, it’s true, but I was thinking that <i>people who live in glass houses shouldn’t throw stones</i> ’.
4.- Animals	39	[61] <i>He would not hurt a fly</i> .
5.- Work and occupations	29	[62] <i>Beggars can't be choosers</i> .
6.- Numbers and amount	26	[63] ‘He doesn’t <i>do a thing by halves</i> . He’s extremely thorough in everything he does.’
7.- Food	25	[64] <i>You can't make an omelette without breaking eggs</i> .
8.- Time	23	[65] <i>Never leave till tomorrow what you can do today</i> .

9.- Life and death	21	[66] 'You won't get way with this, you know'. 'Why not?' ' <i>Dead men tell no tales</i> '.
10.- Money and valuables	19	[67] She didn't want her daughter to marry a fellow who didn't have a penny to his name.
11.- School & education	18	[68] ' <i>Don't do anything I wouldn't do</i> '.
12.- Illnesses and ailments	14	[69] He didn't sleep a wink last night.
13.- Clothes	11	[70] <i>Clothes don't make the man.</i>
14.- Games and sports	10	[71] <i>The game wasn't worth the candle.</i>
15.- Elements	11	[72] That theory won't hold water.
16.- Weather	10	[73] <i>It never rains but it pours.</i>
17.- Trees and flowers	7	[74] <i>The ivy can grow no higher than its host.</i>
18.- Language	8	[75] <i>You can't get a word in edgeways.</i>
19.- Names	7	[76] <i>Not a word to Bessie about this!</i>
20.- Monarchy and Parliament	5	[77] <i>One must not be more royalist than the king.</i>
21.- Relations	5	[78] <i>Don't teach your grandmother to suck eggs.</i>
22.- Tools	4	[79] <i>I wouldn't touch sb/sth with a barge pole/ with a pair of tongs.</i>
23.- Furniture and household articles	4	[80] <i>A watched pot/kettle never boils.</i>
24.- Weapons	3	[81] It's <i>not worth powder and shot</i> writing to the Minister. There is nothing he can do to help you.

25.- Colours	3	[82] <i>Two blacks do not make a white.</i>
26.- Other	45	[83] One of the remarkable things about expert water skiers is the sincerity with which they insist how easy it is. ' <i>There's really nothing to it</i> ', James said. 'A sense of balance, a love of speed.'

2.3 NPIDs according to register

Finally, with respect to register, the expressions collected were catalogued into five main groups according to their degree of formality: *very formal*, *formal*, *neutral*, *informal* and *slang* (Quirk et al 1985: 27). The criteria followed for this classification were based on information extracted from the bibliographical sources used. This was supplemented with additional data obtained from questionnaires administered to a small sample of native speakers, who were asked to rate a series of idiomatic constructions according to the type of context where they most frequently appeared.

A large number of constructions, 258 to be more exact, were regarded as neutral. They did not show any special feature; that is, they could occur in either formal or informal social situations.

[84] They *weren't on speaking terms* last time I visited them.

In contrast, 246 constructions were considered as informal or colloquial; these could have other additional nuances such as pejorative, vulgar, jocular, facetious, typical of language used with children, etc.

[85] It's not very easy to get another job when you are sixty or over. *I shouldn't care to be in your shoes* (pejorative).

[86] 'I can't give you ten pounds for a trip to London, Jill. *Money doesn't grow on trees*, you know!' (expression used with children).

[87] I didn't look to see you here (vulgar).

[88] He paints quite well but he *isn't fit to hold a candle to* his brother (pejorative).

[89] Don't measure yourself by others' successes and failures. *Never let it be said* you've done less than your best: that is the standard to set yourself (facetious).

As expected, formal NPIDs are not very common, because idiomatic resources are rare in formal styles. They were recorded on only thirty-seven occasions, and slang NPIDs were restricted to eight; [90] and [91] illustrate each type:

[90] Don't give up. *Faint heart never won fair lady* – or anything else worth having either.

[91] 'If he's too proud to accept help, let him get on with it. *It's no skin off my nose*'.

Furthermore, it is also important to point out that 124 NPIDs, that is, 22,5 per cent of the total were proverbs (see Appendix 5), similar in form and nature to the following:

[92] Don't shout till you are out of the woods.

[93] Clothes don't make the man.

These popular expressions accumulate and convey folk-wisdom of various generations of speakers and from different areas of the language community in a short and figurative way. The fact that proverbs generally possess a transferred or figurative meaning, and cannot be taken literally, explains why they are analysed as idiomatic constructions. They normally have a pedagogical purpose (eg 'You can't get a quart into a pint pot'; 'Troubles never come singly'), or they may suggest a course of action or behaviour (eg 'Don't shout till you are out of the woods'; 'Two wrongs don't make a right').

3 Conclusion

To conclude, I hope to have demonstrated the importance and interest of NPIDs. No doubt, these expressions constitute a central area within the negative polarity system of English and, quite probably, of most languages. In spite of all the limitations and problems observed, it is possible to describe and systematise NPIDs from a syntactic and semantic perspective. However, further work should be conducted to get deeper into the analysis of the syntactic patterns identified as well as to improve the typology of semantic categories distinguished here. The pragmatic value of these lexical units, as well as the translation difficulties they may occasion to an average learner of English, will also deserve closer attention.

Notes

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2. For further information on negative intensification in modern English, see Quirk et al (1985:785) and Palacios (1996).
3. In *no*-negation clauses the negative element is fused with different types of 'indefinite' words, such as pronouns, adverbs and determiners, eg *I received no letters from them*. In contrast, *not*-negation is expressed by means of a free negative morpheme 'not', eg *I did not receive any letters from them*.
4. Bosque refers to two main pragmatic principles for the explanation of the exceptional nature of the NPIDs in Spanish: the principle of the scale (Fauconnier 1975) and the principle of the negation of the extremes. According to the first, NPIDs could be classified along a scale in the same way as quantitative superlatives. Thus, for example, 'No mover un dedo por ayudar a alguien' (*Not to lift a finger to help someone*) would represent the lowest point on a hypothetical scale that would be associated with the concept of 'ayudar' (*help*). The negation of the extremes theory allows us to make two large groups of NPIDs: those belonging to the inferior extreme (eg 'No ser moco de pavo', 'No andarse con tonterías') and those connected with the superior one (eg 'No ser santo de la devoción de alguien', 'No ser gran cosa').
5. This paper forms part of a larger study of the system of negation in both written and spoken English. See Palacios (1995, 1996 and 1998).
6. According to Klima, full negative clauses are characterized by four main syntactic features: (i) they can be followed by positive tag questions, eg *He doesn't work here, does he?*; (ii) they can be followed by negative tag questions with additive meaning, eg *He doesn't work here, neither do I*; (iii) negative disagreement responses may occur after these in discourse, eg Speaker A: *He doesn't work here*/ Speaker B: *Yes, he does*; (iv) non-assertive items may form part of the structure of these negatives, eg *He doesn't work here any more*.

Apart from this, there are two supplementary criteria which may be added to the previous ones: (v) the impossibility of the occurrence of these negatives with items with a positive orientation, eg **He doesn't work here pretty much*, and finally, (vi) the possibility of admitting a negative appositive tag with *not even*, eg *Nobody works here, not even me*.

7. Other examples of this kind could be: No more than the next man, ('Como cualquier hijo de vecino'), One of these days is none of these days, ('Un día de éstos es nunca') and the quite popular, You cannot judge a book by its

cover, ('No se puede juzgar por las apariencias: las apariencias engañan'). Sánchez-Benedito (1977) devotes two appendices of his work to idioms that are difficult to translate in both Spanish and English.

8. Examples of these in Spanish would be: *(no) dar gato por liebre*, *(no) tomar el pelo*.
9. In Spanish we also find a large number of constructions of this nature; to mention just a few: *Tener mucho cuento*, *Valer un Potosí*, *Ser papel mojado*, *Hablar por los codos*, etc. These expressions are always constructed in the positive form.
10. Spanish does not seem to be an exception to this rule. So, for instance, ¡No me digas!, is clearly negative in form but positive in meaning.
11. There are some lexical structures which only meet part of the requirements or properties mentioned above, but which are still regarded as idiomatic constructions. Several grammarians refer to this phenomenon as the degree of idiomaticity (see eg Gläser 1988). In other words, as is the case with most grammatical categories or classes, it is possible to speak of the existence of prototypes or prototypical items of a particular class versus marginal ones.
12. Following Huddleston (1984: 128), the negative particle *not* is considered to be part of the NP, as it cannot be moved outside the VP without making the structure agrammatical or changing the meaning. This contrasts with the behaviour of other fully negative forms or negative polarity items, such as *neither*, *never*, *yet*, *seldom* or *rarely*, which are more flexible as regards their position in the clause, eg '*Never have I been there*'; '*I have never been there*'; '*I have been never there*'. However, for practical purposes, I decided to keep *not* as an independent unit from the VP in the description of the syntactic patterns.
13. By affixal or morphological negation is meant the expression of a negative meaning by means of an affix, which may be a prefix (*un-*, *in-*, *non-*, *dis-*, *a-*) or a suffix (*-less*, *-out*). This type of negation always conveys local or constituent negation, as the scope of negation only affects part of the clause (eg He is moneyless; It is impossible). For a detailed account of this negative category, see Zimmer (1964), Marchand (1969) and Tottie (1980).
14. As most typologies which are based exclusively on semantic grounds, it may be highly controversial to decide whether a particular idiomatic construction should be referred to one or another category. At times the border line between these general labels may be quite blurred and, consequently, there are examples which may be associated with more than a single category. Take, for example, the expression '*It's jam tomorrow, jam yesterday*,

but never jam today', which are related to both food (jam) and time (tomorrow, yesterday, today). Moreover, it is sometimes almost impossible to group some of the NPIDs selected under any of the classes created, since they do not refer to a concrete notion and do not include a key word. This explains why it was necessary to operate with an additional group called 'Other' to classify all the NPIDs that did not fit into any of the other labels.

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Appendix 1: NPIDs containing a passive structure

- [94] ‘You don’t think I’m going to believe that story, do you? *I wasn’t born yesterday.*’
- [95] You shouldn’t start discussing controversial issues at a social gathering; *it isn’t done.*
- [96] *What can’t be cured must be endured.*
- [97] *Rome was not built in a day.*
- [98] No wonder *they said children should be seen and not heard*. With so many of them it would have been absolute chaos if they’d all been speaking at once.
- [99] The supermarket killed off his trade but his shop’s still there. *They’re dead but they won’t lie down*, both him and the business.

- [100] *Justice must not only be done, it must be seen to be done.*
- [101] Don't measure yourself by others' successes and failures. *Never let it be said you've done less than your best: that is the standard to set yourself.*
- [102] I thought *you wouldn't be seen dead* without a tie.
- [103] *Poets are born, not made.*
- [104] 'I'm your little bit of fun, *I'm the slice off the cut cake that'll never be missed.* You smug, hypocritical swine!'
- [105] But we can't change him, so we must make the best of it. *What's done, cannot be undone.*
- [106] 'Most people favour one or the other party'. *I wouldn't be seen dead in a ditch* with either of them'.
- [107] *No quarter was given.*
- [108] 'The teacher *was not tuned into* the feelings of his pupils.'

Appendix 2: NPIDs containing a comparative structure

- [109] As a director, *he is not in the same street as Mr. Brown.*
- [110] 'Surely Tom's thinking of making a match of it with the tailor's widow, he goes there so often.' 'Don't you believe it. It's the daughter he's after-*no fool like an old fool*'.
- [111] 'Do you think I should go back and live with Rob again?' 'You can try. *It's never too late to mend* and the breakup make have made him see sense'.
- [112] Ledderford is a place where to talk about holidays abroad is one of the almost infallible marks of the stuck-up, the high-and-mighty, who *are no better than* they should be.
- [113] The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that *I am not as other men are*, extortioners, unjust, adulterers.
- [114] If you are really interested in finding out more about local antiquities, *you couldn't do better than* have a chat with the Vicar.
- [115] She told me of his discretion: 'You could tell him everything and you knew *it wouldn't go any further*'.

- [116] ‘You do understand, don't you, that the operation will only partially restore your eyesight?’ ‘Well, even *half a loaf is better than no bread*’.
- [117] ‘What is one to do? *One must not be more royalist than the king.*’
- [118] The senior of the officials merely said: ‘Come on, *there's no time like the present*’. ‘No platitude has ever sounded to me more profound and original’.
- [119] He had no son. His heir *was none other than* William Pitt, then prime Minister and Chancellor of the Exchequer.
- [120] ‘Don't tell me you have a drink problem too?’ ‘*Not so much a problem, more a way of life.* It's my friends that do the worrying’.
- [121] Personally I feel a demand for simplicity in my Christmas music which has eluded many great composers. But *simplicity, like patriotism, is not enough.*
- [122] For this old trouper, *there's still no business like show business.*
- [123] I adore seeing the world. But, let's face it, *there really is no place quite like your own home.*
- [124] Robin went to the Yorkshire town of Holmfirth, where Monday's new comedy series was filmed, to see if the people there were anything like the characters on the screen. He found that- *there's nowt so queer as folk.*
- [125] She's a soldier's wife: cheerful, resourceful, warmhearted, adaptable, on top of life; a home maker; no theories, all practicality. ‘*They don't make them like that any more*’.
- [126] People think they have it under control, *thus far and no further* and so on, but how many people decide to be alcoholics, drug-addicts or chain-smokers?
- [127] You think he's a great scholar, just because he reads old manuscripts. How could he be a great scholar? *He hasn't enough imagination to come in out of the rain.*
- [128] I can't say I like Dr. Knox, but if I change him for another doctor, I may be worse off than I was before. *Better the devil you know than the devil you don't.*
- [129] *The ivy can grow no higher than its host.*
- [130] I have spent six hours interrogating witnesses and *I am none the wiser.*

Appendix 3: NPIDs organized in parallelistic constructions

- [131] It is essential that she has this medicine, and the cost is *neither here nor there*.
- [132] *No names, no pack-drill*.
- [133] ...a nation that prides itself on its *waste not want not* thrift and its environmental conscience.
- [134] *Neither a borrower nor a lender be... (for a loan oft loses both itself and friend)*.
- [135] *No gain without pain / No pains, no gains*.
- [136] No wonder they said *children should be seen and not heard*. With so many of them it would have been absolute chaos if they'd all been speaking at once.
- [137] It is very annoying that we do not always enjoy doing what is right, but *the fault is probably in ourselves, not in our stars*.
- [138] Be not afeared: the isle is full of *noises /sounds, and sweet airs, that give delight and hurt not*.
- [139] English spelling and pronunciation must seem to the foreigner to be totally *without rhyme or reason*.
- [140] *I haven't seen hide nor hair of Peter*.
- [141] *It's not what you do, it's the way that you do it*.
- [142] Bank of England backing might clothe a CSI with some authority. But the premise that *justice ought not only be done but seen to be done*, is much more important than the invisible, guiding hand.
- [143] The thirteen countries of Wales could not for a moment be expected of their own volition to focus on Cardiff; the last thing *the mountains* were prepared to do was *to come to Mahomet. It was for Mahomet to go to the mountains*.
- [144] Except in the sonnets and poems, Shakespeare's formal sense is disguised and does not threaten. No matter how wrong this idea might be, it does give the poet bobbing in Shakespeare's wake the momentary illusion that he might *be waving instead of drowning*.

- [145] By midday Tuesday I had the answers, a neat, typed list of names and addresses, and muttering *nothing venture, nothing gain*, I dictated a letter to go to all the club secretaries.
- [146] ‘*Those that can, do; those that can’t, teach*’ runs the despairing adage, and there is something of the same feeling about commentators. If he knows so much why doesn’t he have a go himself. In fact, commentating, like criticism or teaching, has little to do with one’s own ability as performer.
- [147] This is neither a game of chance nor skill. It is *neither fish, flesh, fowl nor good red herring*.

Appendix 4: NPIDs classified according to semantic subcategories

SEMANTIC CATEGORY: MIND	N	EXAMPLE
(i) senses (hear, see, etc)	10	[148] She <i>wouldn't hear</i> of his sharing in the expenses.
(ii) opinion	8	[149] ‘I believe our hostess has planned guessing games for after supper’. ‘That’ll be great fun, I don’t think.’
(iii) humour	7	[150] There is nothing worse than someone who <i>cannot see the joke</i> .
(iv) dislike/hate	7	[151] Enemy is rather a strong word to use. <i>I bear no ill-will</i> to Julius.
(v) feelings	6	[152] It is a small, young, and poor organization of lay volunteers and sympathetic clerics of all creeds, which gives advice and comfort to couples who <i>love each other well, but not wisely</i> .
(vi) surprise	5	[153] ‘Really, dear, I couldn't say when they went to the park. <i>Don't tell me</i> they're not home yet.’ Brigit shook her head.

(vii) advice	5	[154] You can fool/cheat/deceive/please/interest all the people some of the time, and some of the people all the time, but <i>you cannot fool/cheat/deceive/please/interest all the people all the time.</i>
(viii) ignorance	5	[155] You don't know a thing – you're <i>so ignorant it isn't true.</i>
(ix) reason	4	[156] The crisis is in and <i>there's no getting away from it.</i>
(x) confusion	4	[157] Oh, I like having a job. I <i>wouldn't know what to do with myself</i> if I was at home all day.
(xi) incredulity	4	[158] 'What were you up there?' 'I was head of the information department.' 'Well, I never!'
(xii) mind	4	[159] He must have been insane, temporarily at least. <i>Nobody in his right mind</i> could have reason to murder a whole family.
(xiii) fear/scare	3	[160] Rowdy meetings should <i>have no fears</i> for an old professional like you.
(xiv) will	3	[161] I <i>couldn't help</i> laughing.
(xv) suffering and woe	3	[162] He didn't <i>suffer fools gladly</i> and anybody not prepared to work 100 per cent for mark was a fool to him and he could be hard on them.
(xvi) err	2	[163] We shall insist on having every penny that is due to us, <i>make no mistakes about it.</i>
(xvii) worry	2	[164] I discovered that she had not eaten anything. I <i>was not unduly worried</i> by this, for some creatures when newly caught refuse to eat until they have settled down in captivity.
(xviii) indifference	1	[165] 'Do you realise the serious consequences that such conduct may have?' 'I <i>couldn't care less</i> '.
(xix) trust	1	[166] No, young Victoria. I'm going to have you under my eyes. I'm not going to take nay chances on your running out on me. <i>I don't trust you as far as I can throw you.</i>

(xx) risk	1	[167] By midday Tuesday I had the answers, a neat, typed list of names and addresses, and muttering <i>nothing venture, nothing gain</i> , I dictated a letter to go to all the club secretaries.
(xxi) other	23	[168] You know, <i>believe it or not</i> , you've got a funny kind of resemblance to a bloke I once knew in Shoreditch.

SEMANTIC CATEGORY: BODY	N	EXAMPLE
(i) eye	10	[169] 'It was all neatly and carefully planned. <i>Haven't you any eyes in your head?</i> '
(ii) heart	5	[170] 'In the last few weeks <i>your heart hasn't been in your work</i> . Would you like to talk to me about it?'
(iii) body	5	[171] Richard's novel was quite amusing but very light; it <i>had no body</i> .
(iv) head	3	[172] I <i>cannot make head or tail out of it</i> .
(v) hair	3	[173] When she was told her father was dying, she <i>never turned a hair</i> .
(vi) bone	3	[174] I have a feeling I <i>won't make old bones</i> , you know. I take after my mother's people and they were a short-lived family on the whole.
(vii) hand	3	[175] I'm <i>not much of a hand</i> at painting.
(viii) finger	2	[176] They <i>wouldn't even lift a finger</i> to save their grandmother.
(ix) face	2	[177] When I had signed the contract, I felt I <i>could hardly look Hugo in the face</i> any more.
(x) ear	2	[178] 'When Anne told me she had been married to my brother two years ago, I <i>couldn't believe my ears</i> '.
(xi) skin	2	[179] I almost didn't recognize Peter; he was <i>nothing but skin and bones</i> .

(xii) lip	1	[180] ' <i>None of your lip!</i> '
(xiii) nerve	1	[181] He goes at tremendous speeds on the racetrack without any fear. He <i>doesn't know what nerves are!</i>
(xiv) nose	1	[182] 'No one would think he's your son. You treat him abominably. Just because you <i>can't see beyond the end of your stupid, commonplace nose.</i> '
(xv) feet	1	[183] I never got over his savage piece of demagoguery when he murdered poor old George Lansbury. Neither Bevin <i>not I nor</i> any of us, Chris, <i>were fit to wash</i> George Lansbury's feet.
(xvi) stomach	1	[184] I <i>can't stomach</i> him.
(xvii) lungs	1	[185] <i>Don't breathe a word</i> to anyone about this; it must be kept a strict secret.
(xviii) cheek	1	[186] <i>Don't give me any of your cheek.</i>
(xix) chin	1	[187] Some people would say that as a poet Wordsworth does <i>not come up to</i> Browning's chin.
(xx) shoulder	1	[188] Some people would say that as a poet Wordsworth does <i>not come up to</i> Browning's shoulder.
(xxi) leg	1	[189] It would sort itself out, he decided, no one wanted a bypass, the council <i>didn't have a leg to stand on.</i>
(xxii) blood	1	[190] 'It's no good appealing to Uncle Joe. You <i>can't get blood out of a stone.</i> '

SEMANTIC CATEGORY: PLACES	N	EXAMPLE
(i) town and around	10	[191] As a director, he <i>is not in the same street</i> as Mr. Brown.
(ii) house	9	[192] <i>If you can't stand the heat, get out of the kitchen.</i>
(iv) world	5	[193] I <i>wouldn't leave</i> London <i>for all the world.</i>

(v) place	2	[194] <i>There's no place like home.</i>
(vi) Rome	1	[195] <i>Rome was not built in one day.</i>
(vii) island	1	[196] It is mainly because in the first flush of romance, we like to pretend that 'marriage means independence of other people' that it so often goes sour. <i>No man is an island</i> , nor are a man and a woman,
(viii) mountain	1	[197] The thirteen counties of Wales could not for a moment be expected of their volition to focus on Cardiff; the last thing <i>the mountains were prepared to do was to come to Mahomet. It was for Mahomet to go to the mountains.</i>
(ix) beach	1	[198] Peggy's just playing hard to get. Let her see she's <i>not the only pebble on the beach</i> and she'll act very differently.
(x) Ritz	1	[199] <i>You are not at the Ritz!</i>
(xi) Jericho	1	[200] <i>The walls of Jericho didn't fall down in a day.</i>
(xii) London	1	[201] Martin gets a lot of pleasure from his painting but I'm afraid he'll <i>never set the Thames on fire.</i>
(xiii) other	11	[202] 'Full House' hangs loose. <i>Things fall apart not because the centre cannot hold</i> but because there is a no centre to begin with – by which I mean there is no informing concept, no intellectual authority and no adequately defined editorial purpose.

SEMANTIC CATEGORY: ANIMALS	N	EXAMPLE
(i) birds	9	[203] 'That's an encouraging order you've just had, but it doesn't prove that our business will succeed. <i>One swallow doesn't make a summer.</i>
(ii) dogs	7	[204] 'It would be useless to appeal to the law Society about your lawyer's behaviour. <i>Dog doesn't eat dog!</i> '
(iii) horses	5	[205] <i>Don't put the cart before the horse.</i>

(iv) cats	2	[206] I'd rather live in this old house with all its inconveniences than in one of those pokey bungalows where you <i>haven't room to swing a cat</i> .
(v) insects	2	[207] One of the small dismal features of alcoholism is the way that the character degenerates. It doesn't always happen; there are those quiet gentlemanly chroniclers who <i>never hurt a fly</i> , and even the occasional saintly ones.
(vi) fish	2	[208] This is neither a game of chance nor skill. <i>It is neither fish, flesh, fowl nor good red herring</i> .
(vii) lynx and leopard	1	[209] <i>A leopard can never change its spots</i> .
(viii) other	11	[210] <i>You can't run with the hare and hunt with the hounds</i> .

SEMANTIC CATEGORY: WORK AND OCCUPATIONS	N	EXAMPLE
(i) law	8	[211] <i>Justice must not only be done, it must be seen to be done</i> .
(ii) theatre	4	[212] 'Surely Tom's thinking of making a match of it with the tailor's widow, he goes there so often.' 'Don't you believe it. It's the daughter he's after – <i>no fool like an old fool</i> '.
(ii) business	4	[213] Actually he <i>had no business to</i> give you any orders at all. You're not part of his command.
(iii) music	3	[214] <i>Don't shoot the pianist, he's doing his best</i> .
(iv) beggar	2	[215] 'You won't sleep very well on this couch'. 'It's all right. <i>Beggars can't be choosers</i> '.
(v) church	2	[216] He sets out to amuse by offending as many people as possible. He makes racial jokes, <i>nothing is sacred</i> and he is there to tell us.
(vi) tinker	2	[217] I <i>don't care a tinker's cuss</i> for her principles.

(vii) press	2	[218] <i>The camera cannot lie</i> perhaps, but photographic experts can do almost anything now by fading out some parts and superimposing others.
(viii) the police	1	[219] It's broken and I <i>haven't got a clue</i> how to fix it.
(ix) book trade	1	[220] 'It <i>may not suit his book</i> to take the carpet back. He may not find another customer for it so quickly'.

SEMANTIC CATEGORY: NUMBERS AND AMOUNT	N	EXAMPLE
(i) amount	8	[221] He <i>has not done a stitch of work</i> all day.
(ii) half	5	[222] We'll pull the place down and rebuild. <i>No half-measures</i> .
(iii) first	2	[223] <i>If at first you don't succeed, try, try, try again</i> .
(iv) hundred	2	[224] In the end I told her to give up – that she was wasting her money and would never learn to drive, <i>not in a hundred years</i> .
(v) two	2	[225] They don't <i>give two pins</i> for that.
(vi) quarter	2	[226] <i>You can't get a quart into a pint pot</i> .
(vii) million	1	[227] 'Will I be able to get a ticket?' 'Not a <i>chance in a million</i> .'
(viii) second	1	[228] Our medical staff <i>are second to none</i> .
(ix) sixteen	1	[229] <i>Sweet sixteen and never been kissed</i> .
(x) other	2	[230] <i>Troubles never come singly</i> .

SEMANTIC CATEGORY: FOOD	N	EXAMPLE
(i) vegetables	6	[231] Her parents objected to her marrying a fellow, who, they alleged, <i>hadn't a bean</i> .
(ii) cake	2	[232] 'You must make up your mind whether you want to buy a house with Uncle Tom's legacy, or invest the money. <i>You can't have your cake and eat it.</i> '
(iii) tea	2	[233] Camping <i>is not</i> at all <i>my cup of tea</i> .
(iv) eggs	2	[234] <i>Don't put all your eggs in one basket</i> .
(v) sausage	1	[235] 'Can't hear you, old man, <i>not a sausage</i> .'
(vi) butter	1	[236] I knew John had left his wife but not that he was living with Anna. You can't mean it! She always looks as though <i>butter wouldn't melt in her mouth</i> .
(vii) fat	1	[237] They <i>don't live on the fat of the land</i> there either.
(viii) beer	1	[238] Life <i>is not all beer and skittles</i> .
(ix) bread	1	[239] 'You do understand, don't you, that the operation will only partially restore your eyesight?' 'Well, even <i>half a loaf is better than no bread</i> '.
(x) jam	1	[240] ' <i>It's jam tomorrow, jam yesterday, but never jam today!</i> '
(xi) milk	1	[241] <i>It's no use crying over spilt milk</i> .
(xii) taste	1	[242] So office work <i>is not to your taste</i> , young man.
(xiii) sugar and sweets	1	[243] Carlo's my brother, the little one, he <i>can't sing for toffee</i> , though he's the dead spit of me, only not so gay.
(xiv) sauce	1	[244] <i>Don't give me any of your sauce!</i>
(xv) picnic	1	[245] 'We gathered a good deal of information from our expedition, but <i>it was not a picnic</i> , I can tell you'.
(xvi) wine	1	[246] <i>Good wine needs no bush</i> .

(xvii) pudding	1	[247] <i>Not a word of the pudding!</i>
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SEMANTIC CATEGORY: TIME	N	EXAMPLE
(i) day	6	[248] Hurry up and drink your tea – <i>we haven't got all day.</i>
(ii) time	4	[249] <i>There is no time like the present.</i>
(iii) moment	3	[250] <i>In an unguarded moment</i> Alison told me she had been convicted of shoplifting many years ago.
(iv) tomorrow	1	[251] <i>Never put off/leave till tomorrow what you can do today.</i>
(v) yesterday	1	[252] You don't think I'm going to believe that story, do you? <i>I wasn't born yesterday.</i>
(vi) May	1	[253] <i>Don't cast a clout before May is out.</i>
(vii) clock	1	[254] 'There I was, <i>nothing on the clock</i> , and climbing hard!'
(viii) end	1	[255] Meanwhile, the Shara desert grows, increasing its acreage year by year and within itself growing ever more desert – like as oases, unconserved, degenerate. And <i>the end is not yet.</i>
(ix) past	1	[256] That day that any politician stands up and tells us the real truth about our economic situation – on that day will I believe that <i>the age of miracles is not past.</i>
(x) other	4	[257] I thought this over for a week and then decided that I wouldn't wait; Janet Prentice might well be in trouble that <i>would brook no delay.</i>

SEMANTIC CATEGORY: LIFE AND DEATH	N	EXAMPLE
(i) life	8	[258] <i>Poets are born, not made.</i>
(ii) death	8	[259] (Bill is helplessly drunk). Mrs. Curry smiled graciously. 'You're quite all right, aren't you, dear?' she said to Bill. ' <i>Old soldiers never die</i> '.
(iii) hell	2	[260] So I said to myself, <i>hell knows no fury like a woman scorned</i> and it's no use telling Muriel at this moment that thought she was Elsie. That'll only make her vicious.
(iv) god	1	[261] <i>If God did not exist, it would be necessary to invent him.</i>
(v) devil	1	[262] I can't say I like Dr. Knox, but if I change him for another doctor, I may be worse off than I was before. <i>Better the devil you know than the devil you don't.</i>
(vi) soul	1	[263] It's the truth. <i>There's not a living soul</i> of my kin left anywhere in the world.

SEMANTIC CATEGORY: MONEY & VALUABLES	N	EXAMPLE
(i) penny	5	[264] 'When I first met Tom three years ago, he couldn't <i>rub two pennies together</i> ; look at him now!'
(ii) money	4	[265] <i>Money doesn't grow on trees.</i>
(iii) gold	1	[266] <i>All that glitters is not gold.</i>
(iv) farthing	1	[267] 'Haven't you any money at all?'. ' <i>Not a brass farthing</i> '.

(v) cop	1	[268] ‘What fee are they paying you?’ ‘20 pounds’. ‘That’s <i>not much cop</i> . Take your Income Tax and your fares off that and you might as well stay at home’.
(vi) change	1	[269] ‘She can complain as much as she likes about her misfortunes: she’ll <i>get no change out of me</i> ’.
(vii) other	6	[270] <i>You can’t get something for nothing</i> .

SEMANTIC CATEGORY: SCHOOLS AND EDUCATION	N	EXAMPLE
(i) rules and punishment	9	[271] ‘ <i>Do as I say, not as I do</i> ’.
(ii) arts	1	[272] ‘What’s the matter with me? I may <i>not be oil painting</i> but I’m all right in my way’.
(iii) writing	1	[273] ‘What did you think of the exhibition?’ ‘It’s not bad, but <i>it’s nothing to write home about</i> .’
(iv) manners	1	[274] You shouldn’t start discussing controversial issues at a social gathering; it isn’t done.
(v) sums	1	[275] He <i>counts for nothing</i> in this matter.
(vi) other	5	[276] <i>Nothing succeeds like success</i> – for a while at least – and publishers can be fairly certain of a good response to that book of an author’s which immediately follows his best-seller.

SEMANTIC CATEGORY: ILLNESSES AND AILMENTS	N	EXAMPLE
[i] blind	2	[277] <i>There are none so blind as those who will not see the truth.</i> Who has ever said that imperialism can be overthrown by a mere push of the shoulder?
[ii] pain	2	[278] <i>There is no gain without pain./ No pain, no gains.</i>
[iii] fever and colds	1	[279] 'If you got the opportunity of working with his research team, <i>you'd not sneeze at it</i> , would you?'
[iv] medicine and health	1	[280] 'How many new potatoes have you sold?' 'Oh, I don't know, but several pounds.' 'Several pounds! You ought to have sold several hundredweight, at least, or several tons if you want to persuade the inspector that <i>you're not in business for your health</i> '.
[v] other	7	[281] <i>Hard work never hurt anybody.</i>

SEMANTIC CATEGORY: CLOTHES	N	EXAMPLE
(i) cloth(es)	2	[282] <i>The emperor has no clothes.</i>
(ii) shoes	2	[283] It's not very easy to get another job when you are sixty or over. I shouldn't <i>care to be in your shoes</i> .
(iii) rag	1	[284] The old miser <i>hadn't a rag to his back</i> .
(iv) knickers	1	[285] <i>Don't get your knickers in a trust.</i>
(v) frills	1	[286] I would like a simple, straightforward account of what happened, <i>without the frills</i> , please.
(vi) patch and sew	1	[287] As a scholar he <i>is not a patch on</i> his predecessor in the post.

(vii) other	3	[288] You can trust me. I have told you the whole truth and I promise you <i>I have nothing up my sleeve</i> .
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SEMANTIC CATEGORY: ELEMENTS	N	EXAMPLE
(i) water	3	[289] Oh, she means well, but she's not my sort. <i>Oil and water don't mix</i> , no good trying.
(ii) earth	2	[290] He <i>hasn't an earthly chance</i> of succeeding.
(iii) fire	2	[291] <i>Don't have too many irons in the fire</i> .
(iv) sun	2	[292] <i>There's nothing new under the sun</i> .
(v) stars	1	[293] It is very annoying that we do not always enjoy doing what is right, but <i>the fault is probably in ourselves, not in our stars</i> .
(vi) other	1	[294] Asked if was short of money, he said: ' <i>Not by a long chalk</i> '. He said that he had 37 pounds in savings.

SEMANTIC CATEGORY: WEATHER	N	EXAMPLE
(i) rain	2	[295] You think he's a great scholar, just because he reads old manuscripts. How could he be a great scholar? <i>He hasn't enough imagination to come in out of the rain</i> .
(ii) ray	2	[296] I am so sorry but the doctor didn't offer <i>a ray of hope</i> ; it's very said.
(iii) hot	1	[297] 'How are you feeling this morning?' ' <i>Not too hot</i> , actually. My stomach's been upset these last two days'.
(iv) fog	1	[298] ' <i>I haven't the foggiest idea</i> what you are talking about'.

(v) ice	1	[299] That argument will <i>cut no ice with me</i> ; you'd better think of a better one.
(vi) lightning	1	[300] <i>Lightning never strikes in the same place twice.</i>
(vii) snow	1	[301] He <i>hasn't got a snowball's chance in hell</i> to win the competition.
(viii) wind	1	[302] <i>It's an ill wind that blows no good.</i>

SEMANTIC CATEGORY: GAMES AND SPORTS	N	EXAMPLE
(i) game	1	See example 69.
(ii) cricket	1	[303] <i>To be 100 not out.</i>
(iii) dicing	1	[304] 'Sorry, <i>no dice</i> . I can't lend you any money this time'.
(iv) fishing	1	[305] Her new boyfriend's <i>not much of catch</i> really, is he?
(v) rowing	1	[306] 'If Baxter doesn't <i>pull his weight</i> , we would be better off without him. He is putting too much strain on the rest of us.'
(vi) wrestling	1	[307] The Japanese wrestler, A.I., said in Tokyo yesterday that he might break M.A.'s arm- just to prove his fight <i>with no holds barred</i> against the heavy-weight champion was not fixed.
(viii) other	4	[308] All too often, the attitude of the workers' representatives, heavily outnumbered has been ' <i>if you can't beat them, join them</i> '. They've had to dance to the bosses' tune.

SEMANTIC CATEGORY: LANGUAGE	N	EXAMPLE
(i) word	8	[309] <i>He never uttered a word.</i>

SEMANTIC CATEGORY: TREES AND FLOWERS	N	EXAMPLE
(i) forest/wood	2	[310] <i>Don't shout till you are out of the woods.</i>
(ii) straw	2	[311] <i>I don't give a straw for his opinion.</i>
(iii) rose	1	[312] <i>I felt that I should explain to them that life here is not a bed of roses.</i>
(iv) grass	1	[313] <i>He says his publisher tells him there's a lot of advance interest in this book – he's working on the publicity side himself, making the right contacts and so on. Oh, he's cute, Alec is. He doesn't let the grass grow under his feet.</i>
(v) ivy	1	[314] <i>The ivy can grow no higher than its host.</i>

SEMANTIC CATEGORY: NAMES	N	EXAMPLE
(i) name	2	[315] <i>No names, no pack drill.</i>
(ii) Bessie	1	See example 74.
(iii) Joseph	1	[316] <i>Not for Joseph!</i>
(iv) Adam	1	[317] <i>I knew him when we were at school together, but that's many years ago. If I were to meet him today I shouldn't know him from Adam.</i>

(v) Josephine	1	[318] ‘Care for a drink’? – ‘ <i>Not tonight/today for Josephine!</i> ’
(vi) Nannie (or – ny)	1	[319] <i>Not on your Nannie!</i>

SEMANTIC CATEGORY: MONARCHY AND PARLIAMENT	N	EXAMPLE
(i) king	1	See example 75.
(ii) prince	1	[320] I am not in the least surprised that the boss has forgotten about your promotion. <i>Don't put your trust in princes.</i>
(iii) ceremony	1	[321] ‘Don’t wait to be asked but help yourselves to the cakes. There’s <i>no need to stand on ceremony</i> ’.
(iv) chivalry	1	[322] Rather grumpily he gave up his seat to her. ‘I’m glad to see, young man,’ she said as she settled herself with all her packages around her, ‘that <i>the age of chivalry is not quite dead</i> among the younger generation.’
(v) patriotism	1	[323] Personally I feel a demand for simplicity in my Christmas music which has eluded many great composers. But simplicity, like <i>patriotism, is not enough.</i>

SEMANTIC CATEGORY: RELATIONS	N	EXAMPLE
(i) child	1	[324] No wonder they said <i>children should be seen and not heard.</i> With so many of them it would have been absolute chaos if they’d all been speaking at the same time.

(ii) friendship	1	[325] <i>Now your best friend won't have to tell you. Surgeons in Denmark have come to the rescue of people who have serious problems with underarm sweating.</i>
(iii) grandmother	1	See example 76.
(iv) widow	1	[326] He won't do it for widows or orphans.
(v) other	1	[327] She claims that she <i>has nothing to do with her son's business affairs.</i>

SEMANTIC CATEGORY: TOOLS	N	EXAMPLE
(i) tongs	1	See example 77.
(ii) strings	1	[328] What makes the grant even more acceptable is that there are <i>no strings attached.</i>
(iii) pole	1	See example 77.
(iv) other	1	[329] <i>Don't rake the past; there are things that are better forgotten.</i>

SEMANTIC CATEGORY: FURNITURE AND HOUSEHOLD ARTICLES	N	EXAMPLE
(i) candle	1	[330] 'He paints quite well but he isn't fit to hold a candle to his brother'.
(ii) mug	1	[331] He is <i>no mug.</i>
(iii) kettle	1	See example 78.
(iv) drawer	1	[332] Peter is <i>not out of the top drawer.</i>

SEMANTIC CATEGORY: COLOURS	N	EXAMPLE
(i) colour	1	[333] We talked for over half an hour together, but nothing that he said stands out in my memory. I'm afraid he's a dull, <i>colourless</i> man.
(ii) white	1	See example 79.
(iii) black	1	See example 79.

SEMANTIC CATEGORY: WEAPONS	N	EXAMPLE
(i) powder	1	[334] <i>It's not worth powder and shot</i> writing to the Minister. There is nothing he can do to help you.
(ii) shot	1	[335] <i>No more shots in the locker.</i>
(iii) war and peace	1	[336] <i>There's no peace/rest for the wicked.</i>

Appendix 5: Proverbs found within NPIDs

- [337] I knew John had left his wife but not that he was living with Anna. You can't mean it! She always looks as though *butter wouldn't melt in her mouth*.
- [338] *Don't put all your eggs in one basket.*
- [339] Look! The sooner you realize that your money has gone, the better it will be for you. *It's no use crying over spilt milk.*
- [340] *There's no eye like the eye of the master.*
- [341] *You can't get a quart into a pint pot.*
- [342] *There aren't many flies on me*, and when I was younger I was even brighter.

- [343] 'Surely Tom's thinking of making a match of it with the tailor's widow, he goes there so often.' 'Don't you believe it. It's the daughter he's after – *no fool like an old fool.*'
- [344] *No man is an island.*
- [345] *All that glitters is not gold.*
- [346] A nation that prides itself on its '*waste not, want not*' thrift and its environmental conscience.
- [347] *What can't be cured must be endured.*
- [348] *It's an ill wind that blows no good.*
- [349] I know we did the same last year, but *two wrongs don't make a right.*
- [350] *You've never had it so good.*
- [351] *Troubles never come singly.*
- [352] Mrs Salad has to appear in court on a charge of shoplifting. Gerald Patter her shoulder. He could find nothing to say but "*Never say die, Mrs. Salad. It'll be all over soon.*"
- [353] *The leopard can never change its spots.*
- [354] If it be true that *good wine needs no bush*, 'tis true that a good play needs no epilogue.
- [355] It's no good appealing to Uncle Joe. *You can't get blood out of a stone.*
- [356] *Neither a borrower nor a lender be... [for a loan oft loses both itself and friend].*
- [357] When her name and the Duke's were mischievously linked in the Press, the Duke encouraged her husband to bring a libel action, from which he won 2000 pounds. Nevertheless many people shook their heads and muttered. "*No smoke-*".
- [358] *We never miss the water until the well runs dry.*
- [359] *There's nothing new under the sun.*
- [360] "Do you think I should go back and live with Rob again?" "You can try. *It's never too late to mend* and the breakup may have made him see sense."

- [361] I have tried to reorganize the company but it's hopeless. *It is 't worth the candle.*
- [362] *Crime doesn't pay.*
- [363] A wise historian usually stops twenty or thirty years before his time, because – like the rest of us – *he can't see the wood for the trees.*
- [364] *I cannot make head or tail [out] of it.*
- [365] We didn't reach it after all. But we will. Very shortly. *It's a long road that has no turning,* as they say.
- [366] *Don't cast a clout before May is out.*
- [367] *You can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear.*
- [368] When I was very young and first married I was very idealistic. But one changes as one gets older. Fidelity is not all that important. *What the eye doesn't see, the heart doesn't grieve over.*
- [369] *Don't you know a watched kettle never boils?* Whether they are late or early, looking out of the window won't bring them here any quicker.
- [370] *There is no shortcut to success.*
- [371] *You can't get something for nothing.*
- [372] *You can't have too much of a good thing.*
- [373] “You won't sleep very well on this couch”. “It's all right. *Beggars can't be choosers*”.
- [374] *Don't count your chickens before they hatch/are hatched.*
- [375] *Don't cross a bridge until you come to it.*
- [376] *Don't have too many irons in the fire.*
- [377] *Don't make a mountain out of a molehill.*
- [378] *Don't put the cart before the horse.*
- [379] When I was dismissed, the boss gave me a marvellous reference, but what's the good of that, now I can't get a fob! *Fine words butter no parsnips.*
- [380] Your classroom's been mucked up.” “I would be late this morning of all mornings.” “And it is all over the School”, she said, “You were supposed

to be on playground duty.” “Christ Almighty! *It never bloody rains but it pours!* I quite forgot.”

- [381] I was just trying to decide whether it would be a good thing to make my way to the pub with him or not – it was one of my mother’s maxims *never to look a gift-horse in the mouth* – when he started making little nibbling noises again with his lips, and I ran away.
- [382] *No gain without pain/ No pains, no gains.*
- [383] She was too worried to go across the passage for Mrs Batey’s comfort. Mrs Batey would tell her that *no news was good news* and that if there had been an accident, she would have heard about it all too soon.
- [384] That’s an encouraging order you’ve just had, but it doesn’t prove that our business will succeed. *One swallow doesn’t make a summer.*
- [385] With his talents I can’t understand why he hasn’t made it in life. Well, you know, *a rolling stone gathers no moss.*
- [386] *Rome was not built in a day.*
- [387] You must make up your mind whether you want to buy a house with Uncle Tom’s legacy, or invest the money. *You can’t have your cake and eat it.*
- [388] It is not difficult to count both the losses and the gains. *You can’t have omelettes without breaking eggs*, and I have no doubt that the omelette which eventually emerged justified the breaking of a good many eggs.
- [389] *You can’t run with the hare and hunt with the hounds.*
- [390] The young girls in the office soon learned how to use the teletext, but I just can’t understand it. *You can’t teach an old dog new tricks.*
- [391] *You may lead/take a horse to water, but you cannot make him drink.*
- [392] Rather grumpily he gave up his seat to her. “I am glad to see, young man,” she said as she settled herself with all her packages around her, “that *the age of chivalry is not quite dead* among the young generation.”
- [393] That day that any politician stands up and tells us real truth about our economic situation – on that day will I believe that *the age of miracles is not past.*
- [394] *The camera cannot lie* perhaps, but photographic experts can do almost anything now by fading out some parts and superimposing others.

- [395] No wonder they said *children should be seen and not heard*. With so many of them it would have been absolute chaos if they'd all been speaking at once.
- [396] "You won't get way with this, you know." "Why not? *Dead men tell no tales*."
- [397] "The parts shouldn't be too difficult to obtain." "I'll ring up in a day or two, then, and call or collect them." "No, *don't call us, we'll call you*".
- [398] Off on your holidays tomorrow, are you? Be sure to enjoy yourselves then, but *don't do anything I wouldn't do*.
- [399] DAVID: Anyway, what can you do with two hundred pound?
SAM: You can build up the business into a really posh layout; or you can take a world trip before you begin.
DAVID: *Don't make me laugh*, a world trip? You're living in the past. All I could do is buy a motor-scooter or eight new suits.
- [400] I happen to have read one of M. Orioux's earlier biographies in his own languages and can assure the reader that this tone is entirely his own. So *don't shoot the translator; she is doing more than her best*.
- [401] The last story concerns a European couple and the way in which the wife, seeking to immerse herself in India, still retains her ability to see that *the emperor* [in the guise of mysticism or eastern eroticism] very likely *wears no clothes at all*.
- [402] Don't give up. *Faint heart never won fair lady* – or anything else worth having either.
- [403] It is very annoying that we do not always enjoy doing what is right, *the fault is probably in ourselves, not in our stars*.
- [404] You can fool all the people some of the time, and some of the people all the time, but *you cannot fool all the people all the time*.
- [405] "Me a breakdown?" said Harold, as if a breakdown was a thing that only happened to writers with too much time on their hands, and too much money. "*Hard work never did anyone any harm*".
- [406] So I said to myself, *hell knows no fury like a woman scorned* and it's no use my telling Muriel at this moment that I thought she was Elsie. That'll only make her vicious.

- [407] *If colour film had not existed when Paul Newman hit the screen it would have been necessary to invent it.* The blaze of those blue eyes made him an overnight heart-throb.
- [408] All too often, the attitude of the workers' representatives, heavily outnumbered, has been "*if you can't beat them, join them*". They've had to dance to the bosses' tune.
- [409] *If you can't stand the heat, get out of the kitchen.*
- [410] The supermarket killed off his trade but his shop's still there. *They're dead but they won't lie down*, both him and the business.
- [411] Years ago when we read of the terrifying range of drug addiction in the US we thought *it can't happen here*. Well it hasn't yet [quite].
- [412] *It's not what you do, it's the way that you do it.*
- [413] Bank of England backing might clothe a CSI with some authority. But the premise that *justice ought not only be done but seen to be done*, is much more important than the invisible, guiding hand.
- [414] Certainly the Dorset business is an illuminating instance of a *governmental right hand not knowing what the left hand is doing*.
- [415] He says his publisher tells him there's a lot of advance interest in this book – he's working on the publicity side himself, making the right contacts and so on. Oh, he's cute, Alec is. *He doesn't let the grass grow under his feet*.
- [416] I thought that I should explain to them that *life here is not a bed of roses*.
- [417] *Lightning never strikes in the same place twice.*
- [418] "I wish I had a pound for every hundred he's got." "You're a lot better off than he is, son. I tell you, *money can't buy you happiness*".
- [419] What is one to do? *One must not be more royalist than the king*.
- [420] The thirteen counties of Wales could not for a moment be expected of their own volition to focus on Cardiff; *the last thing the mountains were prepared to do was to come to Mahomet. It was for Mahomet to go to the mountains*.
- [421] *Never put off/leave till tomorrow what you can do today.*
- [422] "*No rest for the wicked*", his mother always said. "But I'm not wicked".

- [423] The senior of the officials merely said: “Come on, *there’s no time like the present.*” No platitude has ever sounded to me more profound and original.
- [424] And as for education, *there’s no two ways about it.* The chances of working-class child going to University are still minute, compared with a middle-class child.
- [425] *There are none so deaf as those who will not hear the truth.* Who has ever said that imperialism can be overthrown by a mere push of the shoulder?
- [426] She’s a very irritable old lady, my mother. But she *does try not to let the sun go down on her anger.*
- [427] “Don’t tell me you have a drink problem too?” “*Not so much a problem, more a way of life.* It’s my friends that do the worrying”.
- [428] “Now, now, Mary. One is *not supposed to speak ill of the dead.*” “Why not, I want to know, if they deserve it?”
- [429] [The Nixon Administration, US] This is the way it ends. *Not with a big bang*, as many had feared. And not with an embarrassed sigh of relief, as others had hoped. *But with veiled accusations and self-justifying whimpers* from an Administration that finds the buck can no longer be passed on.
- [430] He sets out to amuse by offending as many people as possible. He makes racial jokes, *nothing is sacred* and he is there to tell us.
- [431] *Nothing succeeds like success* – for a while a least – and publishers can be fairly certain of a good response to that book of an author’s which immediately follows his best-seller.
- [432] By midday Tuesday I had the answers, a neat, typed list of names and addresses, and muttering *nothing venture, nothing gain*, I dictated a letter to go to all the club secretaries.
- [433] [Bill is helplessly drunk]. Mrs Curry smiled graciously. “You’re quite all right, aren’t you, dear?” she said to Bill. “*Old soldiers never die*”.
- [434] Personally I feel a demand for simplicity in my Christmas music which has eluded many great composers. *But simplicity, like patriotism, is not enough.*

- [435] “He got that job through influence, not on merit – what are you looking at me like that for? It’s true, isn’t it?” “Of course, it’s true, but I was thinking that *people who live in glass houses shouldn’t throw stones*”.
- [436] Maybe *writers are born rather than made*; but they still need spotting and cultivating, and they can easily be unmade by bad habits.
- [437] *A prophet [is] without honour in his own country.*
- [438] I’m your little bit of fun, I’m *the slice off the cut cake that’ll never be missed* – You smug, hypocritical swine!
- [439] I don’t know what the hell this game is, but I’ve got to play it cool. *Sticks and stones will break my bones, but words...etc.*
- [440] A woman trapped in the rubble of her washhouse said she was about to have a baby. *I was sweet 16, wide-eyed, and had no idea what to expect next.*
- [441] For this old trouper *there’s still no business like show business.*
- [442] I adore seeing the world. But, let’s face it, *there really is no place quite like your own home.*
- [443] Robin went to the Yorkshire town of Holmfirth, where Monday’s new comedy series was filmed, to see if the people there were anything like the characters on the screen. He found that – *there’s nowt so queer as folk.*
- [444] She’s a soldier’s wife: cheerful, resourceful, warmhearted, adaptable, on top of life; a home maker; no theories, all practicability. “*They don’t make them like that anymore*”.
- [445] “*Those that can, do; those that can’t, teach*” runs the disparing adage, and there is something of the same feeling about commentators. “If he knows so much why doesn’t he have a go himself?” In fact, commentating, like criticism or teaching, has little to do with one’s own ability as performer.
- [446] Well, professor, *two wrongs do not make a right*, so should not our wonderful modern technology have done something about quietening down our factories before producing this super-plane?
- [447] But we can’t change him, so we must make the best of it. *What’s done can’t be undone*, no use crying over spilt milk.

- [448] “Is this the kind of food they give you here?” “Boy, *you ain’t seen nothing yet*. This is high class for here, this is”.
- [449] Love is in the past, round the corner, slipping through the fingers. *You can’t win*.
- [450] *Now your best friend won’t have to tell you*. Surgeons in Denmark have come to the rescue of people who have serious problems with underarm sweating.
- [451] I can’t say I like Dr Knox, but if I change him for another doctor, I may be worse off than I was before. *Better the devil you know than the devil you don’t*.
- [452] *The ivy can grow no higher than its host*.
- [453] It would be useless to appeal to the Law Society about your lawyer’s behaviour. *Dog doesn’t eat dog!*
- [454] *Don’t keep a dog and bark yourself*.
- [455] This is neither a game of chance nor skill. It is *neither fish, flesh, fowl nor good red herring*.
- [456] *Don’t teach your grandmother to suck eggs*.
- [457] *It’s jam tomorrow, jam yesterday, but never jam today!*
- [458] *The walls of Jericho didn’t fall down in a day*.
- [459] *There are too many chiefs and not enough Indians*.
- [460] *Necessity knows no law*.

