Never judge a wolf by its cover. An investigation into the relevance of phrasemes included in advanced learners' dictionaries for learners of English as an additional language in Australia

Julia Miller, MA (Flinders University, Australia); BA Hons (Cambridge University)

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Thesis summary

Native speakers of English use idioms, proverbs and similes, collectively known as 'phrasemes', to communicate in a variety of settings and in a variety of ways. However, phrasemes can cause problems for learners of English as an additional language (EAL). Not knowing that a word belongs to a phraseme, they may look for the item in their monolingual English learners' dictionary (MELD), but MELDs often vary in their choice of headword, and consistency is not guaranteed even within a single dictionary. After finding the meaning of an item, learners may not know with whom the phraseme should be used, since native English speakers in different countries, such as Australia and the UK, may not use the same phrasemes, and usage may vary according to age group. Such differences may not be reflected in MELDs.

   This thesis addresses an original area of investigation at the intersection of three related fields: (1) the concept of communicative competence, with regard to EAL learning and teaching; (2) lexicography, particularly in relation to MELDs; and (3) phraseology, in regard to the use of phrasemes by native speakers of English. The investigation aimed to discover which phrasemes are used by which age groups in the UK and Australia and whether age and country usage need to be addressed by MELDS more accurately in their inclusion and labelling of phrasemes. The two hypotheses investigated are that (1) people in the same geographical location will have similar knowledge, and perhaps similar use, of phrasemes, regardless of their age (a regional model); and (2) age has a greater influence than location, so that people in the same age group in two locations will have similarities in phraseme knowledge and use (a generational model).

Literature regarding lexicography, EAL learning and phraseology is addressed, and a gap in research into phraseme use by native speakers of English is identified. The methodology takes an emic (intralingual) and etic (interlingual) perspective, providing qualitative and quantitative data. Data were collected through an online questionnaire completed by over 1000 participants from different age groups of native English speakers in the UK and Australia. It was found that the generational model of phraseme use is more accurate than the regional model.

The results provide a description of phraseme use that should be applied to the coverage of phrasemes in future MELDs used in Australia, with two major implications for lexicographers and publishers. First, future research needs to ascertain if the label 'British English' in MELDs means that these items are used in the UK rather than the US, or whether these items are only used in the UK and not in other English speaking countries such as Australia. Secondly, the *old-fashioned* label should be clarified or a *youth* label introduced. These changes would greatly benefit the communicative competence of EAL learners in the use of phraseology.

Declaration

I certify that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university; and that to the best of my knowledge and belief it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

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Julia Miller

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Acknowledgements

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Chapter One

Introduction

Introduction
1. Conceptual framework and research questions
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That which feel one's snotly blow blow one's nose – Pedro Carolino

Introduction

A good dictionary can be invaluable for anyone who wishes to communicate in a foreign language, using not only individual words but also meaningful phrases in a situationally appropriate way. Those who attempted to use Pedro Carolino's *English as she is spoke* (da Fonseca & Carolino 2002), published in 1855, would have had hilarious and maybe even disastrous interactions with native English speakers. The quotation at the head of this chapter is Carolino's effort to translate the Portuguese saying, 'quem se pica alhos come' (which literally means, 'whoever takes offence eats garlic', signifying that anyone who feels criticised should learn from such criticism). All who have tried to use a dictionary in another country will understand the importance of accurate and up-to-date information regarding correct sociolinguistic understanding and usage, and any

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who have attempted to translate an idiom into another language will realise the difficulties involved. Although *colourless green ideas [may] sleep furiously*, not every syntactically correct combination of words in English may make semantic or socio-pragmatic sense. Neither is every expression necessarily used by a wider group. *Never judge a wolf by its cover*, for example, was proffered, either humorously or in confusion, by a young participant in this investigation.

Regional and age differences are two of the important sociolinguistic variations that need to be taken into account when communicating in another language. There are many regional varieties of English, and the variety spoken in countries such as Australia, for example, is close, but not identical, to that spoken in the United Kingdom. Neither are the same terms necessarily used by the same age groups within a single country (McCarthy 1998, p. 145). These are facts that are not always apparent to those consulting a dictionary, since the needs of different markets, in varying countries, are not always taken into account by dictionary publishers (Benson 2001, p. 113). Learners of English as an Additional Language (EAL) in Australia, for instance, are restricted to British English advanced learners' dictionaries since there is no advanced Australian learners' dictionary, the excellent *Macquarie learner's dictionary* published in 1999 being now out of print. The five main advanced monolingual English learners' dictionaries (MELDs) for British English (known collectively as the 'Big 5') have good features, but do not necessarily include information that is useful for EAL learners in other countries. EAL learners need to know if a term is used in a certain variety of English (Tottie 1988, p. 311), in this case Australian English, if they are to communicate competently with native speakers. Moreover, many of these learners are of university age, and want to converse with their peers in contemporary language, using expressions which are readily understood and used

in everyday speech. Such learners need to know whether particular words and phrases are used by certain age groups, in a certain country, and one way to determine usage restrictions is in a dictionary (Hartmann 1981, p. 263), since a good dictionary should be succinct yet detailed enough to cover such sociolinguistic variables. Dictionaries based on British English may not necessarily give students enough sociolinguistic and cultural information to communicate competently with their peers in Australia.

1. Conceptual framework and research questions

This thesis addresses an original area of investigation at the intersection of three related fields: (1) the concept of communicative competence, with regard to EAL learning and teaching; (2) lexicography, particularly in relation to MELDs; and (3) phraseology, in regard to the use of phrasemes by native speakers. (The term 'phraseme' will be discussed in further detail in section 5 below. Briefly, it is used in this thesis to describe idioms, similes and proverbs, which encapsulate the cultural and semantic load of the ways in which a speech community uses language.) The overlap of the fields addressed in this investigation is represented in Figure 1, where communicative competence, as a sociolinguistic construct and as a paradigm in EAL learning and teaching, is realised at the level of phraseological usage (in this case, the use of a set of 84 phrasemes), which in turn informs the coverage of these and similar phrasemes by English learners' dictionaries. In Figure 1, the intersection of communicative competence, lexicography and phraseology is highlighted by a book symbol, representing a dictionary. This central intersection of the three fields is the focus of the following thesis.
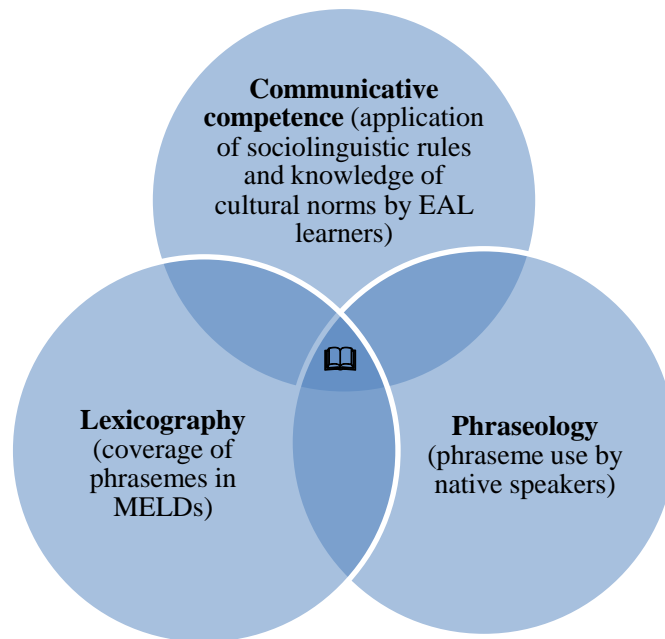
Figure 1: The relationship between communicative competence, lexicography and phraseology in this thesis

Although the key principle of lexicography should be that of user-friendliness (Zgusta 1971), user needs in relation to phrasemes in pedagogical lexicography remain under-researched, both in regard to which items need to be included in a MELD and how these items should be labelled. Moreover, lexicographers' impressions of user needs may be based more on 'arbitrary decisions' rather than on linguistic principles (Hartmann 1981, p. 267). It is therefore vital that further research be conducted to determine not only the frequency of use of items selected for a dictionary, but also what is necessary for learners with different needs (Hartmann 2001, p. 103). In particular, it is important to establish which items are used by native speakers of the same age as the learners (deWaele & Wourm 2002, p. 139), so that EAL learners can be made aware of sociopragmistic restrictions on usage and the appropriateness of certain items in different settings (Zgusta 2006, p. 135). EAL learners may use their dictionaries to try to satisfy their communicative needs, but these needs may not be targeted by the lexicographer.

Previous scholars have looked at the links between phraseology and lexicography (e.g. Cowie 1981; Gouws 2007; Moon 1998a), and phraseology and EAL learning (e.g. Granger & Meunier 2008; Howarth 1996, 1998; Kövecses 2001; Liu 2008; O'Keeffe, McCarthy & Carter 2010). However, no one has yet researched the question of which phrasemes are most important for EAL students to learn (Liu 2003), let alone within an Australian context. Neither has anyone yet studied which phrasemes should be included in a MELD for users in Australia, in terms of both regional and generational appropriateness, and how they should be labelled in the dictionary. Is there a need, for instance, for British English phrasemes which are not used in Australia to be highlighted as such, or is there a need for a new label such as *youth*, indicating that a phraseme is used more by younger people, or a better use of the traditional *old-fashioned* label? This thesis explores new empirical data in a way which has not hitherto been done, in relation to the following main research question:

To what extent do advanced learners' dictionaries in Australia meet the needs of university-aged EAL users in their coverage of phrasemes?

In order to answer this overall question, it is necessary to determine what users' needs are. In this respect, information about frequency of use by native speakers of different age groups provides an answer by giving an 'empirical description of what the [native speaking] language user does in communicative contexts' (Hartmann 1981, p. 270). Information about native speakers should then inform the needs of EAL learners. Thus, if native speakers of English of university age in Australia (in the age group 16-22) hear and use certain phrasemes, it is likely that EAL learners in Australia will hear them too and will need them for the purposes of comprehension, and perhaps for production when talking to native speakers of many ages. If native speakers of English of university

age in Australia hear but do not use these phrasemes, EAL learners in Australia may need to comprehend the phrasemes but not produce them in interactions with their peers. Indeed, if EAL learners did use these phrasemes with other young people, they would be regarded as lexical dinosaurs and probably provoke merriment among their peers. If phrasemes which appear in the Big 5 are hardly used by anyone in Australia, EAL learners will not need to learn them for productive use in this country, though they may of course encounter them in English texts written by authors from other countries, or hear them in British or American television programs. Information regarding native speakers' frequency of use of certain types of phrasemes is thus vital in assisting EAL learners to grow in their sociopragmatic competence in the field of phraseological use.

To find out which phrasemes are appropriate for use by EAL learners in Australia, and which phrasemes they are likely to encounter, five more detailed questions will be addressed. These questions compare frequency of phraseme use and familiarity in different age groups of native English speakers in Australia and the UK, in order to determine whether the labelling systems of the Big 5 reflect any potential differences:

1. *Is there a difference in the familiarity, interpretation or opacity of certain phrasemes for people of different age groups in Australia and the UK?*

2. *Are the phrasemes selected for the study still in use, by whom, and in what circumstances?*

3. *Can any difference in use be accounted for in terms of age and/or region?*

4. *Are any such differences reflected in the labelling systems and inclusion of these phrasemes in the Big 5?*

5. *What other phrasemes are elicited from the prompts given to participants in the study, and what variations do participants make to established phrasemes?*

The answers to these questions help to determine the phrasemes which EAL learners in Australia may encounter, and whether they will find appropriate usage labels for these and similar phrasemes in the Big 5. Knowledge about the use of these phrasemes in a sociocultural context will help users become more communicatively competent.

The argument that I shall defend in this thesis therefore relies on the two possible models of phraseme knowledge and use by native speakers of English which are exemplified in Figure 2 (below).
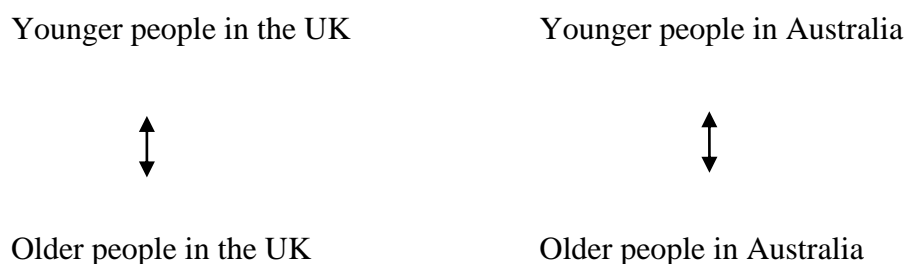
1. Regional model

Younger people in the UK   Younger people in Australia

$\updownarrow$ $\updownarrow$

Older people in the UK   Older people in Australia

2. Generational model

Younger people in the UK $\longleftrightarrow$ Younger people in Australia

Older people in the UK $\longleftrightarrow$ Older people in Australia
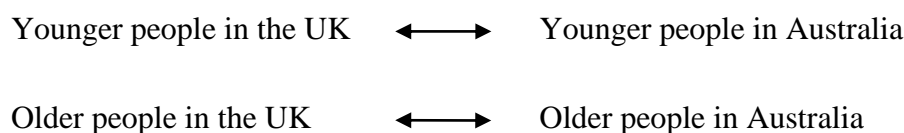
Figure 2: Two models of commonality in phraseme familiarity and use

In the first, regional model, it is hypothesised that people in the same geographical location will have similar knowledge, and perhaps similar use, of phrasemes, regardless of their age. In the second, generational model, it is hypothesised that

age has a greater influence than location, so that younger people in two locations will have similarities in phraseme knowledge and use, and older people in these locations will also have similarities, regardless of which country they are in.

The examination of these two models has implications for the labelling of phrasemes in MELDs in regard to what Zgusta (2006, p. 135) has termed 'functional appropriateness', since EAL learners need to know which phrasemes are appropriate to use with which age groups in a particular location if they are to achieve greater communicative competence.

2. Communicative competence

The common ground which connects the three related fields in the framework of this thesis is the sociolinguistic notion of communicative competence. The concept of communicative competence in the native speaker was first expressed by Hymes, who said, 'There is an important sense in which a normal member of a community has knowledge in respect to all these aspects of the communicative system available to him' (2001, p. 63 referring to a paper first presented in 1966). The aspects Hymes refers to are formal possibility, feasibility, appropriateness to a context, and 'whether (and to what degree) something is in fact done, actually performed, and what its doing entails'. The person's ability to use such aspects reflects their competence in communication, which is seen as:

> a two-step process in which the speaker first takes in stimuli from the outside environment, evaluating and selecting from among them in the light of his own cultural background, personal history, and what he knows about his interlocutors. He then decides on the norms that apply to the situation at hand.

These norms determine the speakers [sic] selection from among the communicative options available for encoding his intent (Gumperz 1986, p. 15).

The need to recognise and apply these norms relates as much to the language learner as to the native speaker, and yet the idea of 'communicative competence' in foreign language learning and teaching was uncommon before the 1970s. Savignon's *Communicative competence: an experiment in foreign-language teaching* (1972) was one of the first books to articulate a methodology and evaluation for a communicative approach to teaching in the language classroom. Savignon distinguishes between 'communicative competence' and 'linguistic competence', defining the latter as 'mastery of the sound system and basic structural patterns of a language' while the former is seen as 'the ability to function in a truly communicative setting' (1972, p. 8). These ideas were further explored by Canale and Swain, who articulated the definition of communicative competence in terms of language learning by subdividing it into 'grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, and strategic competence' (1980, p. 28). 'Grammatical competence' relates to Hymes' aspect of formal acceptability, while 'sociolinguistic' and 'strategic' competence relate to Hymes' aspects of possibility and contextual appropriateness. Since Canale and Swain are addressing the needs of the language learner here, and not the native speaker, these subdivisions are more explicit than the original definition because they focus on the need for competence in grammatical acceptability as well as sociocultural knowledge. Since the 1980s, communicative language teaching has become the popular model in the West, replacing the former grammar-translation model.

The unit of description around which communicative competence revolves is the 'speech community', defined by Hymes as 'a community sharing rules for the

conduct and interpretation of speech, and rules for the interpretation of at least one linguistic variety' (2003, p. 36). This community may vary in size, but all the speakers 'share knowledge of the communicative constraints and options governing a significant number of social situations' (Gumperz 1986, p. 16). For an EAL learner to engage with a particular speech community, then, it is necessary to outline the rules by which speech is conducted within that group. This will enable the learner to use language productively in an appropriate and confident way.

Providing the outline of any speech community's rules is an immense task. This thesis therefore investigates one defined area: the use of phrasemes, based on five lexical sets, by university-aged native speakers of English in Australia. Empirical data on the use and familiarity of 84 phrasemes by this group can be used to draw general conclusions about their use of similar phrasemes. This information can then be used to refine existing labelling systems in MELDs in order to give EAL learners further guidelines to help them communicate competently with their peers in one particular area of phraseology.

3. Pedagogical lexicography

Lexicography is a field in its own right, distinct from lexicology and applied linguistics (Wiegand 1984, p. 13). While lexicology studies the meanings and forms of words, lexicography aims to encapsulate these in a dictionary compiled for a specific purpose and with a certain set of users in mind, and is based on practice and research (Gouws & Prinsloo 2005, pp. 2, 4). Pedagogical lexicography is a branch of lexicography which deals with dictionaries for learners of a language. One of the key principles of lexicography is that a

dictionary should be user-friendly (Zgusta 1971), and learners' dictionaries try particularly hard to reach this goal.

There are various abbreviations for the item 'monolingual English learners' dictionary', including LD, ELD and MELD. This thesis will use the letters MELD, highlighting the fact that such dictionaries are monolingual, they are in English, and they are for learners. There is variation in the use of the apostrophe with the word *learners*: *learners dictionary* (as in the title *Australian learners dictionary*), *learner's dictionary* (Cowie 1999a) and *learners' dictionary* (Svartvik 1999; Fontenelle 2009). I have chosen to place the apostrophe after the 's', to reflect the fact that the dictionary is designed for and used by many learners.

Students in Australia now have at least five major advanced MELDs to choose from, all produced initially for the British English market: *Cambridge advanced learner's dictionary, Collins Cobuild advanced learner's dictionary, Longman dictionary of contemporary English, Macmillan English dictionary for advanced learners* and *Oxford advanced learner's dictionary*. These are known collectively as the 'Big 5'. (Since this thesis was started, *Merriam Webster's advanced learner's English dictionary*, or MWALED, has also come onto the market. However, it is not addressed here, as despite the increasing influence of American English in Australia, the British influence is of longer historical significance. Moreover, the data in the study were compiled before the advent of the *MWALED*, and so do not address items included in that dictionary.) All of these Big 5 British MELDs come with a CD-ROM, and they are also available online. Since it is preferable that learners' dictionaries be portable, their hard copy size is restricted, but this issue is now being addressed by the inclusion of learners'

dictionaries in pocket electronic dictionary devices, as mobile phone applications and through the Internet.

Monolingual dictionaries for learners of English originated in research into vocabulary control, in which key vocabulary for communication was identified (Cowie 1999a, p. 97). Communicative competence is thus central to the function of a MELD, which aims to help EAL learners with both comprehension and production of English (Jain 1981, p. 274). The relevance of MELDs in their sociolinguistic context is highlighted by Summers, editor of the third edition of the *Longman dictionary of contemporary English*:

> When conceptualizing new dictionaries for learners of English, we begin with the assumption that learners <u>want</u> to know and learn about natural spoken language. *We assume that they want to understand spoken English in order to converse with their own age group if they visit the UK or the US; that they want to communicate with other non-native speakers of English* using English as a modern lingua franca as they travel round the world; or that they want to be able to use spoken English in their adult life, whether by giving a paper at a conference in English or by taking part in business meetings or telephone calls.
>
> (Summers 1999, p. 258, my italics)

The words which I have italicised in the above quotation are key to the thesis that follows: learners want to communicate with their own age groups, or, in sociolinguistic terms, to become members of a certain speech community. Since most users of MELDs are taken to be of secondary (high) school or university age (Nesi 2000), the native speakers with whom they wish to interact most will therefore be aged between about 11 and 22. Given that most students who go to a

foreign country to study go straight to a university or a pre-university preparatory program, this age range may be further articulated as relating to students between 16 and 22 years of age. Information on the use of lexical items by native speakers of this age range can thus inform the communicative choices of learners who wish to enter their speech community.

Usage labels in a MELD make a vital contribution to users' communicative needs, typified by Hartmann's words (1981, p. 264): 'the lexicographer's task [involves] labelling words and expressions as instances of particular types of usage'. If 'a realistic goal [of a dictionary] is to meet the needs of most users most of the time' (Atkins & Rundell 2008, p. 32), it is thus important to examine areas such as the labelling of items in a MELD to see if these labels reflect actual usage in the country in which the dictionary is being consulted. Given that the varieties of English targeted in MELDs are usually those used in the United Kingdom or the United States (Summers 1999, p. 258), users' needs may not be met if they are using a MELD in a country whose variety of English is not addressed by the dictionary's editorial team.

3.1   Issues with monolingual English learners' dictionaries

The claim has been made that MELDs do not adequately reflect regional varieties of English (Leech & Nesi 1999, p 300), and that 'the chief EFL [English as a foreign language] dictionaries seek to expound the standard language in a social and cultural context which is generally and implicitly that of British life and institutions' (Stein 1999, p. 53). This appears still to be the case, as publishers are driven by profits, and smaller markets, such as that in Australia, may not attract the same investment of financial resources from publishers as the larger American or British markets (Benson 2001, p. 3). Many users, however, will be in countries

other than the United States or the United Kingdom (Corrius & Pujol 2010) and will require information on different varieties of English.

Although a dictionary is in part a 'cultural artefact' (Kuiper 2002, p. 165) which should help non-native speakers with English comprehension and production, one criticism levelled at MELDs is that they do not include sufficient cultural information (Tseng 2003, p. 217). In order to be communicatively competent, students need to know about the contextually appropriate use of language in the target culture, and a MELD should provide this information in order to be user friendly. Since the principal MELDs use a British framework for social and cultural expression (Stein 1999), they may not reflect the target culture experienced by learners in Australia. Even the choice of entries can reveal bias, limiting the amount of vocabulary to one particular variety of English. Algeo (1995) gives the example of *football* defined in its British sense of *soccer*, but not recognising the different referent understood by an American (or in my case, Australian) native speaker of English. Many MELDs do go some way to addressing this bias, by including labels such as 'Australian English'. This is helpful for distinguishing Australian vocabulary, but since British English is used as the norm in MELDs learners still do not know whether most of what they are consulting is also appropriate for use in the Australian context. This information is essential, because many users want to learn more about a culture through using a dictionary (Dalgish 1995). Hence, a key question highlighted by Benson (2001, p. 118) is not just what items might be added to a dictionary to give it more regional relevance, but whether the standard, unmarked entries in the dictionary are actually used in other countries.

To avoid possible confusion arising from unmarked entries therefore, greater and more exact use could be made of the labelling systems in MELDs. The label

'British English' could be applied more often, to deter learners from using unknown terms in another country; conversely, greater use may need to be made of labels such as 'Australian English'. The word *zucchini*, for example, is labelled as American English in most MELDs, but is also used in Australia instead of the British term *courgette*. A user of the Big 5, however, would not find this information.

A second area of difficulty is the currency of certain entries, particularly phrasemes. There is often inconsistency within and between dictionaries in their application of the label *old-fashioned*, which can mean simply that a term is used by older speakers, or that it is passing from common use altogether. There is little to indicate whether a term is more suitable to speakers of different age groups, and yet many terms are unsuitable for use in certain speech communities. In fact, McCarthy (1998, p. 145) makes this very point, when he says that 'the overwhelming majority of idioms in the CANCODE corpus are spoken by speakers over 25 years old. This may make their teaching as *productive* vocabulary for younger age-groups inappropriate'. It may be, therefore, that more exact use needs to be made of the *old-fashioned* label, or that a new label such as *youth* should be introduced, indicating that an item is particularly appropriate for younger age groups.

A third problem for all dictionaries is how to choose the headword for a multiword item. Sometimes the first word in an expression may vary, as in *carry/take coals to Newcastle*. Many dictionaries try to avoid this problem by using the first word felt to be salient in an expression (Doyle 2007, p. 191). This is a subjective decision, and there is a lack of consistency across dictionaries in this respect, and sometimes even within a single dictionary. A British English speaker, for example, might not feel that the word *Newcastle* is salient, since it is a well-

known city in the UK, but a non-native speaker would probably look first under this word rather than *coal* and thus fail to find the expression in four of the Big 5. The question of saliency is thus linked to assumptions about cultural knowledge.

It has been said that 'if the dictionary is to serve as an efficient comprehension-production tool, its scope must be extended to include all such lexical-semantic information as has an important bearing on appropriate language use' (Jain 1981, p. 284). This thesis investigates whether such information is available in the Big 5 in relation to the knowledge and use of phrasemes by university-age native speakers of English in Australia. If the language of these native speakers is adequately labelled in the MELDs, or if terms used mainly by older speakers are labelled as such, then EAL learners will have more guidelines to enable them to interact socioculturally with their peers. If the headwords for phrasemes are comprehensively addressed, then users should have little trouble finding the terms; however, if there is inconsistency in the choice of the 'salient' word, then the dictionary in question may not be user-friendly. Labelling and choice of headwords are thus vital aspects of a MELD for learners in a country other than the UK. If EAL learners in Australia use one of the Big 5, will their needs be met in terms of Australian English?

3.2   Australian and British English

Users of MELDs in Australia may not realise that the English in their MELD does not necessarily reflect the English used around them. The Big 5 have a British cultural basis, but Australian English is a distinct variety which, despite many similarities, also has many differences to British English.

Australian English has developed over the last 200 years, since the First Fleet from England arrived in New South Wales in 1788 and English native speakers

settled in Australia. Delbridge (1983, p. 36) describes it as 'that form of English that originated early in the nineteenth century among those children of British settlers who were born and raised in the new colony'. It was distinctive in pronunciation and, as Blair and Collins (2001) note, developed to reflect the exigencies of a new country, in terms not only of its landscape and climate but also its ideals and emerging culture. The word 'Australian' was first applied to non-indigenous inhabitants of Australia in 1822 (Ramson 1987, p. 140). However, the term 'Australian English' was not used until the 1940s, when it was introduced by Alexander George Mitchell (Delbridge 2001, p. 311). Indeed, there was no recognition of Australian English as a unique variety until a few decades ago (Peters 2001).

Australian English is distinguishable not only by vocabulary but also by pronunciation. It is likely that the original Broad Australian English form was established during the first 50 years of settlement (Mitchell n.d. in Collins & Blair 2001, p. 2), distinguishing itself by pronunciation from the language spoken by those born in the UK or Ireland. There is some indication that Australian English has become more homogenous in pronunciation over the years, with the traditional 'Broad' and 'Cultivated' varieties merging into a central 'General' variety (Horvath 1985 in Blair & Collins 2001) in suburban Australia by the 1870s or 1880s (Yallop 2001). For many years, Australian English was held as inferior to that spoken in the 'mother country', but in the 1940s it came to be regarded more positively (Delbridge in Collins & Blair 2001).

The growth in recognition of Australian English led to the publication of two Australian dictionaries in 1976: the *Australian pocket Oxford dictionary* and the *Heinemann Australian dictionary*. These were followed by two major dictionaries in the 1980s. The first was Delbridge's *Macquarie dictionary*, published in 1981.

The second was Ramson's *Australian national dictionary* (1988), which was based on historical principles. Both dictionaries include many Australianisms. Ramson (in Bailey 2009, p. 293) defines an Australianism as 'one of those words and meanings of words which have originated in Australia, which have a greater currency here than elsewhere, or which have a special significance in Australia because of their connection with an aspect of the history of the country'. It is therefore important for Australia to have its own dictionaries to reflect this usage. A third dictionary, the *Australian Oxford dictionary*, followed in 1999. There is thus a growing tradition of Australian monolingual dictionaries for native speakers of English, who form the majority of Australia's population.

According to the 2006 Australian census, from a total of 19,855,288 respondents, 15,581,332 spoke only English at home, while 3,146,196 spoke a language other than English (with 1,127,760 unstated replies) (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2008a). Thus, while English is the major language of Australia, at least a fifth of the population speak another language at home. In terms of language proficiency, of those who spoke a language other than English 2,591,653 responded that they spoke English very well or well, and 561,419 said they did not speak English well or at all (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2008a). From these statistics, it appears that English is spoken fluently, very well or well by the majority of the population in Australia. (Statistics on language will not be available for the UK until the 2011 Census has been processed (Penny Wilson, Census Customer Services, personal communication 21 August 2008)). It may, however, vary, according to the first language of the speaker.

Over the years, Australian English has become distinguishable from the varieties spoken by different ethnic groups within Australia, and the Aboriginal community (Collins & Blair 2001, p. 2). It is often informal and colloquial (P

Peters 2007, p. 251), with many abbreviations and contractions (such as *bickies* for *biscuits,* or *pickies* for *pictures*). More recently, there has been an increasing American English influence, and younger people in particular are more exposed to outside influences through the Internet and other media (Taylor 2001). Some writers claim that American English, indeed, now outstrips British English in its influence on Australian English (Butler 2001, p.154). This may be true in terms of vocabulary. However, Newbrook (2001) claims that the syntactic variation between Australian and British English, although it exists, is much less than that between British and American English. Australian English therefore is still closely allied to British English.

Although much vocabulary remains British in origin, and there is an increasing American influence, Australian English also includes words from Aboriginal languages, such as *bilby* (a type of bandicoot). According to Dixon, Ramson and Thomas (1980 in Moore 2001), there are about 400 words in Australian English borrowed from 80 Aboriginal languages. In addition, there are numerous loans from other languages, such as Chinese *cheongsam* (a type of dress).

To outsiders, it might seem that Australian and New Zealand English would be virtually identical, due to their proximity. Nevertheless, despite their similarities there are also many differences. For example, a *laughing jackass* is a type of owl in New Zealand but a variety of kingfisher in Australia (Bailey 2009, p. 295). Because of possible differences, the focus in this investigation is on Australian English rather than New Zealand English, and New Zealanders were not included in the questionnaire which forms the main part of the data to follow. One phraseme probably originating in New Zealand did creep into the

questionnaire, however, due to its labelling as an Australian phraseme in one MELD. This was the idiom *box of birds*.

Australian phrasemes have their own features and are not necessarily the same as phrasemes from other varieties of English. Pam Peters (2007) highlights five characteristics of Australian similes which are applicable to Australian phrasemes in general. Firstly, many phrasemes make a play on words. For example, in *done like a dinner*, the word *done* can mean both *cooked* and *tricked*. This phraseme also highlights the tendency to use what Peters terms 'periphrastic ways of saying that someone comes off worst, or in colloquial terms is "done for"' (2007, p. 247). Many phrasemes also operate through what Peters terms 'negative polarity', as in the example *no work at Bourke*. Peters points out that in Baker's 1978 survey, the Australian bush, or outback, provided the largest number of similes and 'evaluative phrases' in his survey (2007, p. 241). Phrasemes in Australian English also often reflect themes of physical and social isolation (P Peters 2007, p. 251). Peters adds that 'these essential themes are not unique to Australia, but highlighted in a pioneering society, and in Australian terms'. There is now an increasing tendency for rural phrasemes to give way to urban expressions, as the population becomes more urbanised.

So far, no research has been conducted to establish which age groups of the Australian population use which phrasemes, nor to examine whether phrasemes developed in British English are still used in Australia. These questions are central to this thesis, since the answer has a bearing on the sociocultural competence of EAL learners in Australia.

4. Phrasemes

The term 'phraseme' was chosen for this thesis after much agonised deliberation, since the issue of terminology is one which Cowie (1998a, p. 210) describes as 'bedevilled' by its multiplicity. Wray and Perkins (2000, p. 3) highlight the question, 'dare we assume that where a single term is used by commentators in more than one field, it actually refers to exactly the same phenomenon?' They answer their own question succinctly: 'We think not.' This leaves the researcher in a quandary over whether to use an existing term, perhaps inevitably giving it a new slant according to the linguistic standpoint taken, or to coin yet another word or phrase, adding to the proliferation of existing definitions. In order to highlight the fact that many 'fixed expressions' may actually be variable, and that they may or may not include idioms, Cowie (1999b, p. 308) suggests the use of the term 'phraseological unit' or 'phraseme'. The term 'phraseme' is widely used in French and German phraseological terminology (Dobrovol'skij & Piirainen 2005, p. 30), and embraces both figurative and non-figurative conventional multiword units, including restricted collocations, idioms, proverbs and other formulae. It thus covers a broad field, since, according to Mel'čuk (1998, p. 24), there are ten times as many phrasemes in a language as there are other words.

I have chosen to use the word 'phraseme' to refer to the idioms, similes and proverbs in this study. In simple terminology, an 'idiom' is an expression that does not literally mean what it seems to mean (as in *to let off steam*), while a simile compares one thing to another (as in *done like a dinner*) and a proverb is an expression which appears to carry a weight of traditional truth or experience (as in *hell hath no fury like a woman scorned*). These terms are investigated further in Chapter Three. Knowledge and use of phrasemes form part of a speaker's communicative competence, for both native and non-native speakers of a

language. However, whereas the native speaker usually has an intuitive feeling for the context in which a phraseme is used, this is harder for EAL learners to gauge, since they often do not have the cultural background necessary to know which phrasemes are appropriate in which situations, or are likely to be understood by speakers of different age groups.

Fillmore, Kay and O'Connor (1988) highlight the problems that idioms cause for non-native speakers when they say,

> We think of a locution or manner of speaking as idiomatic if it is assigned an interpretation by the speech community but if somebody who merely knew the grammar and the vocabulary of the language could not, by virtue of that knowledge alone, know (i) how to say it or (ii) what it means, or (iii) whether it is a conventional thing to say. Put differently, an idiomatic expression or construction is something a language user could fail to know while knowing everything else in the language. (p. 504)

It is apparently hard for children to recognise an idiom as a figure of speech, unless they have a context (Gibbs 1987). One might also ask how adult learners of English unfamiliar with a phraseme and its cultural context know that such an expression is to be taken figuratively rather than literally. Sometimes a similar phraseme may exist in their first language, but at other times the conceptual field may be entirely different (Velasco Sacristán 2009). It may be that they realise from context that the expression is not literal, or understand that the position in the narrative suggests that an idiom rather than a literal meaning is involved. Often, however, the difficulty for the learner is not in unpacking the parts of a multi-word expression but in recognising it as such in the first place (Wible 2008).

Occasions when phrasemes may appear abound, enriching texts by their imagery, or denoting slang or humorous speech (Fernando 1996, p. 15). The media and advertisers, for example, delight in idioms and puns on idiomatic expressions, as well as the ambiguity which many idioms and other phrasemes display (Fernando 1996, p. 6). They are, however, as Fellbaum et al. (2006, p. 349) comment, 'not merely an amusing marginal linguistic phenomenon; they are frequent enough to qualify as a significant part of the language'. They also occur, though less frequently, in academic writing (Howarth 1996). This means that EAL learners will encounter phrasemes in many different contexts.

It has been claimed (Danesi 1986 in Littlemore 2001, p. 460) that 'the true sign that the learner has developed communicative proficiency is the ability to metaphorize in the target language'. This may involve not only the ability to create metaphors, but also to use established figures of speech. The use of formulaic language also contributes to a sense of group identity (McCarthy 1998, p. 145; Wray 2002, p. 92), and idiomatic allusions often form part of group language interplay (Prodromou 2010, p. 237). More tellingly, Prodromou adds that 'if L2-users are to take part in such diffuse interplay they must be able to sustain this kind of interaction across turns and across idiomatic types' (2010, p. 237). Since idioms and other phrasemes are part of formulaic language, this means that the EAL student, if they are to fit in to Australian society and communicate with their peers, must at least understand, if not use, appropriate phrasemes.

This does not mean, however, that all age groups use the same phrasemes, as phraseme use may vary between social groups (Fernando 1996, p. 22). In Curtain's (2001) study, older Australian English speakers (aged over 50) had a greater knowledge of traditional colloquial expressions than the younger group

(aged 18-28).   Curtain points out that the older group obviously had longer to be exposed to the expressions, and that what were innovative colloquialisms in their youth might have become embedded in the language and so hold an 'ongoing attraction' for these speakers (2001, p. 266).   Younger speakers, on the other hand, may know or use other phrasemes from different sources, such as Internet chat rooms where they engage with English speakers from other countries. It is important to establish such differences in phraseme use and articulate it in a dictionary, by means of accurate labels, if MELDs are to give accurate information to EAL learners. The following questions, although initially raised in respect to proverbs, apply equally well to other phrasemes: 'Just *which* speakers actually use given proverbs? With what frequency? How currently? With precisely what meanings?' (Doyle 2007, p. 196).   As P Peters says, even native speakers of a language may interpret the same phraseme differently (2007, p. 239), and phrasemes may 'not be understood in exactly the same way by every member of the community at a given point in time' (p. 250). This may be particularly true when different age groups and countries are involved. For example, Peters indicates how the phraseme *possum up a gumtree* was used originally in American English to indicate someone being in dire straits, but changed in Australian English to indicate a state of happiness (2007, p. 239). The phraseme *up a gum tree* alone, however, is used in American, Australian and British English with reference to a difficult situation. It is clear that more research needs to be done on age and regional variations in metaphoric language.

If there is found to be a variation in phraseme use between different age groups and in different geographical locations, EAL learners need to be made aware of this in order to be communicatively competent in a particular language setting, since frequency of use is the most important indicator that an item needs

to be learned (Sinclair & Renouf 1988, p. 148). Since MELDs aim to help users extend their language skills, such dictionaries need to include information to help learners use language appropriate to different contexts, and one way to do this is through their labelling systems.

5. Outline of methodology

As stated earlier, if MELDs are to assist learners with comprehension and production skills in English, they must include sufficient information to assist them in using language appropriately (Jain 1981, p. 284). Identifying learners' lexical needs is therefore highly important. As Jain says,

> this can best be done from both intralingual and interlingual perspectives. Modern linguistic descriptions of English, informed by linguistic theory and research, provide the intralingual perspective; the disciplines of sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics and applied linguistics (with studies in . . . second language acquisition and second/foreign language teaching) would contribute much to the interlingual perspective. [However] the lexicographer may find himself handicapped by the lack of systematized information from both perspectives (1981, pp. 284-285).

Taking 'interlingual' in a broader sense of 'between different language varieties' rather than between different languages, the methodology employed in this thesis takes both an intralingual and an interlingual approach, termed variously in sociolinguistics as an emic and an etic approach (Pike 1971, p. 37). It seeks to discover user knowledge and use of phrasemes from within different age groups within two locations (the UK and Australia) (an intralingual, or emic approach) and then to compare this knowledge and use (an interlingual, or etic approach).

By doing this, the study aims to provide systematised information which is otherwise lacking in this area.

The UK and Australia were chosen for linguistic reasons, as English is the official language of both countries (Commonwealth of Australia 2006; Home Office: UK Border Agency 2007) and they have many close ties, with many British migrants in Australia (Office for National Statistics 2008). They were also chosen for practical reasons, as I am a citizen of both countries and have lived mostly in the UK for 35 years and Australia for 13, and so am aware of usage in both countries.

The youngest age group studied is that of the 16-22 year olds, many of whom are engaged in upper secondary or tertiary education, providing them with a shared experience. (The age of entry to university in Australia varies from state to state. In South Australia, for example, high schooling usually finishes at age 17, and most Honours courses at university take 4 years. The age range of the youngest group in this investigation has been set at 16-22 in order to encompass possible variations.) This represents an emic approach to the data, in that it studies the data from a viewpoint inside the system (Eckert 1997, p. 155; Pike 1971, p. 37). The ages after that are divided into 23-30 year olds, 31-40, 41-60 and 61+, with the oldest group representing those who are approaching retirement or have already retired. These groups represent an etic approach to the data, as they compare language use across age ranges (Eckert 1997, p. 155; Pike 1971, p. 37). Pike stresses that the emic/etic distinction is important, because the insider view allows an outsider to understand what is happening within a system, and the combination of the emic and etic views gives a tri-dimensional view of language behaviour, allowing us to see the same information from different perspectives (1971, pp. 39, 41).

The division of the findings according to age groups is also important, since 'sociolinguistic competence is age-specific' and 'ways of speaking at any life stage are part of the community structuring of language use' (Eckert 1997, p. 157). Information on language use by a particular age group in a particular location is thus central to the communicative competency of those who wish to engage sociolinguistically with that age group, in this case EAL learners at university in Australia. It is this age group who are among those most likely to use MELDs (Nesi 2000). Previous researchers have measured the frequency of phrasemes within written or spoken corpora (Liu 2008), but no one has yet examined who uses which phrasemes, in which register or language variety, although this is 'perhaps the most important information for language learners in order for them to use it appropriately' (Liu 2008, p. 113).

In order to examine phraseme use relevant to EAL learners in Australia, an online questionnaire was sent to native English speaking participants of different age groups in Australia and the UK. The aim was to examine their knowledge and use of 84 phrasemes, and to elicit as many other phrasemes as possible. It was hypothesised that this information might have implications for the coverage of phrasemes in a MELD for use in Australia.

The 84 phrasemes in this study were chosen from the Big 5. To meet the requirements of the study, all of them had to appear in at least two of the Big 5, with the exception of the Australian phrasemes, which were less well covered and for which an appearance in at least one of the Big 5 was deemed sufficient. The phrasemes in the study can be classified according to whether they refer to items, sayings, places or concepts which are Biblical (e.g. *an eye for an eye*); Literary/historical (e.g. *an albatross round the neck*); British (*to carry/take coals to Newcastle*); Australian (e.g. *back of Bourke*); or older (e.g. *full steam ahead*).

These groupings were chosen as representing phrasemes which could be easily classified and which might be less well known or used by different cohorts in the study, due either to the participants' age or their location. The questionnaire was divided into six smaller surveys, each containing questions about 14 phrasemes.

The completed surveys were analysed in terms of familiarity, interpretation, frequency of use, most common expressions elicited, and dictionary coverage given to the prompt and elicited phrasemes. This analysis was made with reference to age group and location of the participants in order to establish any patterns of usage and to see whether such patterns are adequately reflected in the Big 5. The findings are not statistically generalisable, since the number of participants, while large, does not necessarily reflect usage throughout each geographical location. In order to do this, nationwide surveys would have to be conducted in both the UK and Australia, and these would require large resources of time, publicity and analysis. However, the results provide an indication of phraseme use which could be used as a guide for labelling in MELDs, so that learners can communicate appropriately with different age groups in Australia.

It should be stressed that this thesis does not aim to present exhaustive research on phrasemes and phraseme use, but to examine some areas of phraseme use which are relevant to and may inform the inclusion and labelling of phrasemes in a MELD for use in Australia. The narrower theme of phraseme coverage in MELDs is thus presented within the broader areas of lexicography, phraseology and EAL learning and teaching.

Conclusion

It has been said that 'pedagogical lexicography is . . . linguistic in orientation, interdisciplinary in outlook and problem-solving in spirit' (Hartmann 2001, p. 33).

This thesis relates to the central problems of pedagogical lexicography in respect to phrasemes, by drawing from the disciplines of lexicography, EAL teaching and learning, and phraseology, and addressing the problem of phraseme knowledge and use by the English speaking peers of EAL learners in Australia, and the coverage of these phrasemes by the Big 5. This information on phraseme familiarity and use by English speaking peers can inform the inclusion and labelling of these phrasemes in MELDs used by EAL learners in Australia.

The study begins by establishing the background to pedagogical lexicography and its relation to EAL teaching and learning (Chapter Two), before addressing the literature on phrasemes in terms of phraseology, culture and EAL learning (Chapter Three). It then outlines the methodology adopted in the study (Chapter Four). Next, the findings of the study are presented in terms of the familiarity, interpretation and frequency of use of the original phrasemes in relation to native speakers of different age groups in the UK and Australia, together with other phrasemes elicited from these participants and the coverage the Big 5 give to both the original and elicited phrasemes (Chapter Five). This core information on native speaker use provides a basis for the needs of EAL learners of university age who wish to interact with native speakers in Australia by both understanding and using appropriate phrasemes.

The findings are subsequently discussed in relation to familiarity and places in which the phrasemes were first heard; usage rates by different age groups in the two locations; the generational and regional models raised in this introduction; and coverage by the Big 5, in terms of inclusion, labelling and headwords (Chapter Six). This discussion informs the implications of this study for English pedagogical lexicography relevant to Australia, addressed in the final chapter

(Chapter Seven, Conclusion), and indicates areas of application for future learners' dictionaries and new editions of existing MELDs.

If MELDs have indeed entered the 'territory formerly occupied by mainstream English language teaching materials' (Rundell 1998, p. 337), then they need to investigate and implement ever-more productive ways of enabling communicative competence in EAL learners. This thesis highlights new empirical evidence to address one area of such competence, phraseme use by native speakers, and indicates how this area can be appropriately signposted in a MELD for use in Australia. In doing so, it uncovers new information which can be applied by both lexicographers and publishers desiring to make their dictionaries more user friendly for an ever-increasing market.

Chapter Two

Lexicography and EAL learners in Australia

Introduction

Dictionaries have played a role in writing and study skills for many years, but the kind of dictionary used and attitudes to the use of a dictionary in class have often varied. Traditional methods of English teaching to non-native speakers stressed the importance of grammar and translation, and the need to read literary classics in the new language, rather than to communicate with native speakers (Richards & Rodgers 2001, p. 5). Importantly, 'the first language [was] maintained as a reference system in the acquisition of the second language' (Stern 1983, p. 455 in Richards & Rodgers 2001, p. 5), meaning that the use of bilingual dictionaries was inevitable, and encouraged by teachers. Later trends in language teaching, however, reacted against this grammar-translation method almost to the point of banning the use of bilingual dictionaries altogether.

Most learners of a language need to consult a dictionary at some stage, however, since words cannot always be learned or understood from context. If a bilingual dictionary is not used, at least for comprehension, then a monolingual dictionary will be necessary, and a dictionary that is designed specifically for non-native speakers of a language should meet many of their needs, at least in regard to comprehension and possibly in regard to production. The monolingual English dictionary for advanced learners (MELD) is an obvious resource to fill the gap in learners' knowledge which cannot be acquired from context or, in many cases where the learner is not in an English-speaking country, by contact with the language via local speakers and other available media.

In order to understand where the MELD fits into the general fields of lexicography and language learning, this chapter will explore the different types of dictionaries available to learners of English as an additional language. This will include a discussion of the roles of bilingual, bilingualised and electronic dictionaries. A more detailed exposition will then be given of the field of EAL teaching and the use of dictionaries, and the results of two Australian studies will be presented in order to explore the awareness of MELDs by EAL learners and teachers in Australia. This background situates the current research investigation in the wider field of lexicography in general, and pedagogical lexicography in particular, and addresses two of the three key research areas of this thesis, foregrounding the intersection of lexicography and EAL learners. In particular, it gives the necessary background to the main research question, *To what extent do learners' dictionaries in Australia meet the needs of university-aged EAL users in their coverage of phrasemes?*

1. Lexicography

There is debate over whether lexicography is a form of applied linguistics or a separate field in its own right (Svensén 2009, p. 3), and over whether theoretical lexicography actually exists as a discipline (Atkins & Rundell 2008, p. 9). Wiegand (1984, p. 13) says clearly that 'lexicography is not a branch of so-called applied linguistics' and that it is 'not a branch of lexicology'. Instead, Wiegand says that a general theory of lexicography should include 'lexicographical activities' and the results of these activities, including the 'dictionary plan, the lexicographical file and the dictionary' (1984, p. 14). Such a theory addresses the 'purposes of dictionaries' in terms of specific users and the collection of data (Wiegand 1984, p. 15). Tarp (2008, p. 130) extends this to the specific field of pedagogical lexicography when he says that 'a learner's dictionary is a dictionary whose genuine purpose is to satisfy the lexicographically relevant information needs that learners may have in a range of situations in connection with the foreign-language learning process'.

Although early dictionaries had no theoretical basis, lexicography nowadays is seen as both practical and theoretical, in terms of form, function and content (Gouws & Prinsloo 2005, p. 1). Theories of lexicography only developed from the mid-twentieth century, the most important work being Zgusta's 1971 *Manual of lexicography* which linked the hitherto separate fields of lexicography and linguistics, and Herbert Ernst Wiegand's work in the 1980s and 1990s (Gouws & Prinsloo 2005, pp. 1, 4). Several other significant volumes on the field of lexicography are now available in English, including Landau's *Dictionaries: the art and craft of lexicography* (1984); Hausmann et al's 1989-1991 3 volume work *Wörterbücher. Dictionaries. Dictionnaires. An international encyclopedia of lexicography*; Hartmann's *Teaching and researching lexicography* (2001); Gouws

and Prinsloo's *Principles and practice of South African lexicography* (2005); Atkins and Rundell's *The Oxford guide to practical lexicography* (2008); Tarp's *Lexicography in the borderland between knowledge and non-knowledge. General lexicographical theory with particular focus on learner's lexicography* (2008); and Svensén's *A handbook of lexicography: the theory and practice of dictionary-making* (2009).

One area of debate is whether a dictionary should be based on historical principles. The *Australian national dictionary*, for instance, like the *Oxford English dictionary*, is based on historical principles, in that it gives the etymology of a word and traces its use throughout the centuries (Hanks 2005, p. 260). All words at each entry are presented in chronological order of their emergence in the language. Other dictionaries, like the *Macquarie dictionary*, include more encyclopaedic information (Bailey 2009, p. 293), and do not necessarily list polysemous words in chronological order of first attestation, but rather in order of which meaning is used most frequently.

It was Zgusta (1971) who said that dictionaries should reflect real language usage and introduced the user perspective, which became influential in the 1990s. The user perspective meant that lexicographers should 'compile dictionaries aimed at a well-identified target user group, taking cognisance of their specific needs and reference skills' (Gouws & Prinsloo 2005, p. 3), including who and where the users are, and what problems they might face in using the dictionary (Tarp 2002, p. 67 in Gouws & Prinsloo 2005, p. 7). In particular, compilers of dictionaries should aim to produce a user-friendly linguistic description of a language which is based (increasingly nowadays) on evidence (Atkins & Rundell 2008, p. 9), usually from a corpus of texts collected from native speaker usage.

One major area of agreement upheld by different writers is that a dictionary is in part a cultural artefact (Kuiper 2002, p. 165; Svensén 2009, p. 1). This is inevitable, since, as Zgusta (2006, p. 114) says, 'every word is embedded in culture'. A dictionary therefore presents a portrait of a culture through its language. The culture represented by a dictionary relates to the dictionary's purpose, in that it reflects the contents and the intended readership of the work, and this is extremely important in determining the theoretical basis on which a dictionary is compiled (Gouws & Prinsloo 2005, p 13). Is it, for example, user friendly in its examples and coverage, given its intended audience, and does it choose head-words which the user can readily access (Barnhart 1962 in Gouws & Prinsloo 2005, p. 39)?

If a dictionary is to be user friendly, it needs to present cultural information in a way which is helpful to the user. This is often done by the use of labels, which seek to describe language use. A former area of contention was whether a dictionary should be descriptive, as modern dictionaries aim to be, or prescriptive, as in Samuel Johnson's 1755 *Dictionary of the English language*. Johnson tried to exclude foreign terms, did not want language to change, and said that 'The chief intent of . . . [the Dictionary] is to preserve the purity and ascertain the meaning of our English idiom . . .' (Landau 1984, p. 50). Noah Webster, in his 1828 *An American dictionary of the English language*, was not entirely normative, but omitted indelicate words in his dictionary (Landau 1984, p. 59), thereby prescribing a certain kind of usage. Dictionaries from the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, however, now aim to be descriptive rather than prescriptive, and base their examples of usage on corpora. In this way they seek to be empirical (Atkins & Rundell 2008, p. 49). Labels are still provided, however, to indicate whether a word or term is acceptable in a certain context or in a certain variety of

English. As Wiegand (1984, p. 27) says, 'the dictionary is a text of linguistic instruction with which the lexicographer instructs the dictionary user on the use of the lemma-sign'. It might therefore be said that the dictionary is still acting prescriptively, but that such prescription is perhaps inevitable for those who wish to learn how to communicate competently in a certain setting.

When compiling a dictionary, Zgusta (1971) advises that users of dictionaries are not themselves lexicographers and do not know what a lexicographer intends by an entry. Each entry should therefore stand alone, and any theory included to help the user should be unobtrusive (Zgusta 1971, p. 17). Research is therefore needed to see what problems users have that hinder or prevent their effective use of dictionaries, and to discover why they are using the dictionary and what kinds of linguistic information they are looking for (Hulstijn & Atkins 1998, p. 11). In order to make dictionaries accessible to users, Weinreich (1967, p. 37) recommends that lexicographers should use as few words as possible in their definitions, and use them as often as they can, thereby creating a limited defining vocabulary. Such limited defining vocabularies have been a feature of MELDs since the idea was first used by *LDOCE* in 1978 (Atkins & Rundell 2008, p. 112), although they are not usually a feature of monolingual dictionaries for native speakers.

Whether or not the aim of user friendliness could be termed a theory, it is a principle which most dictionary editors would seek to follow, and it is central to this thesis, which situates research on a particular area (communicative competence in relation to phraseme use in Australia) into this wider theme.

2. Pedagogical lexicography

2.1. Monolingual English learners' dictionaries

Central to the emergence of the learners' dictionary, and to its basis in English language teaching in the early twentieth century, was the vocabulary control movement of the 1920s and 1930s. Three key figures, AS Hornby, Harold E Palmer and Michael West, were instrumental in conducting research into core English vocabulary for non-native speaking school students of English (Cowie 1999a, pp. 14-16), and it was their individual efforts which led to the formation of the first English dictionaries for foreign learners. West and Endicott's decoding dictionary, *A new method English dictionary*, was published in 1935, and Palmer's encoding dictionary, *A grammar of English words*, was published in 1938 (Cowie 2009, pp. 393-394). The first English learners' dictionary to address the needs of non-native speakers for both reading and writing in English was Hornby's landmark 1942 *Idiomatic and syntactic English dictionary* (Cowie 2009, p. 386). Such learners' dictionaries have more theoretical underpinnings in regard to lexical and grammatical research than other English monolingual dictionaries (Cowie 1989 in Cowie 1998a).

Hornby's *Idiomatic and syntactic English dictionary* led to the first edition of the *Advanced learner's dictionary*, published in 1948. This was followed by succeeding editions of the *Oxford advanced learner's dictionary* (OALD) and by MELDs from other publishing houses: the *Longman dictionary of contemporary English* (1978) (*LDOCE*); the *Collins Cobuild English language dictionary* (1987) (*COBUILD*); *Cambridge international dictionary of English* (1995) (*CIDE*), later to become the *Cambridge advanced learner's dictionary* (2003) (*CALD*); the *Macquarie learners dictionary* (1999, for users of English in

Australia) (*MLD*); the *Macmillan English dictionary for advanced learners* (2002) (*MEDAL*); and *Merriam Webster's advanced learner's English dictionary* (2008, for users of American English) (*MWALED*).

English learners' dictionaries are intended primarily for students of English, although other stakeholders, such as translators, may also refer to them (Moon 1999, p. 273), and teachers may use them in their lesson planning (Miller 2008). However, many, if not most, students and teachers are unaware of the potential value of MELDs (see, for example, Atkins & Varantola 1998; Chi 2003). This is usually due to poor retrieval skills (Nesi & Meara 1994; Tono 1984 in Cowie 1999a, p. 189). Cowie (1999a, p. 186), in collating the findings of Tomasczyk (1999), Béjoint (1981) and Marello (1989), shows how learners use dictionaries mainly for decoding activities in respect to written material. Nevertheless, most dictionary editors (see, for example, Rundell in the introduction to *MEDAL* 2002) recognise the need to distinguish between the learner's receptive and productive requirements, and to encourage the latter. *LDOCE*, for instance, highlights core vocabulary, based on information regarding word frequency, giving more information at these entries and less at those deemed to be more useful for comprehension. In this way, more emphasis is placed on production needs. Focussing on the users' needs should thus be central to dictionary planning (Tarp 2008, p. 88).

Since the first edition of *COBUILD* in 1987, extensive use has been made of corpora in deciding what to include in a learners' dictionary (Cowie 1999a). *COBUILD* data, according to the former editor John Sinclair, are taken from the Bank of English corpus, 'the largest collection of data of its kind in any language' (*COBUILD* 2003), with a databank of 520 million words providing the basis for the fourth edition of the dictionary. Other dictionaries have followed this lead.

CALD uses the Cambridge International Corpus (500 million words) for its entries and includes common learner errors which are based on the Cambridge Learner Corpus (15 million words based on students' Cambridge ESOL examination responses) (*CALD* 2003). *LDOCE* is based on the Longman Corpus Network (300 million words) (*LDOCE* 2003), while *MEDAL* uses the World English Corpus (200 million words) (*MEDAL 2002*). *OALD* is based on the British National Corpus and the Oxford English Corpus (*OALD* 2010). Corpora provide editors with information on actual language use, and can be drawn on to inform decisions on inclusion and labelling.

Historically, definitions were created by lexicographers and exemplified by citations from written sources. With the advent of corpus linguistics, a much wider range of citations is possible, encompassing both spoken and written material. Sinclair, in introducing the first edition of *COBUILD*, suggested that example sentences could both explain and model native speaker language use for the English learner (1987 in Cowie 1999a, p. 134), and that authentic examples could do this more effectively than invented sentences. Hornby (1965 in Cowie 1999a, p. 134) had earlier argued that invented examples could effectively be tailored to meet a range of learner needs, including grammatical and lexical information. Although Sinclair argues that 'invented examples . . . have no independent authority or reason for their existence' (1987 in Cowie 1999a, p. 134), it must be remembered that invented examples are written by native speakers and in this sense provide an 'authentic' use of language. Nevertheless, the Big 5 all use corpus examples to a greater or lesser extent in their definitions.

At least one writer (Hanks 2005) claims that corpora may be lacking in usefulness owing to the range of the material which they include. Hanks argues (2005, p. 264) that 'authenticity is necessary, but it is not sufficient'. Although

examples should be authentic, he suggests that 'pedagogical lexicographers . . . place a greater premium on elegance and instructiveness' (Hanks 2005, p. 264). 'Human intuition' is therefore important in regard to the choice of what to include in a MELD (Atkins & Rundell 2008, p. 93). If this is the case, then it might be said that although lexicographers claim not to be prescriptive, they cannot avoid a certain amount of prescriptivism, since in choosing what to include in their dictionaries and definitions they are directing the learner to a certain area of English and a certain area of English-speaking culture. Of course, this may be driven by economic demands on the part of the publishers. It can, however, lead to a form of lexicography which is inevitably ethnocentric.

The traditional manner of definition, using synonyms, has been refined in the Big 5, all of which make use of the aforementioned limited defining vocabulary. This metalanguage includes not only high frequency words, but those needed for learning (Widdowson in the introduction to *OALD* 2005), and ranges from 2000 to 3000 words. The synonym style is still used by four of the Big 5, but extended from single words into clauses and phrases. 'Adult', for instance, is defined as 'a fully grown person who is legally responsible for their actions' (*OALD* 2005, p. 21). The example sentences from *OALD* (2005) are 'An adult under British law is someone over 18 years old. – Adults pay an admission charge but children get in free.' *LDOCE* and *MEDAL* also concentrate on the physical and social aspects. *LDOCE* (2003) has '1. a fully-grown person, or one who is considered to be legally responsible for their actions; 2. a fully-grown animal' (p. 21), while *MEDAL* (2002) reads '1. someone who is no longer a child and is legally responsible for their actions; 2. a completely grown animal' (p. 19). *LDOCE* (2003) uses a contrast in its first example sentence ('Some children find it difficult to talk to adults') and a less informative example for the animal reference ('The

adults have white bodies and grey backs') (p. 21). *MEDAL* exemplifies only the human reference: 'Tickets are £2.50 for adults and £1.50 for children'. (Note, incidentally, the cultural reference to British English here in the currency marker.) *CALD* (2008) has 'a person or animal that has grown to full size and strength' (p. 20). Only *COBUILD* (2003) has adopted an entirely different defining style, using a complete sentence: 'An adult is a mature, fully developed person. An adult has reached the age when they are legally responsible for their actions' (p. 20). Again, a comparison with children is made in the example sentences: 'Becoming a father signified that he was now an adult. . . Children under 14 must always be accompanied by an adult.' (This does not take into account, however, the fact that boys under the age of 14 may occasionally also be fathers.) The longer style of definition is designed to provide greater information for users to aid them with their production and comprehension skills.

Despite many advances in pedagogical lexicography in the last few decades, some problems remain unresolved. One such problem is the treatment and inclusion of phrasemes. The word 'phraseme' in this thesis refers to what are commonly called 'idioms', 'similes' and 'proverbs', and will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Three.

2.2 Phrasemes in learners' dictionaries

Phrasemes, in the form of idioms, have been identified by Atkins and Rundell (2008, p. 168) as 'the most difficult multiword expressions to handle in lexicography'. This may be partly due to the difficulty in treating them consistently, since many phrasemes are variable. It is also difficult to know which word to treat as the headword. Although a dictionary's style guide and

introductory notes can help users, it is also a well-known fact that users frequently fail to consult such information (Béjoint 1981, p. 216).

A key problem for EAL learners when looking for a phraseme in a dictionary is that they cannot be expected to know whether a word belongs to a collocation, an idiom or a proverb (Bergenholtz & Gouws 2008, p. 242). They will therefore not know which kind of dictionary to consult (i.e. a general dictionary or an idiom dictionary), and so they need to be able to find the term through a variety of paths. Bergenholtz and Gouws (2008, p. 244) divide these paths into two: the 'outer search route', which leads the user to the expression; and the 'inner search route', within the entry. They make the important point that users may waste a lot of time searching a dictionary and not finding an entry, which will deter them from using that dictionary again (p. 254).

European-style dictionaries are generally based on Russian phraseological principles, while Anglo-American dictionaries do not have a clear theoretical basis underlying their categorisation of idioms and other phrasemes (Moon 1998a, p. 17). This leads to differences among dictionaries as to what is classified as an idiom, so that proverbs and phrasal verbs may both be included under this heading, as well as formulaic expressions and collocations. The Big 5, for example, use the terms 'phrase' or 'idiom' to cover opaque and semi-transparent idioms, similes and proverbs. More specifically, *CALD* and *OALD* use the term 'idiom', supplemented by 'saying' in certain cases; *COBUILD* and *MEDAL* use 'phrase'; and *LDOCE* does not label most of its expressions. (However, there is an exception in *LDOCE* with the saying *charity begins at home*, which is labelled as a phrase, so no doubt there are further exceptions to the general rule.)

Apart from the terminological lack of consistency in regard to phraseology, another problem arises for users unfamiliar with a culture: dictionaries do not explain how we understand things in terms of systematic metaphors (Lakoff & Johnson 1980, p. 115). For example, with the expression 'Look how far we've come in our relationship' there is no link to the underlying metaphor, LOVE IS A JOURNEY. This is because 'definitions for a concept are seen as characterizing the things that are inherent in the concept itself' (Lakoff & Johnson 1980, p. 116). If such underlying metaphors were included, it might make it easier for learners to remember such expressions, since motivation is important in the understanding of a phraseme (Dobrovol'skij & Piirainen 2005, p. 79). It should be borne in mind, of course, that underlying metaphors may differ according to the speaker's own culture. Nevertheless, it appears that 'with a few exceptions, metalexicographers have written little on metaphor, and metaphorists almost nothing on dictionaries' (Moon 2004, p. 197). This means that sometimes a figurative phraseme will be given a separate entry, while at other times it will be tacked on to an entry for a literal meaning. Another problem, highlighted by Moon (2004, p. 213) with regard to the inclusion of metaphorical expressions in the *Macmillan English dictionary*, 'was to devise a discursive explanation of the conceptual metaphor that was clear, informative, and remained within MED's defining vocabulary'. More often than not, however, 'in practice, 'fig.' just seems to be inserted whenever it occurs to the lexicographer to do so' (Ayto 1986, p. 49). The treatment of figurative language in dictionaries is therefore clearly problematic.

2.3 Phraseme headwords

Another major problem, that of knowing which word to choose as a headword in a multiword expression, is one by which lexicographers have been plagued (or intrigued, depending on the point of view) for centuries. Early compilations of

English proverbs used either a thematic or an alphabetical order. Alphabetical order was first used in the 1600s, but this order was based on the first word in the phraseme, which of course could vary (Doyle 2007, pp. 183-185). Words such as articles or pronouns could be used as the first word, leading to a lack of consistency, since many proverbs can take either *a* or *the*, or varying pronouns. Verbs may also vary. For example, native speakers can say either *take* or *carry coals to Newcastle.*

It was John Ray, in 1670, who first adopted the use of 'material words', which were '"Printed in different Character, that so with the least cast of an eye any man may find any Proverb"' (Doyle 2007, p. 186). This was developed further in the mid twentieth century in separate works by Whiting and Tilley, who both selected the first noun as the key feature for listing proverbs alphabetically (Doyle 2007, p. 191). If there was no noun, then the first finite verb was used, and if no verb was present then the 'first important word' was chosen (Doyle 2007, p. 191). This became the prevailing method in the United States, and also the usual method in general dictionaries, where fixed expressions are normally included in a separate entry under a headword taken from the expression (Bergenholtz & Gouws 2008, pp. 237-238).

It is not always easy, however, for a user to find a multiword expression in a dictionary. Those not familiar with codes and abbreviations used in a dictionary may not know how to access an entry, and may be stumped by what Bergenholtz and Gouws (2008, p. 239) refer to as 'the multi-layered nature of the access attempts which a user needs to perform in order to retrieve fixed expressions from a dictionary'. Moreover, phrasemes are not normally used as headwords, except in the case of compounds and phrasal verbs (Atkins & Rundell 2008, p. 181). Mulhall (2010) indicates that this treatment makes phrasemes appear to be less

important than single words, and forces the lexicographer to decide which word to choose as the headword, which Mulhall sees as 'a largely subjective and complex decision' (p. 1355). It also presupposes that the user will think in a similar way to the lexicographer, and choose the same 'semantically heaviest' word as a headword, potentially leading to many frustrating failures when searching.

Returning to the problem of metaphoricity, van der Meer (1999) points out that because words are given in order of frequency, a metaphorical meaning may appear before a literal one. He argues that this is less helpful for the language learner, who will usually find it easier to remember the figurative meaning if they have first learned the literal one. In such cases, Ayto (1986) argues that it is preferable if the literal meaning is given first. Often, however, there is a non-defined meaning of a word which is felt by a native speaker but not necessarily by a language learner. Ayto (1986) gives the example of *mule*, which can be used to refer to a stubborn person, based on the cultural knowledge that a mule is often given as the example of a stubborn animal. In this case, it is difficult for a lexicographer to decide when a word or expression should appear as a separate entry, and which word to choose as the headword.

Choosing the canonical form and showing variations is another problem, as is the indication of any connotations (Moon 1999, p. 273). Gates (1986, p. 102), in a study of six English dictionaries, found that five of them placed multi-word units as main entries at the first 'major invariable word'. For example, *go/run to seed* was placed at *seed*. Generally, however, there was no consistency shown between the dictionaries in Gates' study, some choosing nouns and others preferring verbs as headwords, and no consistency shown within the dictionaries for expressions containing only function words (Gates 1986, p. 103).

This thesis addresses the allocation of headwords given by the Big 5 to the 84 phrasemes in the study, to see if there is consistency and if any problems might arise for a user in the look-up process. Such information relates to the question of coverage of phrasemes by the Big 5 in terms of the principle of user-friendliness.

2.4 Labels in learners' dictionaries

One of the most common complaints made about the use of labels in dictionaries generally, and MELDs in particular, is that there is also a lack of consistency in labelling. Kipfer (1984), for example, claims that all dictionaries label words differently and make their own assessment of the information a reader might require, making the situation hard for the user who refers to more than one dictionary. Marckwardt (1973) reminds us that register labels may also vary between dictionaries, thus making them unreliable.

Labels in MELDs refer not only to usage, but also to parts of speech, meaning that there is a wider range of abbreviations in a MELD than in most normal dictionaries. In most cases, the labelling is included in the textual dictionary entry. In *COBUILD*, the innovative 'extra column' (Kirkness 2004, p. 70) gives information on features such as usage and grammar in a separate location next to the main entry. Wherever the information is placed, however, the plethora of abbreviations makes it hard for users to negotiate and use the information, especially since they are generally unlikely to have read the introduction where this notation is explained, or have failed to read it thoroughly (Béjoint 1981, p. 216). The way in which phrasemes are identified and explained is related to labels of usage and register.

The assigning of labels can be problematic. Indeed, Philip Gove, editor of *Webster's* 3, wanted to abandon labels, mainly because he did not want to be

responsible for deciding which to use (Kipfer 1984, p. 149). Kipfer (1984) comments that G and C Merriam (1967) wrote in 'A new guide to dictionary use' for *Webster's* 7, 'it is virtually impossible for a dictionary to apply status labels with honest realism or with any useful degree of consistency. As a guide to usage the best dictionary is the one that applies such restrictive labelling the least.' Labels of register are the hardest to write, since 'native speaker's intuition is not enough' (Atkins 1992/93, p. 27) and it is very difficult to achieve consistency over years and between writers, let alone between dictionaries.

The word 'usage' refers not only to actual usage but also to suitability in terms of 'time, place or circumstance' (Kipfer 1984, p. 140). She adds that any word that is not labelled is considered by the lexicographer to be standard. Bogaards (1999, pp. 115-116) says that 'discoursal indications' are reflected in labels, e.g. region, subject domain, style, attitude. Some dictionaries (especially *OALD*) are organised in this way, while others prefer grammatical (*COBUILD*) or semantic categories (*LDOCE, CIDE*). So far, no research has been conducted to see which of these is the most effective.

Many suggestions have been made as to the number and types of labels that should be used. If the labels of seven major writers are combined, seven major categories and three minor categories can be made. A summary is given in Table 1 below. The first six labels in this schema are taken from Atkins (1992/93, p. 27), whose list of six labels provides a simple but comprehensive point of departure. Possible sub-categories or examples of the labels used by different writers are given in the second column, with writers' names in the third column.

Table 1: Table of dictionary labels

Labels	Sub-categories	Writers
1. Register	formal	Atkins; Gläser
	familiar	Atkins
	informal	Card et al; Landau
	colloquial	Gläser; Kipfer
	standard	Card, McDavid Jr & McDavid; Kipfer
	non-standard	Card, McDavid Jr & McDavid; Kipfer
	conformity to a situation	Card, McDavid Jr & McDavid
2. Currency	obsolete	Atkins; Card, McDavid Jr & McDavid
	old-fashioned	Atkins; Card, McDavid Jr & McDavid
	archaic	Card, McDavid Jr & McDavid; Gläser; Kipfer; Landau
	modern	Gläser
3. Style	poetic	Atkins
	technical	Atkins
	literary	Gläser
4. Pragmatics	pleasure	Atkins
	surprise	Atkins
5. Status	dialect	Atkins
	slang	Atkins; Card, McDavid Jr & McDavid; Gläser; Kipfer; Landau
	jargon	Atkins
	attitude/expressive markers	Card, McDavid Jr & McDavid; Gläser; Stein
	- derogatory	Card, McDavid Jr & McDavid; Gläser
	- euphemism	Card, McDavid Jr & McDavid; Gläser
	- taboo	Gläser; Landau
	- facetious	Gläser
	- jocular	Gläser
	insult	Landau
6. Field	e.g. architecture, music etc.	Atkins; Gläser; Kipfer; Landau
	occupation	Card, McDavid Jr & McDavid
7. Region	etymological – word from the country, referent anywhere (e.g. *billabong*)	Card, McDavid Jr & McDavid; Kipfer; Landau; Norri; Stein
	geographical – referent specific to the country but word recognised elsewhere (e.g. *kangaroo*)	Norri
8. Medium	speech	Card, McDavid Jr & McDavid
	writing	Card, McDavid Jr & McDavid
9. Frequency	rare	Landau
10. Maturity	age of speaker (e.g. juvenile)	Card, McDavid Jr & McDavid

Atkins' first label is *register*. This overlaps with and includes Kipfer's *status/stylistic* label (1984); Card, McDavid Jr and McDavid's *relationship to reader or hearer*, *social position* and *responsibility* (1984); Landau's *style* and *status/cultural level* (1984); and the *colloquial* and *formal* aspects of Gläser's (1998) *stylistic* label. The level of formality indicated by the register label is important for users who wish to write academic assignments or converse socially with their peers or older people.

The second label suggested by Atkins is *currency*. This would include Stein's *currency* (1999); Kipfer's *status/temporal* (1984); Card, McDavid Jr and McDavid's *history* (1984); Landau's *currency/temporality* (1984); and the *archaic* and *modern* parts of Gläser's *stylistic* label (1998). Currency is difficult to quantify and, according to Atkins and Rundell (2008, p. 186) 'depends on [the] user profile'. For example, what appears as 'archaic' in one dictionary may be labelled 'obsolete' in another. Atkins and Rundell (2008, p. 229) make the important statement:

It is particularly useful for language-learners to be warned that an item is no longer in current use among younger speakers: this is the purpose of the 'time' label [earlier referred to by Atkins as 'currency'] . . ., which can also be used to mark as 'ephemeral' phrases which have only recently entered the language and are not expected to stick around for long. In the absence of a crystal ball, editors tend to avoid 'ephemeral' labelling.

As Card, McDavid Jr and McDavid (1984) point out, usage labels vary over time to reflect language change and 'the most elaborate statements we write cannot do more than set out principles by which a reader or listener may evaluate what he hears and sees' (p. 68). The ephemeral nature of much speech could,

however, be captured in electronic format so that users can see which expressions are most widely used by their own age group. Users could reveal or hide whichever labels they wanted in an electronic dictionary (Atkins & Rundell 2008, p. 497).

Although 'ephemeral' labelling is obviously hard to maintain, some indication of currency is obviously important for users, particularly in regard to whether an item is old-fashioned. *Old-fashioned* is a term which might apply to some phrasemes used by older people but not by younger ones. The range of the label *old-fashioned* varies among the Big 5, however. As Stein (1999, p. 57) says, currency is often inconsistently marked. *CALD* (2008) uses *old-fashioned* for 'not used in modern English – you might find these words in books, used by older people, or used in order to be funny'; and *MEDAL* (2002) has 'no longer in current use but still used by some older people'. *COBUILD* (2009), however, uses it to refer to 'no longer in common use'; *LDOCE* (2003) has 'a word that was commonly used in the past, but would sound old-fashioned today'; and *OALD* (2010) has 'passing out of common use'. There is thus a discrepancy among the dictionaries as to whether *old-fashioned* means something is no longer commonly used, or whether it is restricted to older users. Moreover, there is no indication as to how old these 'older users' might be. As Sinclair (1991, p. 38) warns, dictionaries have 'two types of red herring which should be left out of new dictionaries [. . . one of which is . . .] forms and/or meanings which have lapsed into disuse, but are not so indicated.'

This thesis seeks to identify phrasemes used by different groups of speakers. If it is found that some are used mainly by older speakers, then the *old-fashioned* label could be more accurately defined, and used to refer to items used mainly by

those of a particular age group, or restricted to items which are passing from common use.

The third label is Atkins' *style*. This includes Gläser's *literary* category from her *stylistic* label (1998). The fourth is *pragmatics*, which is not covered by any of the other writers and incidentally includes only feelings or emotions. The fifth is *status*, which also covers Stein's *attitude* (1999) and Card, McDavid Jr and McDavid's *attitude* and *association/slang* (1984); Landau's *taboo*, *insult* and *slang* (1984); and Gläser's *expressive markers* and *stylistic/slang* (1998). Atkins' final label is *field*, which includes Kipfer's *subject* (1984); Card, McDavid Jr and McDavid's *association/occupational* (1984); Landau's *technical* (1984); and Gläser's *register* (1998). All these are important for EAL learners who want to use vocabulary in a situationally appropriate way.

The seventh label, *region* (Stein (1999); Kipfer (1984); Card; McDavid Jr & McDavid (1984); and Landau (1984)), is further subdivided by Norri (1996), who suggests that it would be helpful to distinguish between etymological and geographical labels. Norri (1996, p. 27) gives four suggestions for regional labelling. The first is used for a word referring to something not specific to a certain region and not used elsewhere (for example *moggy*, which is used to mean *cat* in British but not American English). The second is used for a word whose referent is mainly specific to a region and no other word exists outside the region (such as Norri's example of the Scottish *ashet*, referring to a large dish for roasting or serving meat). The third refers to a generally known phenomenon which is used to discuss something with reference to a region (e.g. *Hogmanay*), for which two definitions could be given, one with a regional label and one in which the region is part of the definition. The fourth is used for a word restricted to a region and with no equivalent elsewhere (e.g. *leprechaun*).

Regional phrasemes need to be marked so that students of English use the correct phraseme for their country of residence (in this thesis, Australia). Norri (1996) says that it is hard to find a 'clear and unambiguous system' for labelling. He points out (p. 10) that regionalisms may be indicated by means other than labels (e.g. by giving an American alternative at the end of the entry), but concludes that 'the picture that emerges from a study of regional labelling in American and British dictionaries is essentially one of disharmony' (Norri 1996, p. 26). This thesis will examine the regional labelling of 84 phrasemes from British and Australian English in the Big 5 in order to determine whether regional labels for these items are assigned correctly and sufficiently for users in Australia. Moreover, what is not marked is assumed to be standard usage (Benson 2001, p. 7), and yet that might not be the case. As Benson says (2001, p. 118), an important question to ask is whether British English terms are actually used in other countries.

Medium (e.g. speech or writing) (Card, McDavid Jr & McDavid 1984) is obviously important for EAL learners, and has some overlap with *formal/informal*, since written academic texts tend to be much more formal than spoken language. *Frequency* (Landau 1984) is also vital, and *CALD, COBUILD, LDOCE* and *MEDAL* all indicate the most frequent words in their paper dictionaries in a different font colour or by use of a symbol.

Frequency of use of a set of phrasemes is an important issue that is addressed in this thesis, but since none of the phrasemes in this study are found in the most frequent words used in English it is not expected that frequency of use should be signalled for them in a MELD. Nevertheless, the inclusion of a phraseme in a MELD presupposes that it is in use within a language. This study investigates whether this is still the case in Australia with regard to these phrasemes.

Maturity (Card, McDavid Jr & McDavid 1984) refers to the appropriateness of certain terms when addressing certain age groups. For example, *dolly* is appropriate when talking to a child, but not to an adult. *Maturity* is a label which saves embarrassment on the part of the speaker. Card, McDavid Jr and McDavid (1984) give the example of a university professor using slang more usually associated with their younger students, and appearing ridiculous to students in consequence. Appropriate labelling can help dictionary users to avoid such a situation.

EAL learners need to communicate competently with native speakers of their own age group, but Chan and Loong (1999, p. 302) point out that such learners may not be aware of what language is appropriate in a particular context. There is information in some dictionaries about children's language, as in the *MLD*'s entry for *spook*, which 'is generally used in children's stories. The usual word is **ghost**.' However, there appears to be no label consistently used in dictionaries to mark out the speech of younger people, for example in the age range of about 16-22, which represents the largest numbers of those at university in Australia. This is a central issue which my thesis seeks to address by examining the knowledge and use of phrasemes by native speakers of English in Australia and the UK, in order to establish if there is a need for such a label. If there is, then a label such as *youth* could be used to indicate a certain range of maturity, and a greater use of the label *old-fashioned* could indicate that an item is little used by the younger age group of 16-22 year olds.

3.   Other dictionaries for learners

3.1   Australian learners' dictionaries

Since MELDs are in demand in Australia, where many international students come to study in English for degrees at Australian universities, it might be expected that there would be a MELD designed specifically for the Australian market. In fact, there is an *Australian learners dictionary* (1997), published by Macquarie and aimed at intermediate level students.   There was also the *Macquarie learners dictionary* (1999), aimed at advanced students, and now out of print.   The *Macquarie learners dictionary* was an excellent example of a MELD for use in Australia, competing with the Big 5 in its coverage of grammatical as well as lexical information. Unfortunately, it seems that there was perhaps insufficient demand for this advanced dictionary in Australia to warrant its continuance in financial terms.

One reason for this lack of demand may have been that many students buy their MELDs in other countries, where cheaper editions of the Big 5 are available. As they have usually studied English in their home country, they are also likely to have bought a MELD previously, meaning that they might not be so predisposed to buy a new dictionary on arrival in Australia. This does not mean, however, that an Australian MELD would not be useful. Several Australian teachers in Miller's survey (2008) felt that the existing MELDs were too British-centric and that an Australian MELD was needed. However, only three had heard of the *Australian learner's dictionary* and two knew of the *Macquarie learner's dictionary*. It therefore appears that an Australian MELD would need to be heavily marketed to both students and teachers if it were to be successful.

3.2 Learners' dictionaries in other languages

Learners' dictionaries exist, of course, in other languages, and have similar problems to address as those faced by the English MELDs. French and Portuguese, for instance, have many language varieties to consider.

French, for example, has the *Dictionnaire du français – référence, apprentissage* (1999) (Le Robert and CLE International). This dictionary uses sentence-style definitions, contains grammatical information and includes false friends in 14 languages (Robert 2008). There is also the *Dictionnaire d'apprentissage du français langue étrangère ou seconde* (DAFLES) (n.d.), an online electronic learners' dictionary designed for encoding and decoding. The original DAFLES is now on a new site named 'Lexical Database for French (Base lexicale du français - BLF)', at the time of writing, and can be accessed via the Université Catholique de Louvain at the website http://ilt.kuleuven.be/blf/. The information for learners is sometimes phrased as a question, such as 'Is it *le* or *la*?', 'Is it spelled correctly?' or 'Which verb form is it?', which engages the user and anticipates the kind of questions they may have.

In Portuguese, the *Dicionário do português básico* (1990) is aimed at native and non-native speakers aged between 10 and 15 (p. 1151). It contains grammatical information and aims to help users with encoding and decoding in Portuguese (p. 1152). As its name suggests, it is a basic dictionary, not aimed at advanced learners.

German has many examples of learners' dictionaries, and I am indebted to Dr Antje Töpel (personal communication, 5 November 2010) for the following examples: the Langenscheidt *Großwörterbuch Deutsch als Fremdsprache* (2008) with 66,000 entries; the Langenscheidt *Taschenwörterbuch Deutsch als*

Fremdsprache (2007), which has 30,000 entries and a computer controlled defining vocabulary; the Pons *Großwörterbuch Deutsch als Fremdsprache* (2004), with 77,000 entries; and the Wissen Media *Wahrig Großwörterbuch Deutsch als Fremdsprache* (2008), with about 70,000 entries.

In Polish, there is Halina Zgółkowa's *Słownik minimum języka polskiego z zarysem gramatyki polskiej* (2009), whose title can be translated as 'Minimal dictionary of the Polish language with an outline of Polish grammar', and which has 2144 entries, with examples and collocations, a limited defining vocabulary, and a list of the most frequent words, and an appendix which lists words by syntactic category (Pius ten Hacken, personal communication, 5 November 2010).

The learners' dictionary field is thus a large one, judging by the examples above. This study will concentrate, however, on British English MELDs, which are the ones most applicable for this particular piece of research. Not all students use only a MELD however. Bilingual dictionaries are still popular.

3.3   Bilingual dictionaries

Bilingual dictionaries are usually synchronic and alphabetic, written for native speakers of one language who want to find an equivalent word or expression in another language (Landau 1984, p. 7). In this sense they are 'bidirectional', providing information on two languages for one native speaker (Kirkness 2004, p. 61). It should therefore be made clear which native language is being assumed. This would answer the problem of the language used for definitions (the metalanguage) (Harrell 1967, p. 53). Often there will be two sections: one section translating from L1 to L2 and the other (in the same or a separate volume or volumes) translating from L2 to L1. Since the dictionary is often compiled with a

particular language group in mind, more information may be given for one language than for another (Haas 1967, p. 47).

The grammar/translation method of language teaching used in the UK for many years (Richards & Rodgers 2001, p. 6) relied heavily on the use of bilingual dictionaries, as students translated texts from L1 to L2 and vice versa. The growth of communicative language teaching in the late 1970s and early 1980s, however, led to a greater reliance on contextualisation and less reliance on direct translation, so that many teachers reacted against the use of bilingual dictionaries and discouraged their use in classrooms (Summers 1988, p. 112). Studies have shown, however, that advanced learners use and benefit from bilingual dictionaries (Lew 2004). Swanson (1967, p. 66) suggests that bilingual dictionaries should contain detailed information on 'word-formational habits of the target language'. He also claims that bilingual dictionaries can lead to vocabulary expansion, since when looking up one word another may be learned (p. 69).

There is therefore a place for bilingual dictionaries in language learning which could complement the use of a MELD. One dictionary which seeks to combine the features of a MELD and a bilingual dictionary is the bilingualised dictionary.

3.4   Bilingualised dictionaries

A bilingualised dictionary takes a monolingual learners' dictionary as its starting point but also provides translations of parts of the entry (Cowie 2009, p. 405). For example, the K Dictionaries entry for 'dictionary' (K Dictionaries Ltd. 2009-2010), when consulted by a French speaker, gives all the information in English but also translates the word 'dictionary' into French (see Figure 1).

dictionary [ˈdikʃənəri]– *plural* ˈ**dictionaries**

♦ *noun*

1 a book containing the words of a language alphabetically arranged, with their meanings *etc* : *This is an English dictionary.*
French **dictionnaire**

2 a book containing other information alphabetically arranged: *a dictionary of place-names.*
French **dictionnaire**

Figure 1: K Dictionaries entry for 'dictionary', providing a translation in French

The use of both L1 and L2 helps a user with decoding and encoding tasks (Cowie 2009, p. 406), while giving them maximum exposure to English. So far, little research has been done on the usefulness of this kind of dictionary, although Laufer and Levitsky-Aviad (2006) have said that they are helpful for a wider range of users than other forms of dictionary, and are valuable for encoding.

3.5 Dictionaries of idioms

In addition to monolingual, bilingual and bilingualised dictionaries, English contains many dictionaries of phrases and idioms, varying from the scholarly to the colloquial. Among the more recent scholarly works are the *Cambridge idioms dictionary* (2006), the *Collins COBUILD dictionary of idioms* (2002), the *Longman idioms dictionary* (1998) and the slightly older *Oxford dictionary of current idiomatic English* (*ODCIE*) in two volumes (1975 and 1983).

ODCIE volume 2, *Phrase, clause and sentence idioms*, draws its examples from contemporary spoken and written sources (Cowie, Mackin & McCaig 1983, p. x). This is important, as many collections of idioms make no distinction between past and current use, but continue to list phrases which have historically formed part of the language. As Cowie says in his introduction (Cowie, Mackin & McCaig 1983, p. xxxviii), 'The idioms in this dictionary represent the usage of educated British speakers in the latter half of the twentieth century' and 'a number

are now confined to speakers in or beyond middle age, and will be thought dated by many now reaching adulthood'. This is the very point which the current thesis addresses, namely, which phrasemes are used mainly by older speakers, and which are still used by younger people 'reaching adulthood'.

Idioms dictionaries are obviously better for decoding than for encoding. Béjoint (2003, p. 85) suggests that in order to have an encoding idioms dictionary it would have to be arranged semantically rather than alphabetically. Even so, it is hard to see how an encoding dictionary of idioms could be applied without very detailed information about how and when to use the phraseme, and what age groups would usually use it.

While the above idioms dictionaries are helpful for EAL learners, there remains the underlying problem that learners must first identify a word as belonging to a phraseme in order to know that an idioms dictionary is an appropriate source to consult (Wible 2008, p. 167). Although this problem is being eroded slowly by the incorporation of idioms dictionaries into the search engines used in online dictionaries, most students will probably turn to a MELD rather than to an idioms dictionary as their first point of consultation for the meaning of a phraseme.

4. Electronic and online dictionaries

In the 1990s, with the growth of technology, many students began to favour the use of electronic dictionaries (Midlane 2005 in Chen 2010, p. 276). These are available in the form of small portable electronic devices, CD-ROMs, online dictionaries (increasingly accessible through wireless Internet connections) and mobile phone applications. The more sophisticated offer complete versions of recognised MELDs such as *COBUILD, LDOCE* and *OALD*. It is questionable

whether students use this particular feature, however, since anecdotally it is noticeable that most students prefer the translation to the monolingual option on their machines. My own students at university in Australia tend to prefer pocket electronic dictionaries to printed editions because of their low cost and easy portability. Moreover, increasing numbers of students now carry laptop computers with them, and it is obviously easier to have all their reference material on their computer or to access it online through wireless Internet connections. In addition to this, many mobile phone companies provide MELD applications, and it is easy for students to consult these at any time (even in lectures, where their apparent lack of attention to the speaker does not necessarily mean that they are not engaging with the topic but rather that they are checking unfamiliar vocabulary).

Increasing ease of Internet access means that the Big 5 are now all readily accessible online at the time of writing (December 2010). They are also available free of charge, making them a more attractive proposition to users than the printed editions, which also come with a CD-ROM. This is a financial challenge for publishers which was debated at the Euralex 2010 conference.

Online and electronic MELDs have the advantage of being quick to access. They also provide spoken pronunciation and other audio-visual material (Nesi 2009, p. 477) and, as stated above, can link to other sources, such as idioms dictionaries. It is possible that online dictionaries may feel more 'tailor-made' for the user, since he or she can search through them more quickly than through a printed dictionary, giving a gratifying feeling of satisfaction in the search process (Bergenholtz & Gouws 2008, p. 241). This might incidentally have the effect of increasing profits, if a charge is made for the use of the dictionary.

The quality of online information is variable, however, particularly in regard to phrasemes. Using a simple translation tool, for instance, can cause problems if one looks up a multi-word expression. For example, the English phraseme in *I've got a frog in my throat* is translated into Portuguese by Google Translate as *Tenho um sapo na minha garganta* (meaning <u>literally</u> *I've got a frog in my throat*), a much more uncomfortable proposition than the English need to clear one's throat. Such sophistication is captured more in MELDs, or in established dictionaries like the Portuguese Porto Editora series, where under the online entry for *frog* we find the phraseme to *have a frog in one's* throat translated as *ter a garganta arranhada* (literally *to have a scratchy throat*, which is closer to the meaning of the English original). The message here is to choose one's online dictionary wisely. This is something that is hard for learners to do, since they are very likely to choose the cheapest option without realising the potential difference in quality of information. Now that the Big 5 are freely available online, however, learners have a greater choice of quality products – they just need to be made aware of the difference in quality between various online dictionaries.

Research has shown that online dictionaries can have a positive effect on vocabulary retention (E Peters 2007). This is exemplified by a recent study which suggests that electronic dictionaries do help in language learning and that increased involvement in dictionary consultation by means of the visual impact created by a computer screen aids retention of new items (Dziemianko 2010, p. 265). Online dictionaries therefore have great possibilities for language teaching and learning.

The electronic dictionary also has the potential to avoid the problem of portability raised by the size of a paper dictionary which seeks to be inclusive (Zgusta 2006, pp. 136, 138). However, the problem of currency still needs to be

considered. As Doyle says (2007, p. 194), dictionaries become 'out-of-date at the moment of their publication'. Can this be avoided by an online dictionary? To some extent this is possible, since online dictionaries can be updated frequently without the costs incurred in printing and publishing new editions, but the data collection still needs to be done in order to keep items current. An 'empirical description of what the language user does in communicative contexts' (Hartmann 1981, p. 270) is therefore necessary in order to provide young adult EAL learners with up-to-date information on how native speakers of their own generation use language. Such an empirical description, in regard to the use of certain phrasemes, is the focus of this thesis.

5. Dictionaries in relation to EAL learning and teaching

In approaching the area of English teaching and learning, it is important first to distinguish between the different acronyms applied to different groups of learners. EFL refers to 'English as a Foreign Language', and is used for those students who are studying English in a country where English is not the native language (for example, Japanese students learning English in Japan). ESL is 'English as a Second Language', and refers to students using English as an L2 in an English-speaking country (Granger 2002, p. 8). Since many students speak more than two languages, however, the acronym EAL, 'English as an Additional Language' (Kachru 1982, 1992, p. 2) is more accurate, implying that English is one of perhaps several languages other than one's mother tongue, and will be used throughout this thesis.

The theory of communicative competence has been central to the teaching of English as an additional language at least since Canale and Swain's landmark article 'Theoretical bases of communicative approaches to second language

teaching and testing' (1980), and emphasises the importance of 'learning how to communicate as a member of a particular socio-cultural group' (Breen & Candlin 1980, p. 90). Communication, as Savignon (1972, p. 10) says, is more than 'mastery of the mechanics of the language'. The theory of communicative competence proposed by Canale and Swain had three main areas: 'grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, and strategic competence' (1980, p. 28). As Widdowson (1979, p. 248) says, 'communicative competence is not a compilation of items in memory, but a set of strategies or procedures for realizing the value of linguistic elements in contexts of use, an ability to *make* sense . . . by the skilful deployment of shared knowledge of code resources and rules of language use.' In other words, it acknowledges 'prior knowledge of meaning and prior knowledge of how such meaning can be realised through the conventions of language form and behaviour' (Breen & Candlin 1980, p. 90). Although it has not been adopted worldwide (Larsen-Freeman 2000, p. 179), being largely used in Western countries, the communicative approach has continued into the twenty-first century in most Western EAL classrooms and, as a result of this approach, classroom work is conducted almost entirely in the target language (Train 2003, p. 9).

Communicative competence embraces not only lexical and syntactic components, but proficiency in pragmatic and cultural knowledge. The notion of sociolinguistic competence is particularly relevant to this thesis, since, as Canale and Swain explain, 'Knowledge of these rules will be crucial in interpreting utterances for social meaning, particularly when there is a low level of transparency between the literal meaning of an utterance and the speaker's intention' (1980, p. 30). While they are not referring here to the use of phrasemes *per se*, it is clear that the correspondence between a literal and a figurative

meaning may be further obscured when a speaker uses a phraseme, and, moreover, a learner needs to be able use phrasemes in situations that are socially relevant. Some writers (e.g. Tseng 2003) feel that a MELD should do more to help learners grow in their sociolinguistic competence. As Cowie says, 'pedagogical dictionaries should help the learner to be aware of, and if possible avoid, common sources of error in the language he is attempting to acquire' (1979, p. 82).

The communicative approach to teaching English had some negative effects on the use of dictionaries in the language classroom, with many teachers 'actively discouraging' their use and not training their students to use dictionaries effectively, preferring students to guess meanings from contexts (Summers 1988, pp. 112, 123). This was still true in 2005, according to a survey conducted by Miller (2008), in which 47 teachers out of a total of 55 surveyed felt that a bilingual dictionary should only be used in class for specific purposes and 37 felt that the use of a MELD should also be restricted in class. One participant in that study commented,

It hinges on learner independence. Many use dictionaries as a crutch.

This comment indicates that the writer was probably unaware of the different uses and possibilities of a MELD. This is very likely, since only 12 teachers out of the 55 surveyed had received any training in dictionary use for teaching purposes, and the maximum time spent on this was only two hours. Another complained,

At more advanced levels, students should be using clues from texts instead of relying too much on dictionary use. This will include guessing the meanings of words from the context, using clues from the word form itself to guess

> *meaning. Lower level students will need to refer to their L1 dictionaries more as they have less language to draw on.*

The reference here to L1 dictionaries is somewhat confusing, and suggests that the teacher is possibly thinking more in terms of bilingual dictionaries that contain the learner's first language. However, as Summers (1988) points out, even native speakers need to use a dictionary sometimes, and banning the use of dictionaries can leave students to infer meanings based on guesses from their L1, leading to language interference and inaccuracy. The ban on dictionaries seems to have its origin in the mistaken notion that most dictionaries for language learning are bilingual, based on teachers' own experience of learning a foreign language at school prior to the 1990s through the grammar translation method, which, as its name implies, relied mainly on rote learning of vocabulary, and grammar and translation exercises. For these purposes a good bilingual dictionary was extremely useful. However, a MELD can fill many of the gaps left by the bilingual dictionary, and fulfil other roles which the bilingual dictionary usually does not offer.

Are MELDs actually essential for learners, though? Martin's paper (1998) found few studies to justify the use of monolingual learners' dictionaries rather than bilingual dictionaries, although his own study with twenty Chinese students suggested that learners' dictionaries are beneficial and should be more often used. Lew (2004) also found that advanced level participants in his study tended to use monolingual dictionaries, including MELDs, to supplement their use of bilingual dictionaries rather than to replace them. In practice, although students claim that they are more satisfied with their learners' dictionaries than with their bilingual dictionaries (Marello 1989 in Nesi & Haill 2002, p. 299), they may still prefer their bilingual electronic dictionaries (Atkins & Varantola 1998, p. 111). Svartvik

(1999, p. 287) gives three reasons for this. Firstly, he says that monolingual definitions may be wordy. Secondly, they may be less useful for encoding. And thirdly, 'there is an intrinsic value in knowing what word in your mother-tongue corresponds to an English word' (Svartvik 1999, p. 287), as this can be an aid to memorising the new word. The version of MELD used also seems to have little effect on users' accuracy, according to Nesi (1998, p. 159). Students are often hindered due to their own poor knowledge of grammar. In Nesi and Haill's study (2002), students often failed 'to identify the word class of the look-up word' (p. 282), confusing nouns, verbs and adjectives (p. 283). Nevertheless, MELDs enjoy large sales, and online access is making them ever more available.

6. Users of monolingual English learners' dictionaries in Australia

The socio-demographic composition of Australia is very varied, and at least 20% of the population speak a language other than English at home (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2008a). In addition to this, many international students who are non-native speakers of English come to Australia to study. (According to the latest statistics available at the time of writing, 18% of students enrolled in Australian tertiary education institutes were from overseas, and mostly from countries which do not have English as a first or official language (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2008b).) Since English is Australia's national language (Commonwealth of Australia 2006), anyone who wants to communicate in everyday life there needs to use English. This means that learners may often use a dictionary, either bilingual or monolingual. In practice, it seems that advanced MELDs, with their wealth of grammatical information, are mostly used by language students and others who are in academic settings, and indeed, this is their target audience. Nesi (2000) has suggested that MELDs are mostly used by those at secondary or tertiary level, who are most likely to be studying in English as a second language.

The age at which most domestic students can finish schooling and enter university in Australia is 17. An honours degree takes four years to complete through full time study, so that most students who go straight from school to university will be aged 21 or 22 when they leave. In 2005, 67% of international students engaged in education in Australia were aged 15-24 (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2008b). It is this age group, therefore, who are most likely to use MELDs in Australia. (These statistics on international students were not available when the survey was devised, piloted and conducted, and so the youngest age group in the survey was put at 16-22 rather than 15-24.)

One factor in dictionary use is culture. Some educational cultures encourage the use of dictionaries. Chinese students, for instance, receive training in dictionary skills (Lan 1997). This is less frequently the case in Western countries such as Australia and the UK. Hartmann (2003, referring to Hartmann 1999), for example, suggests that most university staff and students are relatively unaware of what dictionaries have to offer. The studies in the next two sections show that this appears to be the case in Australia.

6.1   EAL learners

The suggestion by Hartmann that EAL learners may be unaware of the multiple uses of a dictionary was borne out by a small-scale study conducted by Miller (2009) in Australia in 2005. This survey of 42 mainly Asian students in an English as a Second Language class for undergraduates at an Australian university revealed that each student in the study owned an average of two dictionaries, and 45% of the participants had at least one electronic dictionary (usually Chinese/English, as 74% spoke a variety of Chinese as a first language, but three of these incorporated a learners' dictionary). Most of the participants had little

detailed knowledge of MELDs and their contents before the study, although 52% of them claimed to have used a MELD before, and 57% had their own MELD. A short discussion, however, revealed that although these students said they had used MELDs before, they were not fully cognizant of their contents and uses.

In the study, roughly half of the students completed an exercise using an electronic bilingual dictionary and roughly half used a paper copy of a MELD. The study was not testing for ease of look-up in electronic versus paper dictionaries, but the coverage of information provided by a MELD compared to a bilingual dictionary. (This was restricted by the nature of the physical classroom to the use of paper versions of MELDs, and so the advantages of electronic MELDs were not a part of the study.) Generally, those who had used a MELD were happy with what they found. Only one participant was disappointed, commenting

I expected that a learners' dictionary was more complete, with the same details in all words, not just in some words.

This participant did not realise that detailed information, for example in regard to register, might not be necessary for every entry.

Four participants were impressed with MELDs, however, and one commented.

Learner's dictionary is a powerful tool during English study in that it force you to forget your native language and go through it totally in English background

while another said,

I need a learner's dictionary. It is useful not only in look up words but also helps your reading.

These students were beginning to realise the value of a MELD for both decoding and encoding.

Six students thought that a MELD could give them more information than their electronic bilingual dictionary:

> *The dictionary shows the context besides word class and pronunciation.*

> *I think have a learning dictionary can help you to understand the words, to know the usage more thoroughly while you can only learn the meaning of the words in elecernic [sic] one which is suit for quick search.*

> *Yes, it tells me using the dictionary is not only just know what the meaning is, but also we should know how to use and explain them in English. Furthermore, the example sentence could help me to understand the different use.*

> *Yes, I might need to have a learner's dictionary if it helps me more than the electronic dictionary.*

> *Yes, more details and information, better than my electronic dictionary.*

> *Personally, I used to use electronic dictionary. It's faster, but I find the learner's dictionary can help me a lot by providing details about the use of words.*

Of course, they may have been obligingly saying what they thought the lecturer wanted to hear, but the comments, in particular the last one relating to usage information, indicate that they felt the MELD offered material that a bilingual electronic dictionary did not provide. This is particularly true of the participant who commented:

As some dictionaries provide more information as well as the meaning of a particular word, it is probably better for people who are not only seeking the meaning of a word but also seeking the use of the word. It changed my view of dictionaries as before all the dictionaries are same.

Participants also thought that MELDs gave more information on collocation and context than bilingual dictionaries, perhaps due to the example sentences and usage information provided in the labelling. If they had had the opportunity to use online or electronic versions of MELDs during the study the findings might have been even more revealing, although at that time (2005) the Big 5 were not all available online.

These findings indicate that EAL learners want to know how and when an item is used (in other words, they are seeking to be communicatively competent), and will look for this information in a MELD. My present study seeks to discover whether they will find this information with regard to phrasemes.

6.2   EAL teachers

While most students in Miller's study (2009) did not appreciate the potential uses of MELDs before the classroom exercise, the situation does not appear to be much better with regard to teachers' knowledge. The study referred to earlier of 55 teachers of English as a second or foreign language at universities and language schools in Australia indicated that over half did not refer their students to grammatical information in MELDs, for example, and two thirds did not suggest their students use dictionaries to help with phrasemes and collocations (Miller 2008).

Moreover, these teachers had little knowledge of Australian MELDs. Only three of these Australian-based teachers were aware of the *Australian learners*

dictionary, and only two named the *Macquarie learners dictionary*. The most common publishers mentioned in response to the survey question 'Do you know the names of any English learners' dictionaries?' were Oxford (34, with 13 naming *OALD* specifically), Collins (18, with 17 naming *COBUILD*), Cambridge and Longman (11 mentions each, no particular dictionary specified), and MacMillan (5, no particular dictionary specified). These findings indicate that there is little awareness of Australian MELDs and that of all the Big 5, *COBUILD* and *OALD* are the most widely known.

A large number of participants (51 teachers) used dictionaries to prepare lesson materials, and 30 used them to prepare dictionary use exercises. Table 2 summarises the uses teachers make of MELDs in class, according to Miller's survey. It should be borne in mind that these 55 individual teachers were those who had responded to a survey invitation sent to all the language schools and University language centres in Australia with websites (a total of 104 institutions), and the fact that they were willing to participate in the survey suggests that they were already interested in dictionaries.

Table 2: Uses of MELDs by teachers in class (no. = 55)

To check word meanings (both by teachers and students)	33
To familiarise students with the English alphabet	18
To indicate collocation patterns	18
To reinforce grammar points	17
To teach pronunciation	8
To refer to phrasal verbs	3
To familiarise students with the contents of a MELD	3
To explore polysemy with students	3
To develop speaking skills	2
To explain parts of speech	1
To teach prepositions	1
To provide example sentences	1
To check spellings	1

The responses to this survey show that these teachers were generally favourable to the use of MELDS, although only 17 teachers thought students should always use MELDs in class, while 37 thought they should use them only for specific purposes. This lack of knowledge in relation to MELDs on the part of teachers may be one reason why students are also unaware of the riches contained in a learners' dictionary.

Conclusion

It can be seen from this chapter that MELDs are an important field of lexicography in their own right. They are designed to boost the communicative competence of their users in terms of both comprehension and production, and are an obvious choice for EAL learners who are encouraged to use monolingual dictionaries. However, many users, both students and teachers, are unaware of the possible applications of MELDs. Although they are often presented as the dictionary of choice for learners, it is therefore necessary for students and teachers to make greater use of them and to become more aware of their possibilities. In order to attract a larger number of users, MELDs thus need to be as user-friendly as possible.

The coverage of phrasemes by MELDs is, however, problematic in at least three particular areas. Firstly, there may be a lack of consistency in the choice of headwords, both within and across different dictionaries. Secondly, there is also a frequent lack of consistency in the assigning of usage labels. Moreover, there appears to be as yet no suitable label in MELDs to indicate the relative age of a speaker.

This chapter has looked at MELDs in regard to communicative competence and EAL learning and teaching, and in respect to dictionary coverage of

phrasemes. These are two of the three key areas on which this thesis is based, and are presented below in Figure 1, where the green circles represent the overlapping areas of EAL learners and MELDs, and MELDs and phraseology. The blue circle represents the third area of phraseology and its overlap with EAL learners, which is the focus of the next chapter.
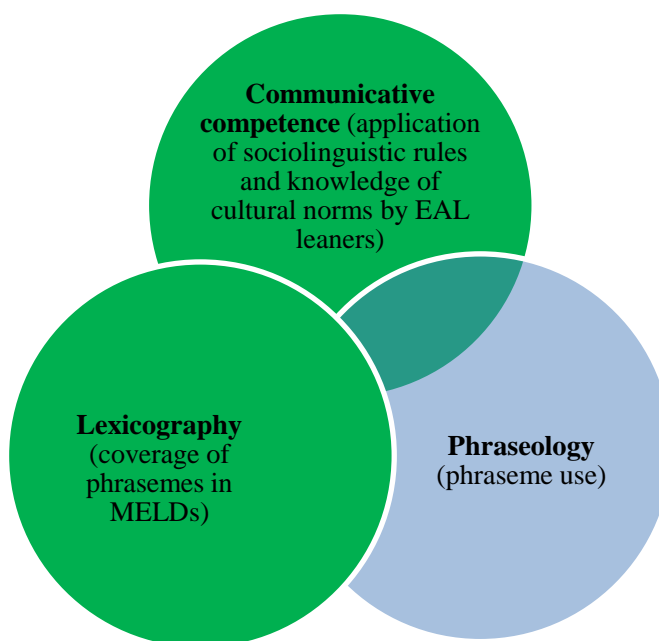
Figure 1: The relationship between communicative competence, phraseology and lexicography in this thesis

The intersection of these three areas – communicative competence of EAL learners, MELDs, and phraseology – will then be in place for the empirical study which follows.

Chapter Three

Literature Review: Phraseology

Introduction

It has been seen that user-friendliness for EAL learners is one of the key aspects in the conception of a learners' dictionary. MELDs also address phraseology, and the use of labels and choice of headwords for phrasemes are particularly problematic areas. The chapter which follows examines the intersection of phraseology and language learning, which is the third area of intersection addressed by this thesis.

Interest in phraseology was already established in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe well before its more recent growth in the West over the last 30 years (Cowie 1998b, p. 1). The area of phraseology is a complicated one, with a variety of terms used by different researchers. Underlying these different positions are varying approaches to the definition of terms such as 'idiom', with some researchers using syntactic and others using semantic criteria (Liu 2008, p. 16). Some of the terms used in the field are identical or overlap, but others are used

with different meanings by different scholars. In classifying idioms, writers have taken different positions, ranging from the very narrow to the very broad. Hockett (1956, p. 222), for example, says that an idiom may consist of only one morpheme, a whole sentence or even a whole book, provided its meaning is 'not deducible from its structure'. Conversely, Grant and Bauer (2004) use the term 'core idiom' to cover a very restricted number of multi-word units which are non-compositional and non-figurative.

For many researchers, the study of phraseology is closely linked to the study of metaphor. The process of defining metaphor has existed for thousands of years, at least since the time of Aristotle (Čermák 2001, p. 5). For most non-linguists, the word 'metaphor' conjures up a particular definition taught in schools, which distinguishes metaphors from similes. For them, a simile is 'an explicit comparison that is literally true in some way', frequently characterised by the words 'as' or 'like' (such as *his face was like thunder*), while a metaphor is an 'implicit comparison that is literally untrue' (such as *his eyes flashed lightning*) (Moon 2004, p. 197). More generally, metaphor can be characterised as seeing one thing in terms of another. According to Dobrovol'skij and Piirainen (2005, p. 122), 'metaphor is a conceptual category . . . [in which] a linguistic form is used outside of its normal conventional meaning'. They add that 'metaphor is not based upon similarity between source and target concepts, but on people's ability to structure one domain in terms of another' (p. 122). This ability is often determined by cultural knowledge, which may be lacking for non-native speakers of a language, or may not coincide with their own cultural mapping.

In addition to cultural knowledge, non-native speakers of English need to be aware of collocational patterns in order to process figurative language. Within the infinite number of word combinations possible in the English language, there are

still some restrictions on the way in which words collocate, or appear in particular patterns. Sinclair's idiom principle (1991, p. 110) suggests that although in many cases it is grammar alone which influences the 'open choice' of word combinations, in other cases, set phrases are used which, although they can be analysed, nevertheless present themselves as a single choice. 'At its simplest, the principle of idiom can be seen in the apparently simultaneous choice of two words, for example, *of course*' (Sinclair 1991, p. 110). The stock of such set phrases is very great. Indeed, Mel'čuk (1998) claims that set phrases 'outnumber words roughly ten to one' (p. 24). The term 'collocation' (first established in linguistic theory by Firth in 1951 in the phrase 'meaning by collocation' (Firth 1957, p. 194)) refers to 'recurrent combinations' (Benson, Benson & Ilson 1986, p. ix), and the study of collocation embraces what appears to be a continuum of possible combinations. There is much debate in the literature over precisely where on the continuum a collocation ends and an idiom begins, and what exactly constitutes an idiom. What is clear is that any violation of a collocation or idiom disturbs the pattern and makes the expression either unacceptable or incomprehensible to a native speaker.

Collocational patterns are thus vital to the language learner who wishes to achieve communicative competence in English language. It is not surprising that Benson, Benson and Ilson maintain that 'collocations should be included in dictionaries' (1986, p. ix), and set out to remedy the deficiency by their own *BBI Combinatory Dictionary of English* (1986). Choosing which collocations to include from the vast number of possibilities, however, is very difficult, and each dictionary and MELD makes its own choices. The choice is further complicated when the area of collocations is extended by that of idioms and other conventional figurative units.

Finding an umbrella term for certain types of conventional figurative units, such as idioms, similes and proverbs, is very problematic. Indeed, as Cowie indicates (1998a, p. 210), phraseology is 'a field bedevilled by the proliferation of terms and by the conflicting uses of the same term'. In order to avoid the complications arising over the term 'idiom', this thesis will use the umbrella term 'phraseme' to cover those units which the Big 5 call 'phrases' or 'idioms'. This follows the work of Dobrovol'skij and Piirainen (2005), which is explained in greater detail below.

The chapter that follows is not an exhaustive review of the literature on phraseology, since that is a vast and complicated field which is not the focus of this thesis. Rather, it seeks to clarify the key terms and concepts applicable to this study, particularly in regard to the term 'phraseme'. In order to do this, an explanation is given of the concepts of metaphor, collocation, idioms, similes and proverbs. The area of phraseology is then linked to the significance of phrasemes in enhancing the communicative competence of EAL learners. Importantly, this chapter shows that there is a gap in previous measurements of the frequency and familiarity of phrasemes, and that the question of when certain speakers use particular phrasemes also needs further research.

1. Phrasemes

Before proceeding with this chapter, it is important to clarify the overarching term that has been chosen to embrace the troubled term 'idiom' and the less troubled terms 'proverb', 'saying' and 'simile'. The Big 5 frequently do not distinguish between these terms, but tend to refer to them as 'sayings', 'idioms' or 'phrases', or to assign them no label at all. For example, the saying *the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak* appears in *CALD* as a saying; in *LDOCE* without a label; in

MEDAL as a phrase; and in *OALD* as an idiom, with the subsequent label 'saying'. It is not listed at all in *COBUILD*, which does not include any of the proverbs or sayings in my list. The idiom *to turn the other cheek* appears in *CALD* and *LDOCE* without a label, in *COBUILD* and *MEDAL* as a phrase, and in *OALD* as an idiom. Moreover, in eliciting expressions from the participants in the questionnaire on which this thesis is based, it was felt that if skilled phraseologists and lexicographers do not agree on their terms, then the general public involved in the questionnaire would have even more trouble distinguishing between them and knowing whether or not to write down an expression. Since I wanted participants to think as widely as possible, and not be constrained by terminological complications, I therefore used the word 'idiom' in the questionnaire to cover all the kinds of expression I was hoping to elicit. In discussing the literature more formally, however, I will be more precise in addressing the complexities of phraseology relating to this thesis.

As will be seen in the following sections, the word 'idiom' is beset with difficulties. Moon (1998a) uses the term 'fixed expressions and idioms' (FEIs) to encompass a wider range of lexical units. As Cowie (1999b, p. 308) points out, however, many 'fixed expressions' are actually variable to some extent, and may also include idioms, making the use of the additional 'and idioms' in the term 'FEIs' often redundant. He suggests the alternative terms 'phraseological unit' or 'phraseme'. 'Phraseme', according to Dobrovol'skij and Piirainen (2005, p. 30), is common in French and German phraseological terminology, though not in English. It is used to include figurative and non-figurative conventional multiword units. Dobrovol'skij and Piirainen (p. 31) add that 'phrasemes are multiword units of the lexicon . . . and . . . are relatively stable in form and meaning.' Phrasemes traditionally include restricted collocations, idioms, proverbs and formulae.

Mel'čuk (1998, p. 24) says that a phraseme is a lexical unit, usually a collocation, and that in the lexicon of any language 'phrasemes outnumber words roughly ten to one'. Although this thesis does not address restricted collocations, it will include idioms and proverbs, as well as formulae such as sayings and similes. Therefore I have chosen to adopt the term 'phraseme' as an umbrella term for them all, and will use it throughout the thesis.

Before the individual expressions included under 'phraseme' are considered, however, it is important to look in more detail at the foundational concepts of metaphor and collocation.

2. Metaphor

Metaphor may belong to the domains of language and/or thought (Cameron 1999a, p. 8). Cameron (1999b, p. 114) says that it is hard to define the term 'linguistic metaphor', and suggests four criteria for definition. The first is etymological, so that *salary*, for example, had an original basis in the salt given as payment to Roman soldiers and was then extended to refer to monetary wages. The second relates to convention and probability in a discourse community, so that normal collocation is not necessarily metaphorical (e.g. *hot spells* is not a metaphor when referring to the weather but refers simply to *spells* of time). The third relates to individual experience, so that *hot spells*, describing the weather, could also be a metaphor if linked to *witches* in someone's imagination. The fourth relates to how an individual processes an expression, depending on whether they take it symbolically, as in *I can read your lips*.

There is often a close link between physical entities and associated abstract concepts. This link is captured at a core level by a prototypical scene (see, for example, Lindstromberg 1998, and Tyler & Evans 2003), from which extensions

arise. Thus a preposition such as *in* may have a prototypical meaning of 'containment'*,* with extensions such as 'pierce' or 'dent'. The prototypical meaning may not, however, be the same in every linguistic culture. For example, the English *to dance in the rain* would be rendered in French by *danser sous* [=under] *la pluie*, where *sous* represents a spatial relationship rather than one of containment. Our perceptions therefore vary from one language and culture to another. Dobrovol'skij and Piirainen (2005, p. 210) point out that while the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis on the relationship between language and thought is somewhat disputed by modern linguists, many feel that our 'cultural patterns of thought' are indeed influenced by language. What is clear is that each language has its own way of expressing a particular concept, and there is therefore a connection between culture and language and, more precisely, culture and phraseology (Teliya et al. 1998). Teliya et al. explain how metaphors may reflect cultural practices. The expression *it's not cricket*, for example, expresses unfairness and unsportsmanlike, and hence ungentlemanly, behaviour. Cricket is seen as epitomising the British sense of fair play, associated with the private school culture and a particular moral code. The idiom thus has an underlying metaphor such as LIFE IS A GAME WITH RULES. The study of idioms, metaphor and culture is therefore closely linked.

It is evident that there is much overlap between idioms and metaphors in the minds of many phraseologists, but that the distinctions are often not clearly drawn. According to some writers (e.g. Moon 1998a, pp. 22-23), metaphors may be transparent (*alarm bells ring*), semi-transparent (*grasp the nettle*) or opaque (*kick the bucket*). However, there is some disagreement here. Nuccorini (1986), for example, says that opaque metaphors are not metaphors at all, but idioms, thus making a distinction between idioms and metaphors. Hanks (2004, p. 256) talks of

'degrees of metaphoricity'. *Storm*, for example, may be literal, but the accompanying verb, such as *rage*, as in *a raging storm*, may be metaphorical. If none of the words are literal, and they are conventionalized (used by everyone), then they become an idiom in Hanks' terminology. Hanks further notes that 'whereas the meaning of an idiom is distinct from the sum of its parts, the meaning of a metaphor is less than the word's normal meaning' (p. 257). The degree of transparency is subjective, however, depending on the background of the speaker. Usually, there is little ambiguity in terms of whether a literal or metaphorical meaning is intended (Moon 1998a, p. 309). Outside the cricket pitch, for example, one is unlikely to taking the figurative expressions *he/she had a good innings* (meaning they had a long or fruitful life) or *it's not cricket* literally. Studies by Chafe (1986 in Moon 1998a) and Gibbs (1986) also indicate that figurative meanings are much commoner than literal interpretations of ambiguous idioms.

A 'dead metaphor' is one which no longer has any literal meaning for its users. Cameron (1999a, p. 24) says that '[to] label a particular metaphor as "dead" is in effect to assign to it a very low probability of being given "active analogical processing" by members of particular discourse communities.' Van der Meer (1999, p. 204) also claims that a dead metaphor is no longer a metaphor but has a new meaning altogether. Again, it is hard to distinguish whether a metaphor is dead or alive (Moon 2004, p. 197), given that different members of a discourse community will have different experiential and linguistic knowledge. Some speakers, for example, will know that if one strokes the leaf of the plant known as a 'stinging nettle' (*Urtica dioica*) one will be stung, but that if one grasps the leaf firmly the little hairs which cause the stinging sensation are flattened, causing no pain. Therefore, if one *grasps the nettle*, approaching it firmly, one will have less

trouble than if one strokes it timidly. The metaphor may therefore be dead for some speakers, who know nothing about nettles, but alive for others who have this knowledge.

Metaphors are particularly problematic for non-native speakers of English, since a seemingly equivalent metaphor in their first language may have a very different meaning (Littlemore 2001, p. 335). For example, the German *über den Berg sein* can be translated literally in English as *over the hill*, but the meanings in the two languages are different. In German, the idiom means 'to overcome a crisis, an illness; to be out of the greatest trouble or difficulty', whereas in English the idiom means that one is 'past one's most successful times; . . . too old to do one's job well, or too old to be attractive' (Dobrovol'skij & Piirainen 2005, p. 112). There is therefore a link between metaphor and culture, and the use of language. Before examining further the issue of culture, however, it is important to return to the basic concept of collocation.

3. Collocation

Metaphors provide an underlying basis for many expressions, which may vary in length and collocate in different ways. Words appear to collocate on a continuum, and any variation to established patterns will be noticeable to a native speaker. This variation is exemplified in the following verse:

Tweedledee and Tweedledum

Both sipped a cup of feeble rum.

It made them fight like cat and snake;

For them, that was a slice of cake.

For a native speaker, the more established patterns for the collocations in the verse would be *Tweedledum and Tweedledee*; *drink/sip a cup of weak tea; fight like cat and dog*; and *a piece of cake*.

Placing these collocations on a continuum (see Figure 1), we find a range from combinations which are entirely free except for grammatical restrictions of syntax (*Tweedledum and Tweedledee*); to restricted collocations (*drink/sip a cup of weak tea*); to figurative idioms, whose meaning can be easily deduced (*fight like cat and dog*); to opaque idioms, whose meaning is not readily apparent to the uninitiated (*a piece of cake*) (Howarth 1998, p. 164).

| Free combinations | Restricted collocations | Figurative idioms | Pure idioms |
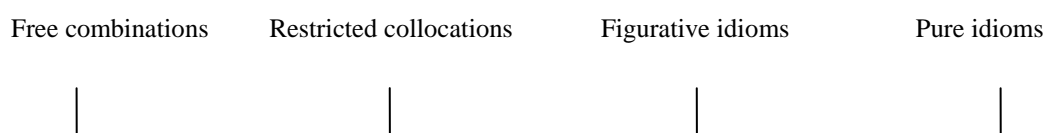
Figure 1: Continuum of collocations and idioms

On the continuum at Figure 1 above, restricted collocations appeared second from the left, after free combinations. Free combinations are not the subject of this thesis, since they do not form an institutionalised whole. The discussion will therefore start with collocation, as the form which underpins phrasemes such as idioms, similes and proverbs/sayings.

Sinclair (1991, p. 170) defines collocation as 'the occurrence of two or more words within a short space of each other in a text'. Cowie names it 'a composite unit which permits the substitutability of items for at least one of its constituent elements' (1981, p. 224). Dobrovol'skij and Piirainen (2005, p. 47) say that the term 'restricted collocation' is usually used to describe 'word combinations that co-occur habitually but are fully transparent'. Restricted collocations are therefore not figurative as multi-word units. There is sometimes difficulty in distinguishing

a collocation from an idiom, since collocations are situated in what Cowie (1998a, p. 211) refers to as 'the fuzzy zone between free combinations and idioms proper'. Amosova (1963 in Moon 1998a, p. 13) does not include restricted collocations (which she terms 'phraseloids') or fixed transparent collocations as pure idioms. Mel'čuk, as discussed by Weinreich (1969, pp. 44f), contrasts collocations with 'a high degree of contextual restriction' (such as *kith and kin* or *luke warm*) with idioms (such as *red herring*), which have 'a strong restriction on the selection of a subsense'. In other words, some words, such as *kith*, can only appear with other words, and form 'stable collocations' and are unambiguous, while others, such as *red* and *herring*, can appear separately but can also be combined to form a new meaning. Moon (1998a, p. 21) refers to such unique items as *kith* and *luke* as 'cranberry collocations', following Makkai's term 'cranberry morph' and Hockett's example of the morpheme 'cran-' in the word *cranberry*. ('Cran-' is unique because it appears not to be related to the fruit, unlike the 'straw' of *strawberry* (whose fruit is grown on a bed of straw) or the 'elder' of *elderberry* (which comes from the elder tree).)

Although collocations are felt by the native speaker to be correct, they are not always apparent to the language learner. Why, for instance, can a storm *wreak havoc* or *cause havoc* but not normally *make havoc*? Why can we *sip a cup of tea* but not *swig a cup of tea*, and why can *tea* be *weak* but not *feeble* (Benson, Benson & Ilson 1986, p. xxvi)? It may be that stylistic and semantic factors are involved which would not be readily apparent to the learner. *Swig*, for example, is used for drinking a large amount quickly, often from a bottle, while *cup of tea* conjures up images of cultural gentility, in which ladies sip from porcelain cups which balance delicately on elegant saucers. There is a related image of

relaxation, incompatible with the hastiness of *swig*. This sociocultural knowledge may be lacking for the EAL learner.

Moon (1998a) indicates three kinds of collocation. The first denotes a paradigmatic relationship between words (Mel'čuk 1998) and is purely semantic, so that, for example, *jam* may collocate with *doughnut* (*jam doughnut* − a doughnut filled with jam, popular in the UK) or *strawberry* (*strawberry jam* − a sweet spread made by boiling strawberries and sugar until the mixture partially solidifies) (Moon 1998a). This is what is known as a 'free collocation'. The second is 'constrained lexicogrammatically as well as semantically' (Moon 1998a, p. 27), so that it is restricted to a certain class of items. This is a 'restricted collocation'. *Rancid*, for example, may co-occur with *butter* and similar fatty foods, or verbs may require certain subjects or objects. *Drink*, for instance, requires a living subject and a liquid object. These are what Mel'čuk terms syntagmatic relationships (1998, p. 34). Binomials (Malkiel 1959 in Fernando 1996, p. 19), such as *bag and baggage*, or *milk and honey*, are included under restricted collocations. The third type of collocation is syntactic, where a grammatical string of words occurs recurrently: *one of, you know*, etc. Since there are always at least two words in a collocation, and each is in some way restricted in its relationship to the other, it could be said that the term 'restricted collocation' is tautological. Benson, Benson and Ilson (1986) in fact use the simple term 'collocation', also calling them 'recurrent' or 'fixed' combinations. They subdivide them into two groups: grammatical and lexical. Howarth (1998, p. 186) claims that in terms of word combinations, learners make most errors with restricted collocations. They can memorise idioms, once they are pointed out as a specific form, and understand about free combinations, but are unaware of the middle ground. Learning how to use collocations is thus difficult but important.

Phrasal verbs could be said to bridge the gap between restricted collocations and idioms, since many of them are figurative. *CALD* (2008) defines a phrasal verb as 'a phrase which consists of a verb in combination with a preposition or adverb or both, the meaning of which is different from the meaning of its separate parts'. For example, in the sentence *the plane took off* we understand that the plane left the ground, and *take* is forced to collocate with *off* to create that meaning. In the sentence *he took off his shoes*, however, we understand that someone removed their footwear, but the verb and preposition do not create a meaning that would be incomprehensible without specific knowledge. *Take* in this case could be replaced by other verbs, such as *pulled*, *wrenched* or *kicked*. It is therefore a verb followed by a particle, rather than a phrasal verb proper. Phrasal verbs will not be included in this study, purely because there are so many of them and, as Moon (1998a, p. 3) indicates, a restriction has to be drawn somewhere.

Some dictionaries have been produced to help students with the difficult area of collocability. Béjoint (2003), while referring to Estienne's 1539 dictionary as full of collocations, highlights the creativity of the *BBI Combinatory dictionary of English* (1986) in exploring English word collocations. Mel'čuk's *Explanatory combinatorial dictionary* is a 'phrasal dictionary' which is 'centred around restricted co-occurrence' (Mel'čuk 1998, pp. 49-50), using set phrases for both headwords and inside entries. Many other MELDs, including all the Big 5, provide example sentences which allow students to see collocations in action, but these word combinations are not always pointed out as such, so that it is hard for a student to know whether a particular word always collocates within a narrow framework or whether there could be many other examples which do not rely on collocations. It is, of course, difficult to arrange collocations in a printed

dictionary and provide multiple examples, due to constraints of space (Komuro 2003) and time (Pawley 2007, p. 29). This problem can, however, be obviated in an online dictionary, where space is no longer an issue (Svensén 2009, p. 438).

Among the possible ranges of collocation is the cliché. As with other phraseological terms, the definition of clichés is problematic, and Howarth (1996) suggests that there are no fixed criteria to identify them, since they do not have a particular structure but are identified more by their lack of stylistic impact, arising from over-repetition, and their pejorative application. An example is in the opera *La Traviata* (1982) in which Alfredo's words in Act1, scene 3 'Di quell'amor ch'e' palpito, Dell'universo intero' are translated in the subtitles with the cliché 'It's love that makes the world go round', taking the viewer from the sublime to the ridiculous in a single step.

Cowie (1998b, p. 6) says that the debatable area between collocations and clichés lies in the degree of variation possible in a restricted collocation. Makkai (1972) stresses that there is an overlap between clichés and idioms. Fernando (1996, p. 66) also says that familiar collocations, such as *the wonders of nature*, are sometimes called clichés. Such collocations are often 'empty' expressions, indicative of an 'impoverished vocabulary' (Moon 1998a, pp. 275-6). Moon admits, with Howarth (1996), that the terming of an expression as a cliché is often a 'stylistic judgement' (1998a, p. 276), and that clichés may have pragmatic uses or appear as hesitation markers or sentence fillers (p. 277). They are regarded as features more of rhetoric and pragmatics than of linguistics (Ilie & Hellspong 1999). Howarth (1996, p. 67) claims that for this reason they appear in speech but rarely in academic writing. If, however, we take 'cliché' to mean a stock expression which is often repeated, then collocations and idioms are included as clichés and do in fact appear in academic writing and in lectures. According to

Moon (1998a), many dictionaries label idioms as clichés. Whether or not an idiom is termed a cliché will not affect its inclusion in my study, which is based on usage and not on stylistic judgement.

4. Characteristics of idioms

In the above discussion of metaphor, it can be seen that for many writers there is a degree of overlap between metaphors and idioms. Opaque and 'dead' metaphors are seen by some researchers (e.g. Nuccorini 1986; Van der Meer 1999) to be idioms rather than metaphors. Moon (1998a, p. 4) uses the term 'idiom' to 'refer loosely to semi-transparent and opaque metaphorical expressions such as *spill the beans* and *burn one's candle at both ends'*. She also mentions (1998b, p. 96) the concept of an 'idiom schema', which has an underlying metaphor with different lexical realisations. She gives the examples of *chicken-and-egg*, as in *a chicken and egg situation*, and *which came first? The chicken or the egg?* These two expressions both refer to an underlying unanswerable question with reference to origins, but the metaphor is lexicalised differently in each case.

The definition of the term 'idiom' has led to much debate, partly fuelled by the different approaches, which are usually either syntactic or semantic (Liu 2008, p. 16), and perhaps by the fact that phraseology developed as a discipline in Eastern Europe well before Western researchers became involved in the field, and many of the terms in Russian may not readily translate into other languages such as English. Vinogradov, in the 1940s, referred to 'phraseological units' (Cowie 1998a, p. 214), subdivided into 'phraseological fusions' ('idioms'), 'phraseological unities' (which Cowie calls 'figurative idioms') and 'phraseological combinations'. The boundary between fusions and unities is not clear (Cowie 1998a, p. 214), since one speaker may have more insight into an

idiom and its derivation than another. P Peters (2007, p. 251) gives the distinctive features of an idiom as a combination of fixed lexical content, 'marked syntactic patterns' and 'distinctive semantic and pragmatic purposes', some or all of which would be present. Makkai (1972) divides idioms into those of encoding and decoding, and gives a comprehensive list of different approaches to and definitions of the term, ending with the statement (p. 28) that Hockett 'uses the term IDIOM as a cover term for certain lexicographic and syntactic phenomena which share the fact that the meaning is not predictable from the composition'.

Some other expressions, which Fernando terms 'relational idioms' (1996, p. 74), ensure cohesion in discourse and have a textual function, like conjunctions. Examples are *at the same time*, *in addition to* and *what is more*. Wong-Fillmore (1976 in Nattinger & de Carrico 1992, p. 25) says that formulae are central to child language acquisition and lead into creative language. Despite the usefulness of simple formulae in language encoding, they will not be included in this study, as there is no figurative element involved.

Grant and Bauer (2004) add the category of 'core idiom'. A core idiom, in their terminology, is both non-compositional (unable to be visualised) and non-figurative. This definition tends to complication, since what may be visualised by one person may not necessarily be visualised by another. For example, *dog days* is not seen by these researchers as a core idiom, but *red herring* is a core idiom. The concept of core idiom will not be included in this thesis, since it appears to be somewhat subjective, as Liu agrees (2008, p. 12), and is thus hard to apply.

The general consensus seems to be that there is a scale of idiomaticity, and that the meaning of an idiom 'cannot be derived from analysis of the literal meanings of the words of which it is composed' (Hanks 2004, p. 256). This places

idioms firmly in the realm of opaque metaphors. Zgusta (1971) states that it is hard to create clear boundaries between set and free expressions. Makkai (1965 in Fernando 1996) and Strässler (1982 in Fernando 1996) say that idioms should have potential ambiguity, with the possibility of being understood literally as well as figuratively. For this reason, they exclude as idioms those expressions which have unique elements, such as *kith and kin*, where *kith* does not appear in any other expression and has no literal equivalent. They thus equate idioms with a degree of figurative interpretation. Moon (1998a, p. 5) discusses fixed expressions together with idioms, coining the expression FEI (fixed expressions and idioms). Cowie, however, suggests problems with this grouping, pointing out that fixed expressions may yet allow for variation and that to include the terms separately (fixed expressions *and* idioms) implies that the two are 'co-hyponyms of some more inclusive term' (1999b, p. 308). The debate over the definition of the term 'idiom' is thus complicated and wide-ranging.

4.1   Length

It is clear that different language types will have different views on the number of words needed to constitute an idiom. Ideogrammatic and agglutinative languages will not function in the same way as some European languages, for example (Čermák 2001, p. 8). Traditionally, only a few people have taken single words as idioms, although some researchers accept compounds (eg *sickroom, baby-sitter*) because they have distinctive stress patterns in speech and are often derived from longer idioms (Katz & Postal 1963, Fraser 1970, both in Fernando 1996, pp. 40-41). For example, *boot-licker* is derived from the idiom *lick somebody's boots* (Fernando 1996, p. 41). What is rendered by a multi-word expression in one language, however, may be expressed by a single word in another language (Dobrovol'skij & Piirainen 2005, p. 46).

Most writers, such as Dobrovol'skij and Piirainen (2005, p. 40), Teliya et al. (1998, p. 59), Kövecses (2001, p. 93) and Weinreich (1969, p. 42), claim that idioms are multi-word units. In terms of corpus data, Moon's study (1998a, p. 78) found that the average length of what she terms 'fixed expressions and idioms' was 3.56 words, with more common expressions often being shorter than less common ones. Čermák (2001, p. 7) also points out that the length of an idiom may be on a scale, in which it is hard to distinguish when an idiom ceases to be a variation of a single idiom and actually becomes two separate idioms.

The thesis that follows will include idioms which are at least two words in length.

4.2   Institutionalisation and currency

Another main feature of an idiom is institutionalisation (Fernando 1996, p. 3), implying that a particular discourse community accepts the expression conventionally (P Peters 2007, p. 235). This conventionalisation occurs mainly for pragmatic reasons, to 'convey various recurrent speech acts and discourse strategies' and provides 'conventionalized building blocks that are used as convention routines in language production' (Altenberg 2007, pp. 121-122). Roberts (in Fernando 1996, p. 18) points out that every idiom was at one time an original creation until its subsequent adoption by a discourse community. Its adoption provides 'a standard way of referring to a familiar concept or situation' (Pawley 1986, p. 101 in Fernando 1996, p. 35). Institutionalisation therefore means that other users of a language accept a word or phrase as part of the language (Bauer 1983, p. 48). Hanks (2004, p. 256) recognises institutionalisation as central to idiomaticity.

The degree to which an expression is institutionalised is hard to quantify, however (Arnaud 1992). Neither does it imply durability. Some idioms may be transitory, used by a small group at a certain time, while others will be more widely used and reach that pinnacle of acceptability: inclusion in a dictionary of idioms, or, perhaps, a learners' dictionary. It is the very transitoriness of some idioms which is problematic in terms of dictionary inclusion. Ann Atkinson, Senior Editor of the *Macquarie dictionary*, referring to the *Macquarie learners dictionary*, revealed in a personal communication on 9 November 2006 that 'idioms, like other items in the *Learners dictionary*, were selected from our main database on the basis of the judgement of myself and other editors, backed up by corpus evidence, as to (1) whether the phrase was in common use (2) a learner would have trouble understanding it'. Evidence for the institutionalisation of a phraseme is therefore necessary for dictionary editors.

Establishing whether or not a phraseme is in common use is, as Arnaud (1992) and Doyle (2007) say, difficult to test, although it is important for EAL learners to know (Carter & McCarthy 1988, p. 56). Many phrasemes are used by particular groups, and as Cowie says of the idioms in the *Oxford dictionary of current idiomatic English*, 'a number are now confined to speakers in or beyond middle age, and will be thought dated by many now reaching adulthood' (1983, p. xxxviii). So far, few studies appear to have examined the currency of particular phrasemes. A study by Titone and Connine (1994) rated the familiarity of 171 idioms among 226 undergraduate students in New York, but their scale did not distinguish between whether participants had only heard, or both heard and used, the idioms before. Participants were also asked to rate the meaningfulness of the idioms in their study on a scale. There was, however, no indication whether participants actually understood the idioms correctly.

Another problem is how idioms are used. As Carter and McCarthy (1988, p. 56) say, 'style levels are notoriously variable . . . in the area of conventionalized language.' Phrasemes may be used with varying degrees of formality, and it is important for EAL learners to know when and how to use a particular phraseme appropriately if they are to communicate competently with native speakers.

No one yet appears to have addressed the question of who uses which phrasemes, and in which circumstances. This thesis therefore examines the familiarity of a set of 84 phrasemes in order to determine the degree of their institutionalisation and the circumstances in which they are used by participants in the study. It will discuss whether these phrasemes are familiar in certain countries and among certain age groups, and how they are used. The findings have implications for the communicative competency of EAL learners and need therefore to be reflected in MELDs. These issues are addressed in research questions (1) *Is there a difference in the familiarity, interpretation or opacity of certain phrasemes to people of different age groups in Australia and the UK?* (2) *Are the phrasemes selected for the study still in use, by whom, and in what circumstances?* (3) *Can any difference in use be accounted for in terms of age and/or region?* and (4) *Are any such differences reflected in the labelling systems and inclusion of these phrasemes in the Big 5?*

4.3   Frequency

Institutionalisation does not necessarily imply frequent use. Moon (1998a, p. 56) calls a frequency of 0.55 per million 'high' when referring to fixed expressions and idioms (FEIs) in the Oxford Hector Pilot Corpus. This indicates that idioms do not occur with great regularity. More than 70% of the FEIs in her database had 'frequencies of less than 1 per million tokens', while almost 40% were used so

rarely as to appear almost random (1998a, p. 60). Ordinary single word entries too, however, also occur infrequently in corpora, with, for instance, a frequency of one per million tokens for the word *adjudicate* (Atkins & Rundell 2008, p. 60). Low frequency therefore does not mean that EAL learners do not need to understand a word or phraseme, but merely that it need not form part of their core vocabulary unless it is a technical term used often in their field of study or work.

Liu (2008) states that two measures of frequency have been used in previous studies. The first of these, exemplified by researchers such as Moon, counts how often a particular idiom or range of idioms appears in a corpus. The second, exemplified by Cooper (1998 in Liu 2008) and Liu, counts how many idioms are used per minute in a spoken corpus. Liu, for example, found a rate of 3 idioms per 100 words when examining the speech of 14 college lecturers in the United States. It should be borne in mind, however, that different researchers have different definitions for the term 'idiom' and may not be examining the same types of phraseme. In addition to corpus research, Arnaud counted the proverbs appearing around him in their canonical or non-canonical form over 8 months in 1993, and found an average frequency of 1.5 per day (Arnaud & Moon 1993, p. 325). Since he was counting only proverbs, it is likely that other phrasemes would also have been heard, raising the total number of phrasemes heard daily.

This relative infrequency of use might suggest that idioms are not important for the language learner. As noted earlier, however, non-understanding of idioms can lead to feelings not only of confusion but of exclusion, as the non-native speaker is unable to follow a conversation, appreciate or simply comprehend a newspaper headline or advertisement, or decode parts of an academic text or instructions given by lecturers. For example, a scan of the television programs offered by ABC television in Australia on 13 August 2010 revealed three

programs whose titles were based on phrasemes: *Something in the air* (= something is going to happen, or is noticeable)*; Enough rope* (based on the phraseme *give a man enough rope and he'll hang himself* = given enough leeway, people can create trouble for themselves)*;* and *Waking the dead* (based on the phraseme *make enough noise to wake the dead* = make a lot of noise). The use of these phrasemes adds an extra-linguistic dimension to the titles, giving an indication of possible content.

In addition, an idiom may not appear frequently, but it may still be widely known, so that although it may not be used verbally it may be appealed to visually. Knowles and Moon (2006, p. 20) give the example of a cartoon or advertisement in which cats and dogs are seen falling from the sky, providing an oblique reference to the idiom *raining cats and dogs*. Learners are thus likely to encounter idioms in a variety of settings and, as Carter and McCarthy maintain, 'require information concerning the relative frequencies and currency of particular patterns' (1988, p. 56). Information on frequency is a key indicator that a term needs to be learned and this should preferably also be linked to patterns of use (Sinclair & Renouf 1988, p.148).

This thesis fills a significant gap in previous research, highlighted by Carter and McCarthy (1988), by asking participants of different ages in both the UK and Australia how often they would use certain phrasemes, providing empirical data which can be reflected in MELDs. It also aims to establish links between familiarity and frequency of use, since as Liu (2008) points out, most scholars claim that frequency and familiarity are related. These issues are addressed in research questions (1) *Is there a difference in the familiarity, interpretation or opacity of certain phrasemes to people of different age groups in Australia and*

the UK? and (2) *Are the phrasemes selected for the study still in use, by whom, and in what circumstances?*

4.4   Semantic opacity

Most writers would hold that opacity is one of the criteria for idiom definition. The degree of opacity, however, may vary, according to different researchers. There are writers who claim that only semantically opaque metaphors are idioms (Čermák 2001; Gläser 1998). Others distinguish between pure idioms, which are totally unanalysable in terms of their content, and figurative (Cowie 1998b; Howarth 1996) or semi-idioms (Fernando 1996), whose meaning is partly analysable. Vinogradov (in Cowie 1998a, p. 214) uses the term 'phraseological unities' to refer to figurative idioms and 'phraseological fusions' to refer to what other writers call pure or opaque idioms. These varying views, together with other terms used in the continuum from collocations to idioms, are given in the idiom schemata of Table 2 below.

Table 2: Idiom schemata from different writers

Example – *To carry a trumpet*	Example – *To blow a trumpet*	Example – *Alarm bells ring*	Example – *To blow your own trumpet*	Example – *To spill the beans*
Open collocation Cowie	**Restricted collocation** Cowie, Howarth	**Transparent metaphor** Moon	**Figurative idiom** Cowie, Howarth	**Pure idiom** Cowie, Fernando, Howarth
Free phrase Mel'čuk	**Semi-phraseme/ Collocation** Mel'čuk		**Quasi-phraseme/ Quasi-idiom** Mel'čuk	**Full phraseme/ Idiom** Mel'čuk
Free combination Howarth	**Phraseological combination** Vinogradov		**Semi-literal idiom** Fernando	**Idiom** Čermák, Deignan, Dobrovol'skij & Piirainen, Gläser, Howarth
	Habitual collocation Fernando		**Phraseological unity** Vinogradov	**Phraseological fusion** Vinogradov
				Opaque metaphor Moon

In defence of opacity, Čermák (2001, p. 11) maintains that the term 'transparency' is redundant with regard to idioms, since each idiom is a distinct semantic phenomenon. Deignan (1999, p. 182) and Gläser (1998) also hold the view that an idiom is semantically opaque, as do Dobrovol'skij and Piirainen (2005). However, opacity, as Fernando points out (1998, p. 65), is a relative concept, relating to the language user rather than to the idiom itself. For some people, *spend a penny* will not be opaque, as they will remember putting a penny in the slot of the door in a public convenience. Younger people, however, may be unaware of both the concept and the idiom. It is therefore not the meaning of the combined words which is opaque, but their comprehension by the user and their transference to a situation. Nonetheless, the degree of an expression's literalness

is one of the key factors in placing it on the scale of idiomaticity in the area of figurative or pure idioms.

The idioms which are covered in this thesis include pure idioms which are completely opaque (*to be a box of birds*), figurative idioms (*a wolf in sheep's clothing*) and transparent metaphors (*inch by inch*). These will all be referred to as phrasemes.

4.5 Variation

Some researchers claim that idioms are entirely invariable, while others allow for some flexibility. For example, Deignan (1999, p. 183) says that an idiom is syntactically and lexically fixed. This view is echoed by Gläser (1998, p. 125), who says that idioms are stable in terms of syntax and semantics. Moon (1998a, pp. 6-9) highlights lexicogrammatical fixedness as an important factor in identifying what she terms an FEI (a fixed expression or idiom). 'Lexicogrammatical fixedness' refers to formal rigidity and patterns, with 'preferred lexical realizations and often restrictions on aspect, mood, or voice' (as in *call the shots; kith and kin; shoot the breeze*).

It becomes apparent on examining phrasemes, however, that variability is often possible. Moon herself lists several possible types of lexical variation: by verb (*set/start the ball rolling*); noun (*a piece/slice of the action*); adjective or other modifier (*a bad/rotten apple; no/little love lost*); particle (*at/in a single sitting*); or conjunction (*hit and/or miss*) (1998a, pp. 124-129). Atkins and Rundell (2008, pp. 168-169) echo this view, citing examples such as *throw in the towel/sponge* and *it was an x's dream*. Syntactic variation is also sometimes possible, as in the reversible *day and night/ night and day* (Moon 1998a, p. 132). In all these cases, the meaning is not affected.

Although some writers (e.g. Fernando 1996, pp. 44, 47, 51) claim that addition is usually not acceptable, I would disagree, since in the example she gives of *dangle a carrot before the donkey, dangle a carrot, carrot*, the addition of an adverb and two adjectives is possible: *metaphorically dangle a monetary carrot before a reluctant donkey*. She does concede (p. 48) that addition is possible for the sake of clarity, as in her example *took the art world bull by the horns*. Deletion may also be possible, as when, for example, an article is changed or deleted. Fernando (1996) makes the important point that deletion is an indication of 'the confidence and fluency of the language-user' (p. 51), but that deletion can cause comprehension problems for non-native speakers.

Passivisation of idioms is possible in many cases (Fernando 1996). Moon (1998b, pp. 89-90), indicates that some idioms passivise freely while others are fossilised so that they appear only in the passive (as in *the die is cast*). Newmeyer (1974 in Moon 1998b) suggests that the ability of an idiom to passivise depends on its underlying meaning rather than the verbs which comprise it. I would suggest that those idioms whose underlying synonym is intransitive will never be passivised, while others may be passivised to varying degrees of frequency. For example, *look before you leap* cannot be made passive, as the verbs are intransitive. However, *to separate the sheep from the goats* can be altered to *the sheep were/will be separated from the goats* with no loss of any of the idiom's elements or underlying meaning. Wodehouse exploits the possibilities of changing a transitive form to an intransitive one in the sentence, 'About now, the sheep would be separating from the goats' (1956, p. 26).

The degree of variation displayed in using an idiom is often indicative of one's mastery of a language and is a part of 'native-speaker competence' (P Peters 2007, p. 235). Fillmore et al (1988 in P Peters 2007) talk of 'lexically open'

idioms, in which a particular framework may have pragmatic or semantic properties, and lexical variation is possible while keeping the same underlying meaning. For example, there are many variations on the basic words *short of*, such as *a few sandwiches short of a picnic* or *a few bricks short of a load*, all denoting insanity (Wilkes 1995 in P Peters 2007, p. 246). It is also possible to vary an idiom innovatively in order to demonstrate a speaker's creativity (Fernando 1996, p. 54) and create a certain effect. Writers such as PG Wodehouse exploit these possibilities frequently, with expressions such as '[that] rather falls under the head of carrying coals to Newcastle' (1960, p. 23).

In addition to variation, it is true that, as Hockett says (1956, p. 222), 'in every living language, new idioms are constantly being created, some destined to occur only once or twice and then to be forgotten, others due to survive for a long time . . . Nor can one, with any reliability, predict what new idioms will be coined.' Merely because a form occurs once, that does not mean that a new idiom is being created (p. 223). In distinguishing between nonce-forms and possible idiom creations, Hockett (p. 223) highlights that the new idiom should be memorable.

One aim of the following investigation was to elicit variations on established patterns, together with new phrasemes. Such variations or innovations need to be reflected in MELDs if such dictionaries are to be useful to EAL learners. However, previous studies, although they have examined possible variation, do not appear to have elicited data in regard to innovations. This thesis addresses these areas in research question (5) *What other phrasemes are elicited from the prompts given to participants in the study, and what variations do participants make to established phrasemes?*

5. Similes

In the field of metaphor studies, similes are included under the umbrella of metaphors, since at its simplest, 'the essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another' (Lakoff & Johnson 1980, p. 5). Not all similes are idioms, however. Dobrovol'skij and Piirainen (2005) state that 'all similes are figurative units of language' (p. 44), but that if one element, the 'comparatum', is regular, then the simile is not an idiom. For example, in the simile *as white as snow*, the 'comparatum' *snow* is easily understandable because both parts of the simile are literal. If, however, this element is arbitrary, as in *as dead as a doornail*, then the simile is an idiom. They add that constituent opacity is also important (p. 46), as in the German example *grinsen wie ein Honigkuchenpferd* (= *to grin like a honey-cake horse*, i.e. *to have a big smile on one's face*), where the last word exists only in this simile. If the comparatum is opaque, then in their terms the simile becomes an idiom. They state that similes are not typical idioms as 'they display no real meaning shift because they are based on an explicit comparison' (p. 326).

In terms of this investigation, three of the five similes contain what I take to be opaque elements for EAL learners (in bold here): *as old as **Methuselah**; as mad as a **March hare**;* and *like a **shag** on a rock.* These may be opaque if EAL learners do not know that Methuselah is a Biblical character who lived to be 969 years old, that the March Hare is an eccentric character in Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*, or that a shag is a sea bird which can look forlorn when it 'hunches' its wings when sitting alone on a rock. The two other similes in this study are more transparent: *like a lamb to the slaughter* and *like the blind leading the blind*. It could be argued that the overall meaning of *like a lamb to the slaughter* is opaque, emphasising as it does the qualities of innocence and unknowingness,

which are not readily apparent from the literal words and may not be relevant to all cultures. *Like the blind leading the blind* is less opaque, but has been included here because it is used metaphorically in many situations and may still have opaque overtones in that the underlying meaning refers to confusion but could be misunderstood as referring to caution or group identity.

6. Proverbs and sayings

The definition of the proverb is notoriously difficult (Dundes 1981, p. 44). Dundes quotes Cervantes as saying that proverbs are 'short sentences drawn from long experience' (1981, p. 61), and concludes by saying that proverbs must have at least two words and should be defined structurally. Mieder (2007, p. 205) highlights how 'the wisdom contained in these pithy and formulaic utterances is based on observations and experiences that are believed to be of a general enough nature that they merit couching into memorable and repeatable statements. Over time these sentences gain general currency among people . . .' They thus enter the common spoken vocabulary of a community (Doyle 2007, p. 181) and become set expressions which allow a speaker to identify with others in a group by using their cultural norms, since they partially reflect 'the social and moral value system or the worldview of those who use them' (Mieder 2007, p. 205). Dobrovol'skij and Piirainen (2005, p. 52) also say that 'proverbs are cultural models, giving information about how to behave or which values are upheld in a given culture'. They give insight into a culture's values, and are thus useful for learners of a language. Moon (1998a, pp. 22-23) makes a distinction between sayings and proverbs, and states that sayings include quotations (typically without a source) and catchphrases. The examples she uses include *an eye for an eye* and *don't let the bastards grind you down*. Proverbs she sees as 'traditional maxims with deontic functions' (p. 22). She distinguishes between metaphorical proverbs

(*every cloud has a silver lining*) and non-metaphorical examples (*enough is enough*), but includes both as proverbs.

Arnaud (1992, p. 198) gives five defining characteristics of proverbs. They are prefabricated lexical expressions which can stand alone syntactically and in discourse (i.e. they do not need to be changed and they do not need to form part of an exchange). They can be preceded by the words 'It is true that', and they are anonymous, unlike aphorisms, which he sees as short, pithy maxims which are attributed to an author (Arnaud & Moon 1993, p. 324). He concedes, however, that aphorisms and slogans can be included under the term 'proverbs' apart from the criterion of anonymity. Here I would add that many proverbs have authors, Aesop being a classic example, but the users of proverbs are frequently unaware of their origins. For many people they are opaque, so that only the figurative meaning is known. Arnaud suggests, for example, that most people do not understand the literal meaning of *A rolling stone gathers no moss* (1992, p. 210).

Dobrovol'skij and Piirainen (2005) include proverbs under the title of 'phrasemes' (p. 50), but state that most idioms are phrases and so by definition do not include proverbs, which take the form of sentences (p. 51). However, sentence structure does not prevent a proverb being an idiom. This should be decided semantically. Many idioms are also related to proverbs. One example is *a watched pot*, which is an abbreviation of the proverb *a watched pot never boils*.

A saying is a well known expression which is often unattributed. Moon (1998a, p. 22) lists sayings as a subtype of simple formulae, which she describes as 'routine compositional strings that nevertheless have some special discoursal function or are iterative or emphatic'. Under 'sayings' she includes quotations, catchphrases and truisms. *An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth* is one example

she gives. The main difference between a saying and a proverb appears to be the structure, in that proverbs constitute complete sentences, and the possibility of prefacing the expression with the words 'it is true that'. This study will include both proverbs and sayings in their capacity as phrasemes.

As with idioms, it is hard to ascertain the currency of a proverb. Doyle (2007, p. 194) cautions that 'like all dictionaries, proverb dictionaries are out-of-date at the moment of their publication'. Since, as Doyle says, many proverb dictionaries are based on earlier dictionaries, it is hard to say who used or uses the proverbs contained in them, and when they are or were used.

The issues of who uses which phrasemes and in what circumstances are central to this thesis, relating to research questions (2) *Are the phrasemes selected for the study still in use, by whom, and in what circumstances?* and (3) *Can any difference in use be accounted for in terms of age and/or region?* It is hoped to provide some empirical evidence in this thesis which will address the problem of currency raised here by Doyle.

7. The interpretation of phrasemes

As with the question of which phrases are used, and the frequency of their use, two other difficult judgements to make are whether users understand the phrasemes they use, and how they interpret them. This is true of proverbs (Doyle 2007) and is likely to be true of other phrasemes too, although little research appears to have been conducted so far.

A study by Arnaud in 1992 looked at the understanding of French proverbs by 18-23 year old French L1 university students. The study showed that although the students were familiar with roughly 284 proverbs in his list, they only knew the meanings of about 136 of them. Familiarity was thus not related to understanding.

Although native speakers may hear or even use a phraseme, they will therefore not necessarily understand it in the same way, or even understand it at all. Motivation, for example by an understanding of an underlying metaphor or image, is seen by some researchers (e.g. Dobrovol'skij & Piirainen 2005, p. 79; Kövecses 2001) as central to a complete understanding of phrasemes, but such motivation may be subjective. By explaining the origin of a phraseme, it would become 'motivated', and thus easier to learn. For example, the phraseme *wet blanket* is associated with putting out a fire, but the origin of this expression may be opaque even to native speakers and so might need to be explained in a dictionary. Space in a printed dictionary is obviously limited, but an online dictionary could usefully provide such information.

Various studies have examined how phrasemes are processed cognitively or how children acquire them (see, in particular, studies by Levorato & Cacciari (1992), or Gibbs (1987)), but there are few studies similar to Arnaud's which attempt to show exactly what different users might understand by a certain phraseme.

This thesis addresses the important question of whether participants in different age groups share an understanding of a particular set of phrasemes. This is reflected in research question (1) *Is there a difference in the familiarity, interpretation or opacity of certain phrasemes to people of different age groups in Australia and the UK?* If phrasemes are opaque for native speakers of a language, they will be even harder for EAL learners to understand. This means that commonly used and particularly opaque phrasemes need to be included in a MELD.

8. Phrasemes and culture

Phrasemes are an important reflection of the culture which spawned them, reflecting 'socio-cultural preoccupations and value systems' (Wierzbicka 2001, p. 209 in P Peters 2007, p. 235). Their use, and the ability to know when and how to vary them, is an indication of the degree to which someone has gained 'native-speaker competence' (Fillmore et al. 1988, pp. 504-505 in P Peters 2007, p. 235). Moreover, as Fernando points out (1996, p. 179), in some cultures (e.g. Sri Lankan) there may be more body language and less verbal language, whereas Anglo-Celtic culture may use words rather than gestures. Phrasemes are thus important to the language learner in terms of both cultural orientation and cultural adaptation, all of which contribute to the learner's ability to communicate effectively since, as Nation says (2001, p. 397), knowing a word means 'being aware of restrictions on the word for cultural, geographical, stylistic or register reasons'.

Phrasemes may be used in one culture or situation as euphemisms to avoid giving offence, while in another culture the original word or phrase may be used inoffensively. For instance, Dobrovol'skij and Piirainen (2005, p. 219) give the example of *he has gone to a better place* instead of *he has died*. To substitute another phraseme such as *he is pushing up the daisies* or *he has kicked the bucket* would be inappropriate in many situations, and more offensive than the straightforward *he has died*. Thus there are times where a phraseme may be more or less appropriate, depending on the situation and the degree of formality which is required (Carter & McCarthy 1988, p. 56). This is information which a non-native speaker needs to know, and which can be reflected in a dictionary's labelling system. So far, to the best of my knowledge, no one has addressed the issue of phraseme appropriateness in terms of age group and region.

Although there may be some idiomatic equivalence between languages, most phrasemes are language-specific, and cannot be translated literally into another language and still retain their figurative meaning. For example, the French *avoir un chat dans la gorge* is not a literal translation of the English *have a frog in one's throat*. Moreover, the images conjured up by a word in one culture usually do not translate readily to those evoked in another culture. Wierzbicka, for example (in Dobrovol'skij & Piirainen 2005, p. 211), suggests that even words such as 'cheese' will have different underlying images depending on one's cultural background.

Three criteria for idiomatic equivalence between languages are proposed by Gehweiler (2006, referring to Földes (1996) and Roos (2001)). The first is based on world literature, such as phrasemes from the Bible and well-known authors (for example, Cervantes' *in the dark, all cats are grey*); the second comes from loans; and the third is based on shared cultural knowledge. However, Gehweiler (2006, p. 420) also acknowledges Fleischer's hypothesis that 'even where several languages make use of the same image, there will be semantic and pragmatic differences'. All of this makes it hard for a language learner to transfer knowledge from their first language to the language of another culture, both in the areas of meaning and of usage.

Although there has been a shared cultural and linguistic past among many European languages, the influence now on British English is increasingly that of American English (Moon 1998a, p. 41). Idioms vary between American and British English, particularly in regard to changes of noun (Moon 1998a, pp. 133-134). Moon cites the example of the British *have green fingers* and the American equivalent *have a green thumb*. She adds that idioms which exist in both varieties 'may well have different distributions, thus affecting register of use' (1998a, p.

135). Moreover, words may have different divisions and stress patterns, as in British *hot cakes* and American *hotcakes* (British pancakes).

Since the Big 5 are produced largely for a British market, they will not generally mark a phrase as restricted to British English unless a contrast is given with American usage. For example, *CALD* (2008) gives the entry 'green fingers *plural noun UK* (*US* green thumb)'. Algeo (1995) laments this state of affairs, maintaining that the use of some items in British English 'differs from that of the majority of native English speakers' and 'even the best of dictionaries have extensive lacunae in reporting national limitations of usage' (p. 212). Because many dictionaries, including the Big 5, are produced mainly for use in the UK, these gaps are understandable but make it difficult for EAL learners to know whether a phraseme is acceptable in another English-speaking country.

It is not necessarily the case that 'the most common idioms ought to be the same in both language varieties' (Svensén 2009, p. 191). There may be significant differences in familiarity with phrasemes between Australian and UK speakers of English, and between native speakers of different generations. To highlight Moon's statement (1998a, p. 135) again, phrasemes in different varieties of the same language may be used with greater or less frequency in each variety, and this affects the appropriateness of their use. EAL learners need to be aware of such differences if they are to be communicatively competent.

This thesis seeks to address the extent of these gaps in regard to the effect of regional variation on idiom familiarity and usage, reflected in the first three research questions: (1) *Is there a difference in the familiarity, interpretation or opacity of certain phrasemes for people of different age groups in Australia and the UK?* (2) *Are the phrasemes selected for the study still in use, by whom, and in*

what circumstances? and (3) *Can any difference in use be accounted for in terms of age and/or region?* These questions are related to the two models of phraseme use which were highlighted in the introduction (see Figure 2 below):

1. Regional model

Younger people in the UK   Younger people in Australia

$\updownarrow$ $\updownarrow$

Older people in the UK   Older people in Australia

2. Generational model

Younger people in the UK $\longleftrightarrow$ Younger people in Australia

Older people in the UK $\longleftrightarrow$ Older people in Australia
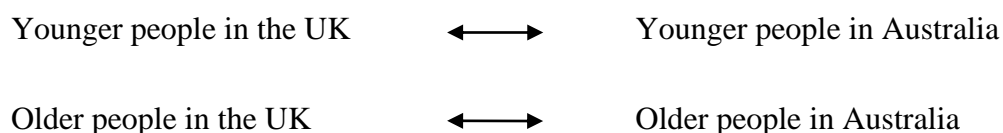
Figure 2: Two models of commonality in phraseme familiarity and use

By studying the use of phrasemes by different age groups in different locations it is anticipated that a pattern of usage will become clear in terms of either the regional or the generational model. This information might then have implications for the design of MELDs used by EAL learners in Australia.

9. EAL learners and phrasemes

Learners of a language usually wish to both encode and decode language around them in order to gain communicative competence. The ability to use phrasemes and other formulaic language allows EAL learners to participate in 'native-like use of language and concomitant acceptance of people as cultural insiders' (Lee 2007, p. 473). Bogaards (1996, p. 281) warns, however, that correct use of vocabulary depends on using items appropriately and at the right 'discourse level'.

Wierzbicka too indicates that 'common expressions . . . are particularly revealing of social attitudes' (2006, p. 23). They allow EAL learners to sound more like native speakers, and failures in this area particularly are apt to highlight a speaker as non-native (Irujo 1986, pp. 298-299). Learners may even choose not to use a phraseme that they know, because 'it is as if one is claiming a cultural membership and identity one has no right to or does not wish to lay claim to' (O'Keeffe, McCarthy & Carter 2010, p. 223). By contrast, greater social integration seems to be symptomatic of the learner's success in learning formulaic sequences (Wray & Perkins 2000, p. 10). Such integration depends not just on a knowledge of phrasemes, but on their appropriate use and understanding in actual conversation. Who has not felt a sense of achievement in correctly decoding a pun based on a phraseme in another language? Such an ability gives not only a sense of linguistic power but also a sense of identity with the unspoken history of another culture.

Phrasemes are thus not just a matter of content, but also of context. They are not usually used in formal situations, and may have more negative and humorous connotations than other forms (Liu 2008, p. 35). Moon's data (1998a, p. 72) suggest that many phrasemes appear more frequently in written than spoken language. Analyses of the MICASE corpus and the LIBEL corpus found many instances of phrasemes in academic interactions, for functions such as paraphrasing, describing and commenting (Simpson & Mendis 2003 and Murphy & Boyle 2005, both in O'Keeffe, McCarthy & Carter 2010, p. 221). They are often used to produce a slightly less formal atmosphere (McCarthy 1998, p. 221). Business people often use idioms too when discussing problems, to lighten the conversational tone (O'Keeffe, McCarthy & Carter 2010, p. 220). An understanding of the sociocultural uses of phrasemes is thus important for EAL

learners, since, as Zgusta says (2006, p. 135), 'mastery of a (foreign) language is measured not only by the grammaticality of the sentences produced by the learner, but also by their functional appropriateness'. Such information is not readily available in most dictionaries but needs to be included in order to assist users to develop their communicative competence.

Creative word plays on phrasemes may also be problematic for EAL learners (Szczepaniak 2006, p. 86). Such word play forms part of what Prodromou (2010, p. 234) refers to as 'creative idiomaticity', whereby speakers manipulate language to produce a shared understanding through words, gestures, intonation and underlying meanings which is 'the fruit of long socio-historical processes and repeated encounters with the members of the speech community' (p. 237). O'Keeffe, McCarthy and Carter (2010, p. 221) state that 'a high degree of intimacy and in-group membership is projected by . . . idiomatic usage'. This can make it hard for an EAL speaker to manipulate phrasemes creatively and still gain acceptance from native speakers (Prodromou 2010, p. 244).

Phraseology, including the teaching and use of idioms, has had a growing recognition in foreign language teaching methodology and theory (Siepmann 2008), adding to traditional grammatical and communicative approaches, and it is thus 'not . . . unreasonable to propose that phraseology should occupy a central and uncontroversial position in instructed second language acquisition' (Granger & Meunier 2008, p. 247). Granger and Meunier (2008, p. 248) see it as important for teachers to promote the development of phraseological awareness in their students, for both decoding and encoding. Nevertheless, there is little research on the learning of formulaic expressions by adult language learners (Pawley 2007, p. 25), although Yorio (1989) says that adult learners do not use prefabricated language as much as child learners.

While prefabricated forms undoubtedly play a role in language acquisition, this role is still relatively unresearched (Granger 1998, p. 157). Hanania and Gradman (1978 in Granger 1998) suggest that for adult language learners, there is little link between fixed patterns and creative use of language, while Yorio (1989, p. 57) indicates that adult language learners' use of prefabricated forms does not lead to further development of grammar. This does not mean, however, that learners do not use fixed expressions; merely that they are unlikely to manipulate these expressions to produce creative outcomes. In fact, they may even be penalised by native speakers for such word play (Prodromou 2010, p. 244). Granger cautions against teaching procedures based on 'prefab oriented approaches', since relatively little is known about how such expressions are learned (1998, p. 159). Phrasemes are nevertheless still important for the language learner in terms of their development of both the knowledge and application of sociolinguistic rules and cultural norms.

The importance of phrasemes in language teaching has been highlighted by Nattinger and de Carrico (1992, p. 114), who say that they are useful for English learners because they come in chunks, allow learners to interact socially and provide syntactical patterns for encoding. They refer to Qin (1983 in Nattinger & de Carrico 1992, p. 126) to emphasise that EAL teaching needs to include 'culture-specific forms' in order to be effective, using the example of a learner who interpreted 'could you pass the salt?' as a yes/no question rather than interpreting it as a request formula. Pragmatic competence (i.e. understanding the communicative intent of the speaker) is therefore just as important as grammatical competence and should be viewed as such in language teaching (Nattinger & de Carrico 1992, p. 127). An earlier article by Nattinger (1980) maintained that an EAL speaker actually produces language by using 'ready-made units appropriate

for a particular situation' (p. 341), and so teaching such units is important for learner production. If this is true, then phrasemes have an obvious part to play for EAL learners, even though phrasemes 'constitute one of the most difficult areas of foreign language learning for both teachers and learners' (Kövecses & Szabó 1996, p. 326).

Sociopragmatic competence is of the utmost importance since, as Kecskes explains, 'it is not only grammatical competence but also conceptual fluency that governs the proper use of language' (2001, p. 251). Learners need to understand when it is appropriate to use a certain expression, and what the cultural background to this might entail. A phraseme which is correctly used and is appropriate for a particular context may still be inappropriate for a certain speaker (Liu 2008, p. 111). Liu (2008, p. 113) highlights the point that 'how formal an idiom is and what register and language variety it is used in constitute perhaps the most important information for language learners in order for them to use it appropriately'. More importantly, he states that 'studies about how ESOL students learn and use idioms have not addressed which idioms they need to learn' (2003, p. 674). Liu's definition of idiom is much broader than my own, and follows Fernando in including certain types of collocation and formulaic expression, including *such as* and *as of*. However, it is true that few studies have addressed the important question about which phrasemes are most useful for EAL learners.

This central problem, mentioned by very few researchers, is highlighted by McCarthy (1998, p. 145): 'the overwhelming majority of idioms in the CANCODE corpus are spoken by speakers over 25 years old. This may make their teaching as *productive* vocabulary for younger age-groups inappropriate.' As Sinclair (1991, p. 39) says, 'the user needs a dictionary whose information is known to be up to date. The words in such a dictionary are words which can be

safely used, in the meanings and contexts that are indicated'. However, dictionaries often do not indicate when an idiom is culturally appropriate (Moon 1992). Moreover, according to O'Keeffe, McCarthy and Carter (2007, p. 62), with the exception of Strässler (1982) and Powell (1992), 'few idiom researchers have gone so far as to examine idiom use in naturally-occurring spoken data'. They add that one way to teach phrasemes and thereby to raise language awareness is 'to engage in the teaching of idioms based on sets of relatively more frequent ones, ones which non-native speakers are at least likely to hear and see when confronted with native-speaker data, whether it be printed or electronic media, or films, TV and popular music, especially in an age of increasing global availability of such material' (p. 96). The frequency with which phrasemes appear in these different contexts is one which has not yet been explored.

This thesis addresses these central questions by examining which language varieties, in terms of different age groups in the UK and Australia, use a particular set of phrasemes, and in which contexts. It then links this information to the Big 5 MELDs to discover whether the coverage and information given in these dictionaries reflect what learners need to know in order to use phrasemes appropriately. These issues are articulated in the first four research questions and form the basis of this thesis.

Conclusion

With the complications surrounding the field of phraseology and the classification of idioms and other figurative language, the approach here is one which synthesises many findings from the literature. For the purposes of this study, therefore, the expressions addressed in detail are all multi-word units of at least two words which fit under the umbrella term 'phraseme', and could be further

sub-divided into idioms (both transparent and opaque), similes and proverbs/sayings (see Appendix 1 for a list of the 84 phrasemes in this study categorised under these headings). These are figurative expressions which, it is hypothesised, learners may hear in everyday usage or come across in their reading or other areas.

This thesis aims to present a portrait of the familiarity use of these three kinds of phrasemes by different age groups in Australia, compared to the familiarity and use of these phrasemes in the UK, thus indicating the likelihood of EAL learners encountering these and similar phrasemes while living and studying in Australia. The phrasemes will be based on five different categories, as outlined in the introductory chapter (Biblical, literary/historical, UK reference, Australian reference and older reference).

The key issues based on the research questions in the introductory chapter have been raised in this chapter and will be developed accordingly in this thesis:

1) *Is there a difference in the familiarity, interpretation or opacity of certain phrasemes for people of different age groups in Australia and the UK?*

In order to study this question, familiarity of the 84 set phrasemes will be discussed in relation to different age groups and in different locations, with particular reference to 16-22 year olds in Australia, with whom the target group of EAL speakers are likely to have most interaction. Where the phrasemes were first heard will also be considered, as this has a bearing on where the target group are likely to encounter them.

2) *Are the phrasemes selected for the study still in use, by whom, and in what circumstances?*

The thesis aims to establish whether the 84 set phrasemes are still in use, and who uses them in which situations. Since there is often a link between familiarity and frequency of use (Liu 2008), this information will help to establish whether what we may feel intuitively to be a link is actually true in fact since, as Doyle says (2007), there is little previous research in this area.

3) *Can any difference in use be accounted for in terms of age and/or region?*

The study will examine similarities or differences in familiarity and use and relate them to the generational and regional models of usage highlighted in the introduction.

4) *Are any such differences reflected in the labelling systems and inclusion of these phrasemes in the Big 5?*

The coverage of the set phrasemes by the Big 5 will be discussed, in order to see whether it reflects the communicative needs of EAL learners in Australia. The possible need for more accurate *maturity* or *currency* labelling in the form of a *youth* label or greater and more clearly defined use of the *old-fashioned* label will be investigated in relation to findings from the study, reflecting the issues raised by McCarthy (1998, p. 145). The headwords given to the phrasemes in the study by the Big 5 will also be addressed, as the allocation of headwords relates to the stated aim of MELDs to be user friendly.

5) *What other phrasemes are elicited from the prompts given to participants in the study, and what variations do participants make to established phrasemes?*

Elicited phrasemes will be discussed, together with variations on established forms. Any innovations will be related to the question of coverage by the Big 5.

This chapter has addressed the intersection of phraseology and language learning, demonstrated in the orange circle of the Venn diagram in Figure 3 below:
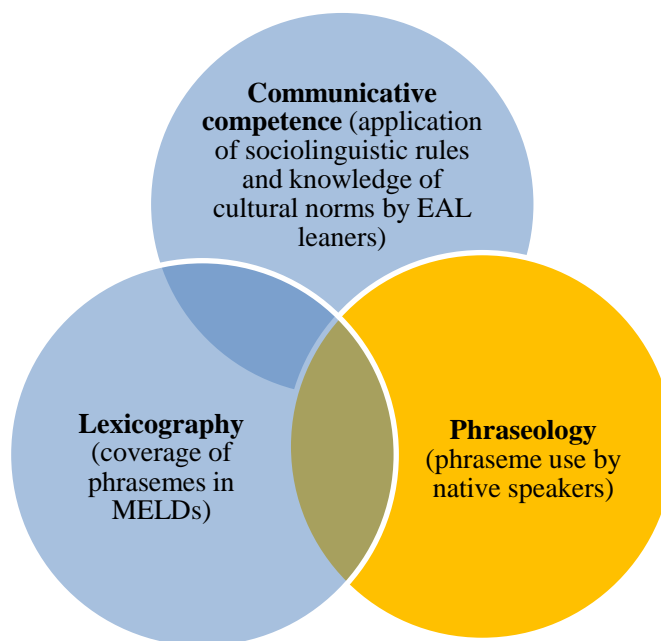
Figure 3: The relationship between communicative competence, phraseology and lexicography in this thesis

The following chapter will introduce the methodology used in this thesis. This methodology will lay the groundwork for the questionnaire which forms the heart of the thesis and which addresses the three areas of the communicative competence of EAL learners, the coverage of phrasemes in MELDs, and phraseme use by different speakers of English, drawing together the three circles of the Venn diagram and placing the dictionary once more at their centre.

Chapter Four

Methodology

Introduction

From the preceding chapters, it can be seen that there is an intersection between communicative competence (in terms of the sociolinguistic rules and cultural knowledge of EAL learners), lexicography (with regard to learners' dictionaries in this case) and phraseology (in terms of phraseme use by native speakers of English) (see Figure 1).
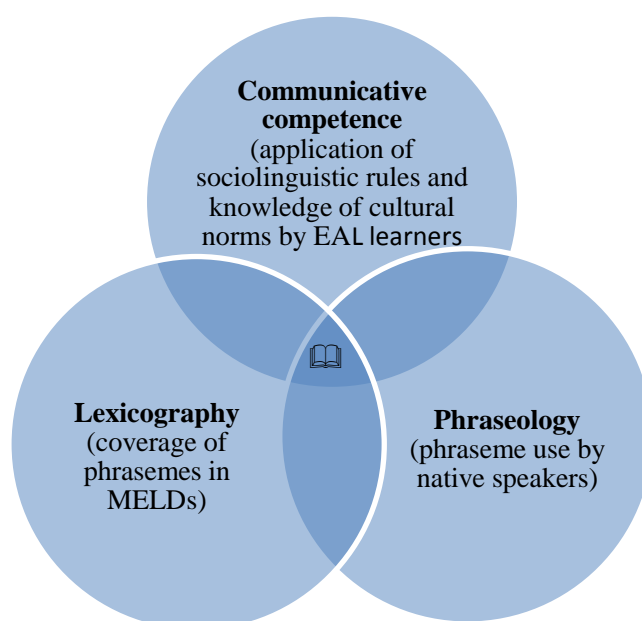
Figure 1: The relationship between communicative competence, lexicography and phraseology in this thesis

This chapter outlines a methodology which addresses this key area of intersection, identified by the dictionary symbol in Figure 1, and seeks to find answers indicative of the communicative competence of native English speakers in regard to phraseme use, and the coverage of certain phrasemes by MELDs used in Australia. The communicative competence of native speakers in this area relates to the sociolinguistic rules and knowledge that EAL speakers in Australia need to acquire in order to interact with their native English-speaking peers.

The two hypotheses being tested in this thesis are that:

1. Phrasemes in MELDs consulted by EAL students aged 16-22 in Australia may not reflect phrasemes known to or used by their peers in that country; and

2. There may be more commonality of phraseme familiarity and use within age groups (a generational model) than within geographical regions.

These hypotheses are demonstrated in Figure 2 below:
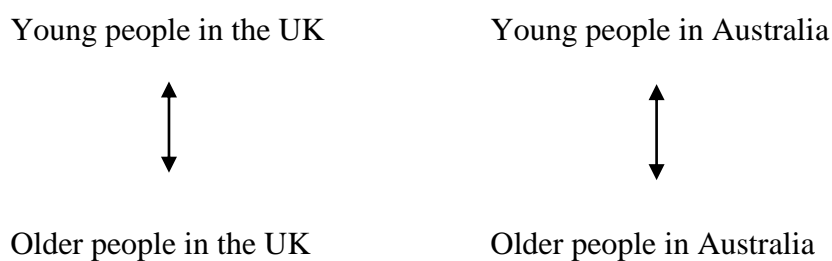
1. Regional model

Young people in the UK   Young people in Australia

↕   ↕

Older people in the UK   Older people in Australia

2. Generational model

Young people in the UK   ⟷   Young people in Australia

Older people in the UK   ⟷   Older people in Australia
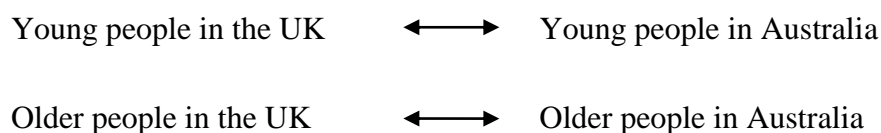
Figure 2: Two models of commonality in phraseme familiarity and use

In order to test the two hypotheses, the main aim of the investigation was to discover which phrasemes from a given list were used by different age groups in the UK and Australia and to examine the coverage of these phrasemes in the Big 5. A second aim was to elicit as many phrasemes as possible from all participants in order to identify any new or emerging expressions and see if there was a common pattern of their use with regard to age or regional location of participants. Since the participants formed a non-random sample, the results are not statistically analysable, but the findings may be regarded as a general indication of phraseme use by different age groups in Australia and the UK.

This thesis combines both quantitative and qualitative approaches, as the familiarity of certain phrasemes, correctness of their interpretation and frequency of their use is measured quantitatively, while other phrasemes, and variations to established phrasemes, have also been examined to provide qualitative information from the native speaker's perspective. Quantitative and qualitative information are thus examined from an emic and etic perspective (Pike 1971, p. 37). The emic (or intralingual) perspective gains data from the user's perspective by examining the use of phrasemes by five different age groups in two different locations. The etic (or interlingual) approach then compares these data in order to provide a wider picture of use that can be applied by pedagogical lexicographers. The combination of these two approaches provides 'systematized information from both perspectives' (Jain 1981, p. 285) which has hitherto been lacking in the field.

The principal methodology adopted in this thesis is a questionnaire in the form of six smaller surveys. The term 'questionnaire' will be used to refer to the complete questionnaire of 84 phrasemes, and 'survey' will refer to the smaller

sections of 14 phrasemes. The questionnaire aimed to answer research questions 1, 2, 3 and 5:

1. *Is there a difference in the familiarity, interpretation or opacity of certain phrasemes for people of different age groups in Australia and the UK?*

2. *Are the phrasemes selected for the study still in use, by whom, and in what circumstances?*

3. *Can any difference in use be accounted for in terms of age and/or region?*

5. *What other phrasemes are elicited from the prompts given to participants in the study, and what variations do participants make to established phrasemes?*

Research question 4 asks:

4. *Are any such differences reflected in the labelling systems and inclusion of these phrasemes in the Big 5?*

In order to answer this, a search of the Big 5 was conducted after the results of the questionnaire had been analysed. This search examined dictionary coverage of phrasemes central to the study and phrasemes elicited from participants.

The first stage in the process was the compilation of a list of phrasemes from the Big 5. These phrasemes were then incorporated in a questionnaire which was sent to participants recruited in the UK and Australia. The results were then analysed qualitatively and quantitatively and applied to coverage of the phrasemes in the questionnaire by the Big 5.

1. Compilation of a phraseme list from the Big 5

Since the range of possible phrasemes is vast, a sample list of phrasemes was initially drawn from paper editions of the Big 5 in 2006. These dictionaries were chosen because at the time the questionnaire was compiled they were the main

MELDs available in Australia. (Since then, the *Merriam-Webster's advanced learner's dictionary* has entered the field and become available online, but it arrived too late to be included in this thesis.) The editions used were *CALD3* (2008)*, COBUILD4* (2003), *LDOCE4* (2003)*, MEDAL2* (2007) and *OALD7* (2005). Paper editions of these dictionaries were used originally since they were not all available online when this investigation started, and although many contained CD-ROMs it was actually quicker to search for phrasemes in the paper dictionary. With the increasing availability of online dictionaries, and new editions of MELDs appearing throughout the period of investigation, the coverage given by each of the Big 5 in its online version in 2009 – 2010 was later used in the discussion of the findings.

In order to construct a questionnaire, a selection of phrasemes was made, using the 'idiom finder' at the back of *CALD3* as a starting point. As stated earlier, the word 'phraseme' in this investigation refers to idioms, similes and proverbs. This broad definition is necessary because many expressions listed as 'idioms' in the Big 5 also include similes and proverbs, and it could not be expected that participants in the questionnaire would distinguish between different types of expression. The 'idiom finder' in *CALD3* lists almost all the phrasemes included in the body of the dictionary, in alphabetical order, with cross-references. Five categories of phraseme were then purposely identified and selected in order to examine a range of familiarity and use, covering those which might be less familiar to younger participants and regional phrasemes which might not be known in different locations. The five categories which I identified were those whose usage or origin could be defined as Biblical (e.g. *to cast pearls before swine*); literary or of historical reference (e.g. *brave new world, to burn one's boats*); distinctively British in reference (e.g. *the man on the Clapham omnibus*);

distinctively Australian in reference (e.g. *back of Bourke*); or old-fashioned in reference (e.g. *to spend a penny*).

Using phrasemes garnered from the *CALD3* list as a starting-point, I then checked all the phrasemes in these categories to see which appeared in the rest of the Big 5 and added others which were not in *CALD3* but appeared in the other dictionaries. Those that were in at least two of the Big 5 were included in the questionnaire. In the case of distinctively Australian phrasemes, one appearance in the dictionaries was enough to warrant inclusion, as they occur less frequently in the Big 5. In some cases, the cultural relevance of a phraseme applied to both the UK and Australia, as with *coals to Newcastle, it's not cricket* and *someone had a good innings*, since there is a coal-mining city called Newcastle in each location, and both locations are renowned for their interest in cricket. The original list contained 34 Biblical phrasemes, but one was removed in order to make the number of questions in each smaller survey consistent (14 in each). I therefore eliminated *to kick against the pricks*, anticipating possibly lewd answers from some participants. However, I blithely left the Australian phraseme *like a shag on a rock*, not anticipating the possible range of responses based on the homonyms of *shag*. As one Australian man in the 61+ group commented, 'perhaps we won't go here!'.

The total of the phrasemes meeting the requirements for inclusion was therefore 84, comprising 33 Biblical phrasemes, 19 literary or with a historical reference, 11 Australian, 6 UK and 15 older reference. The difference in numbers reflects the frequency with which such phrasemes are included across the Big 5, though not necessarily within each individual MELD. (David Crystal's book of Biblical phrasemes, *Begat*, was published in 2010, and doubtless contains many

phrasemes which I did not recognise as being Biblical in origin. This resource unfortunately appeared too late to be of benefit to the questionnaire.)

The 84 phrasemes finally included in the questionnaire, along with their dictionary coverage, are shown in Table 1 below. Although the initial list was taken from the paper versions of the Big 5 in 2006, and used in the questionnaire which was sent out in 2008, online versions of the Big 5 later became available, and this final list of coverage is based on these online versions, consulted between December 2009 and July 2010. Dictionary inclusion is of course an ever-evolving situation, and one can only portray the state of play at any given time. The information in the table below thus represents the most current coverage given by the Big 5 at the time of writing. Each phraseme has been allocated a number according to its place of appearance in the total questionnaire, and the individual survey numbers are also given for reference. Origins, citations and current meanings of all the phrasemes are given in Appendix 2. Separation of the phrasemes by type (idiom, simile or proverb/saying) appears in Appendix 3.

Table 1: The 84 phrasemes included in the questionnaire, indicating the individual surveys in which the phrasemes are addressed and dictionaries in which the phrasemes appear

Number in question-naire	Survey number	Phraseme	CALD	CO-BUILD	LDOCE	MEDAL	OALD
1	Survey 1, no. 1	A wolf in sheep's clothing	✓	X	✓	✓	✓
2	Survey 1, no. 2	An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth	✓	X	✓	✓	✓
3	Survey 1, no. 3	As old as Methu-selah	✓	X	✓	X (Methu-selah – word but no phraseme)	X (Methu-selah - word but no phras-eme)

Number in question-naire	Survey number	Phraseme	CALD	CO-BUILD	LDOCE	MEDAL	OALD
4	Survey 1, no. 4	To beat/turn swords into plough-shares	✓	✓	✓	X	✓
5	Survey 1, no. 5	To hide your light under a bushel	✓	X	✓	✓	✓
6	Survey 1, no. 6	To cast pearls before swine	✓	X	✓	✓	✓
7	Survey 1, no. 7	An albatross around someone's neck	X (albatross, but only in the example)	✓	✓	✓	X (alba-tross, but only in the example)
8	Survey 1, no. 8	All that glitters is not gold	✓	X	X	X	✓
9	Survey 1, no. 9	As mad as a March hare	✓	X	X (March hare, but no phraseme)	X	✓
10	Survey 1, no. 10	The back of Bourke	X	X	X	✓	✓
11	Survey 1, no. 11	To carry/take coals to Newcastle	✓	X	✓	✓	✓
12	Survey 1, no. 12	A pretty/fine kettle of fish	✓	X	X	X	X
13	Survey 1, no. 13	Full steam ahead	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
14	Survey 1, no. 14	To have somebody's guts for garters	✓	X	✓	✓	✓
15	Survey 2, no. 1	To fall on stony ground	✓	X	✓	✓	✓
16	Survey 2, no. 2	To rain fire and brimstone	✓	✓	X	X	X
17	Survey 2, no. 3	To gird up one's loins	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
18	Survey 2, no. 4	To give up the ghost	✓	X	✓	✓	✓
19	Survey 2, no. 5	To have feet of clay	✓	X	✓	✓	✓
20	Survey 2, no. 6	To hide/cover a multitude of sins	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Number in question-naire	Survey number	Phraseme	CALD	CO-BUILD	LDOCE	MEDAL	OALD
21	Survey 2, no. 7	Birds of a feather flock together	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
22	Survey 2, no. 8	Brave new world	X ('brave new' as an example)	✓	✓	✓	✓
23	Survey 2, no. 9	To burn your boats	✓	X	✓	✓	✓
24	Survey 2, no. 10	To be a box of birds	X	X	X	✓	X
25	Survey 2, no. 11	To be up a gum tree	X	X	✓	✓	✓
26	Survey 2, no. 12	To grasp the nettle	✓	X	✓	✓	✓
27	Survey 2, no. 13	To get somewhere under your own steam	✓	X	✓	✓	✓
28	Survey 2, no. 14	Give somebody an inch and they'll take a yard/mile	✓	X	✓	✓	✓
29	Survey 3, no. 1	In the land of Nod	✓	X	✓	✓	✓
30	Survey 3, no. 2	To kill the fatted calf	✓	X	✓	X	X
31	Survey 3, no. 3	Like a lamb to the slaughter	✓	X	✓	✓	✓
32	Survey 3, no. 4	To live off the fat of the land	✓	X	✓	✓	✓
33	Survey 3, no. 5	Man cannot live by bread alone	✓	X	X	✓	X
34	Survey 3, no. 6	Not to know someone from Adam	✓	X	✓	✓	✓
35	Survey 3, no. 7	To cry wolf	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
36	Survey 3, no. 8	The cupboard is bare	✓	X	X	✓	✓
37	Survey 3, no. 9	Discretion is the better part of valour	✓	X	✓	✓	✓
38	Survey 3, no. 10	To come a gutser	X	X	X	X	✓
39	Survey 3, no. 11	Done like a dinner	X	X	X	X	✓
40	Survey 3, no. 12	It's not cricket	✓	X	X	✓	✓
41	Survey 3, no. 13	Inch by inch	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Number in question-naire	Survey number	Phraseme	CALD	CO-BUILD	LDOCE	MEDAL	OALD
42	Survey 3, no. 14	To let off steam	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
43	Survey 4, no. 1	Out of the ark	✓	X	X	✓	✓
44	Survey 4, no. 2	To quote something chapter and verse	✓	X	✓	✓	✓
45	Survey 4, no. 3	To reap what you sow	✓	X	✓	✓	✓
46	Survey 4, no. 4	To rob Peter to pay Paul	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
47	Survey 4, no. 5	To separate the sheep from the goats	✓	X	✓	✓	✓
48	Survey 4, no. 6	A dog in the manger	✓	X	X	✓	✓
49	Survey 4, no. 7	Fools rush in where angels fear to tread	X	X	✓	✓	✓
50	Survey 4, no. 8	To gild the lily	✓	X	✓	✓	✓
51	Survey 4, no. 9	Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned	X	X	X	✓	✓
52	Survey 4, no. 10	Don't come the raw prawn with me	✓	X	X	X	X
53	Survey 4, no. 11	To get a guernsey	X	X	X	✓	✓
54	Survey 4, no. 12	The man/woman on the Clapham omnibus	✓	X	✓	X	✓
55	Survey 4, no. 13	To look/be every inch sth	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
56	Survey 4, no. 14	Two a penny	✓	✓	✓	X	✓
57	Survey 5, no. 1	To separate the wheat from the chaff	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
58	Survey 5, no. 2	The blind leading the blind	✓	X	✓	✓	✓
59	Survey 5, no. 3	A land of milk and honey	✓	X	✓	✓	✓
60	Survey 5, no. 4	The road to Damascus	✓	X	✓	✓	✓

Number in question-naire	Survey number	Phraseme	CALD	CO-BUILD	LDOCE	MEDAL	OALD
61	Survey 5, no. 5	The salt of the earth	✓	X	✓	✓	✓
62	Survey 5, no. 6	An iron fist in a velvet glove	✓	X	X	X	✓
63	Survey 5, no. 7	Jam tomorrow	✓	X	✓	✓	✓
64	Survey 5, no. 8	Look before you leap	X	X	✓	✓	✓
65	Survey 5, no. 9	In the box seat	X	X	X	X	✓
66	Survey 5, no. 10	Like a shag on a rock	✓	X	X	X	X
67	Survey 5, no. 11	To send somebody to Coventry	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
68	Survey 5, no. 12	The penny drops	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
69	Survey 5, no. 13	To pick up steam	✓	X	✓	✓	✓
70	Survey 5, no. 14	Within an inch of something	✓	X	✓	✓	✓
71	Survey 6, no. 1	The scales fall from someone's eyes	✓	X	✓	✓	X
72	Survey 6, no. 2	The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak	✓	X	✓	✓	✓
73	Survey 6, no. 3	To turn the other cheek	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
74	Survey 6, no. 4	Sackcloth and ashes	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
75	Survey 6, no. 5	Something went out with the ark	✓	X	X	✓	✓
76	Survey 6, no. 6	The milk of human kindness	✓	X	✓	✓	✓
77	Survey 6, no. 7	A pound of flesh	✓	X	✓	✓	✓
78	Survey 6, no. 8	(All animals are equal but) some are more equal than others	X	X	X	✓	✓
79	Survey 6, no. 9	Not to have a bar of something	X	X	X	X	✓

Number in question-naire	Survey number	Phraseme	CALD	CO-BUILD	LDOCE	MEDAL	OALD
80	Survey 6, no. 10	Up the mulga	(✓) (mulga, in the phrase 'up in the mulga')	X	X	X	X
81	Survey 6, no. 11	Somebody had a good innings	✓	X	✓	✓	✓
82	Survey 6, no. 12	To run out of steam	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
83	Survey 6, no. 13	To spend a penny	✓	X	✓	✓	✓
84	Survey 6, no. 14	Not to budge/ give/ move an inch	✓	X	✓	✓	✓

2. The questionnaire

In terms of questionnaire length, the list was broken down into six smaller surveys, each containing a total of 14 phrasemes, to reduce questionnaire fatigue (Baker 2003). As stated earlier, the term 'questionnaire' refers to the complete questionnaire of 84 phrasemes, while 'survey' refers to these smaller sections of 14 phrasemes. For a copy of the complete questionnaire, divided into six surveys, please see the accompanying CD-ROM.

In order to compare the use of phrasemes by different age groups in Australia and the UK, a questionnaire format was chosen as most appropriate (Tull & Hawkins 1987 in Baker 2003, p. 345), allowing for a comparison across age groups and locations. The surveys were originally designed to be given out in paper form. As the number of potential participants grew, however, an online version was developed using the Survey Monkey program available at Flinders University in Adelaide. Once a questionnaire is developed using this program, a link is generated which can be emailed to participants. In order to attract a greater number of participants, an invitation was given to enter a free draw to win an iPod

after completing each survey. Participants could do as many of the six surveys as they liked by using links at the end of each one. Since participants' responses remained anonymous at all times, it is not possible to ascertain exactly how many different people took part, but the total number of surveys completed was 2085. The largest number of participants was in survey 1, with a total of 251 from Australia and 618 from the UK, indicating that at least 869 participants took part in the questionnaire as a whole, although the actual total was much higher, judging by the changing demographic details.

The language used in the questions was kept as simple as possible (Baker 2003; Miller & Salkind 2002), to cater for the wide variety of ages and linguistic aptitude of anticipated participants, who ranged in age from 16 to over 61. It was stressed that there were no right or wrong answers to the questions, and that not knowing an answer also provided valuable information to the researcher, as an overall knowledge of a certain phraseme by a particular group contributed to my qualitative analysis. Since the definitions of the terms 'phraseme' and 'idiom' are so complex, and participants could not be expected to understand all the words' intricacies, answers recorded from participants included proverbs and other multi-word expressions as well as pure and figurative idioms, and the simpler term 'idiom' was used throughout the questionnaire.

The questionnaire was designed to be done by any native speaker of English resident in the UK or Australia. Under UK were included Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales. Irish and New Zealand participants were excluded, as were speakers of other varieties of English. Native speakers included those who had been born in either of the locations to migrant parents, since, as Kiesling notes (2001, p. 240), there is little difference in the way second generation and first generation children learn the predominant language of their country. The age

groups were divided into under 16, 17-22, 23-30, 31-40, 41-60 and over 61. 'Old' and 'young' are obviously relative terms, so it is important to present data with the different ages listed (Macaulay 2009, p. 5). The age range 'under 16' was added when the questionnaire was presented at schools in the UK, because a very small number of participants there were found to be aged just under 16 years old and teachers did not want to exclude them from participating during class time. From the other demographic information, it could be seen that these participants had already achieved educational levels at the GCSE level, relating to an examination normally taken in the UK by those aged 16 or over. The findings for the under 16 and 17-22 age groups have been combined in this thesis, since the age range 16-22 more closely matches that of the target group. The division of participants into age groups and regions allows an emic approach to the data (Pike 1971), providing an insider view from those inside a speech community, which can then be complemented by an etic approach (Pike 1971), allowing for comparison across age ranges and locations.

Each survey started with mainly closed questions designed to provide demographic information. This section differed for the UK and Australia, as multiple choice questions about place of residence and school qualifications had to be varied to match the participant's country. Questions were phrased in such a way that they would not appear objectionable to participants (Miller & Salkind 2002), so that 'highest level of education' was requested, rather than the more direct 'did you finish high school?' or 'have you got a degree?'. These factual questions could be answered easily, which is an important factor in survey design (Baker 2003, p. 366), leading the participants in to the more complicated lexical questions.

There is no simple way to elicit all the words a person knows, since any method will inevitably cause people to remember words in a particular context (Meara 2006) and to forget others. The same may be said of phrasemes. Without corpus evidence, it is, as O'Keeffe, McCarthy and Carter (2007, p. 79) point out, 'difficult to introspect on what one says'. Since some people respond well to visual stimulus and others to lexical stimulus, both kinds of stimuli were provided, with a dual picture and word prompt to clarify the question and stimulate ideas (Baker 2003, p. 366). Only one word from the original phraseme was given in the first question. For instance, for the phraseme *Time flies* used in the example for all participants at the beginning of each survey, a picture was first given of a clock with wings, and underneath this was the question, 'What idiom(s) using the word "time" does this picture make you think of?' (see Figure 3). In this way, it was hoped to elicit as many phrasemes as possible, rather than just one 'correct' answer. Some of the phrasemes were easier to guess than others, but using this question meant that other phrasemes might be given by participants which would add to the overall picture of phraseme use by a particular group.
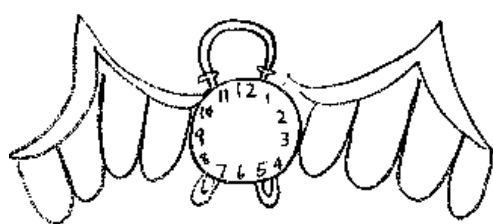
Figure 3: Example question: What idiom(s) using the word "time" does this picture make you think of?

On the next page of the survey, a suggested answer was given. In the case of the example, the answer was *Time flies*. Participants were then asked if they had heard this phraseme before, and if so, where they had heard it. This question was

included so that a list of phraseme sources could be considered in order to indicate where EAL learners might hear a phraseme.

Next, participants were asked if the prompt reminded them of any other phrasemes, and if so, to specify. This question was designed to elicit emerging phrasemes and variations to established phrasemes, in order to examine any patterns of familiarity by age group or location. Such information addresses the theory of imitation, by which new language items spread in a speech community as they are imitated by other speakers (Bright 1997, p. 85). As Milroy and Milroy (1997, p. 59) suggest, 'it is assumed that all individuals are embedded in networks of personal ties . . . when these ties are strong, they can act as norm-enforcement mechanisms'. In this way, speakers 'locate themselves in a highly complex multi-dimensional social space' (Hudson 1980, p. 140). Patterns might therefore appear in regard to phrasemes not included in the study.

Multiple choice questions were then given to see whether the participants knew the meaning of the prompt phraseme. Four possible answers were given: the correct answer (e.g. time can go very quickly); an antithetical answer (e.g. time can go very slowly); an alternative, often literal, answer (e.g. clocks can fly); and an opportunity to reject all the other options (i.e. none of these). The order of these answers was randomised by the computer software used for the survey, and the option 'none of these' was then moved to the end of the randomised list. A full copy of the questionnaire appears in the accompanying CD-ROM.

The online questionnaire was designed so that participants could not return to previous pages. This meant that I could test whether they knew the phraseme, but they could not insert it on the previous page if they had missed it before. A small number of participants bypassed this control, however, by using the 'previous

page' function on their computers. This was evident from those who claimed not to have heard the phraseme before and yet filled in the words of the phraseme at the suggestion box in the first question. This problem was unavoidable.

Sometimes the phraseme was easier to guess than at other times, and this could not be controlled for. A text box could have been included asking people what the phraseme meant, or asking them to write a sentence including the phraseme, but pilot tests revealed that most people had trouble doing this, and so the multiple choice option was chosen. Open-ended questions were thus kept to a minimum, making the survey easier to answer (Miller & Salkind 2002) and to analyse.

The next question referred to the participants' frequency of use of the phraseme, with five choices given, based on adverbs of frequency: never, almost never, sometimes, often, very often. Participants were required to tick one box. These responses could have been a little ambiguous since, as Baker (2003, p. 349) points out, 'often' can mean different things to different people. In addition, there is no measurable distance between the points (Baker 2003, p. 360). 'Never, once a year, once a month, once a week, once a day' is one possibility that might give a more accurate answer. Baker (2003, p. 363) does admit that in some cases a verbal frequency scale such as 'never, seldom, sometimes, often, always' may be the easiest choice.

It was hard to determine a suitable scale, given that I had no idea of the frequency with which phrasemes might be used, and that participants would not necessarily be aware of their own frequency of use. Moon's research (1998a, p. 60) suggests that most phrasemes occur very infrequently, with over 70% of phrasemes in her study occurring less than 1 per million tokens in the Oxford

Hector Pilot Corpus. However, Arnaud indicates that he heard an average of 1.5 proverbs alone each day over an 8 month period (Arnaud & Moon 1993, p. 325). Adding other phrasemes to this would make the overall frequency of spoken phrasemes much higher. This was a central question for this thesis, attempting to provide an answer to Doyle's query, 'just *which* speakers actually use given proverbs? With what frequency? How currently? With precisely what meanings?'(2007, p. 196). Doyle's questions were in regard to gendered use of proverbs, but the same questions are asked in this thesis with regard to phrasemes used by people of different ages in different locations. A simple scale was therefore used to reflect participants' general impressions of their use of phrasemes.

Finally, participants were asked to tick the following boxes to indicate where they would use the phraseme:

talking to children

talking to your parents

talking to your brothers or sisters

talking to friends your own age

talking to people younger than yourself

talking to people older than yourself

talking to colleagues at work

talking to your boss

talking in formal situations

writing an essay

writing a text message

chatting on the internet

For both this and the previous question, it is possible that participants were saying what they thought they might, would or should do (Hatherall 1984, p. 184). This again cannot be controlled for, but it is valuable for qualitative analysis and provides an emic perspective on the data (Pike 1971, p. 37).

Baker (2003, p. 346) points out that people tend to finish a survey once they have started, even if they do not know the answers. In addition, it was necessary to complete at least one survey in order to find the details necessary to enter the iPod draw. For this reason, participants may have gone quickly through the questions and responded with answers that were not carefully thought out. The large number of responses, however, meant that I was able to obtain a lot of valuable information. Many participants were very interested in the subject, evidenced by their voluntary participation and the fact that they also invited their friends to participate. This means that they may have been more dedicated to finishing the questions. Indeed, I received several emails from people who were less used to the Internet and who were keen to find out whether their answers had been submitted, whether they had answered questions properly and whether I would like them to do the whole survey again. There was no way to check whether their submissions had worked, since responses were anonymous, but I was able to clarify their other questions. Such a level of enthusiasm was impressive and made recruitment easier.

2.1   Recruitment of participants

Participants were initially recruited, after University Ethics Committee approval had been obtained, by information posted on the website *World wide words* and

articles in *Australian style* and the largely Australian electronic magazine *Bonzer*. *World wide words* is produced by the British lexicographer Michael Quinion and addresses English as an international language from a British perspective. The respondents from this source lived in either Australia or the UK. *Australian style* is 'a biannual print newsletter, published by the Style Council and Dictionary Research Centre at Macquarie University since 1992' (Macquarie University 2008). Participants who responded to this invitation were largely based in Australia, and the same was true of the *Bonzer* respondents. *Bonzer* describes itself as 'an online monthly magazine by, for and about wise elders', and the editor requested information about the questionnaire after seeing the invitation in *Australian style*. Several hundred participants were gained overall from these three sources, largely from the 40+ age groups. In some cases, people requested paper copies of the survey. These were sent out, and when the 51 completed surveys were returned the data were entered into the Survey Monkey online questionnaire pages. Most people, however, used the online method.

In order to recruit a younger age group, I contacted all the high school principals in Adelaide (Australia) and Cambridge (UK), and most of the secondary school principals in North Yorkshire (UK, where I already had some contacts). I was invited to visit two schools and four university classes in Adelaide. There were no positive responses from schools in Cambridge. However, with the help of Flinders University Outside Studies Program leave of two weeks, I was able to visit the UK and meet interested English teachers in secondary schools and Sixth Form Colleges in North Yorkshire who invited me to talk to staff, and five of these schools invited me to explain the project to students and teach a class. They also publicised the survey in the school newsletters, and one Sixth Form College put details on their school intranet site. These visits to schools

in Adelaide and North Yorkshire resulted in several hundred responses to the survey among the younger age group. Other young people also participated from outside these two locations, but the number of these was much smaller. This means that the results for the younger participants are particularly reflective of young people in Adelaide and North Yorkshire, and may be different to those that would be obtained if a whole country could be surveyed.

The total number of surveys completed when the questionnaire closed on 31 December 2008 was 2085.

3. Analysis of results

The Survey Monkey program automatically downloaded the answers to the questions in an Excel spreadsheet, enabling easy comparison of answers according to different age groups and different countries. Analysis was conducted quantitatively by comparing the familiarity rates of the phrasemes to the different age groups in the UK and Australia. Averages have also been compiled for interpretation of the given phraseme by different participants, and for the frequency with which participants said they would use the given phrasemes. Qualitative data are provided in the form of phrasemes elicited from the participants. These phrasemes appear in tables in the accompanying CD-ROM, in which each survey is given a separate Excel spreadsheet and the phrasemes are given in order of their appearance throughout the surveys, with data about the age groups and locations of those who suggested them. Sometimes the elicited phraseme matches one of the prompt phrasemes in a different survey. *A wolf in sheep's clothing*, for example, is mentioned by 30 participants in Survey 4, and also appears as a prompt in Survey 1. It is unlikely, however, that all the participants in Survey 4 had also done Survey 1 and so had been influenced by the

phrasemes included there; moreover, the fact that these participants mentioned the phraseme suggests that it is part of their active vocabulary, since if they had encountered it for the first time in Survey 1 they would not necessarily have remembered it and written it down in Survey 4.

Dictionary coverage of the prompt and elicited phrasemes was ascertained between December 2009 and July 2010 by means of the online versions of the Big 5. Findings are presented in detail in the following chapter, and relate specifically to the gaps in the literature highlighted by Liu (2003, 2008) and O'Keeffe, McCarthy and Carter (2007) with regard to who uses which phrasemes, in which circumstances. Previous studies, addressed by Liu (2008), have counted the frequency with which phrasemes appear in a written or spoken corpus. So far, however, no research has been conducted to discover how frequently certain phrasemes are used by different age groups in different locations. Neither has the possible link between frequency of use and familiarity been sufficiently explored (Doyle 2007; Liu 2008). This investigation addresses these gaps in the literature in a quantitative manner.

Labels given to the prompt and most commonly elicited phrasemes are also examined, addressing the problem raised by McCarthy (1998, p. 145). This problem relates to the fact that many corpora, such as the CANCODE corpus, include phrasemes used mainly by older speakers, and do not address the issue of whether they should be taught to younger speakers for the purposes of encoding. The provision of clear labelling can help to indicate if a phraseme is appropriate for use by a particular age group in a given location.

4. Limitations

There was a disproportionate number of UK participants in the youngest age group in Survey 1, since this was the link given to many students by their teachers. In the other surveys, the numbers of participants were more evenly spread between the groups, although the number in the UK 23-30 age group remained disappointingly low throughout. The participation of those in the youngest group was also largely restricted to a single location in both Australia and the UK. All the UK schools who responded were in North Yorkshire, while the only schools which responded to the invitation in Adelaide were both church schools, one of which was Greek Orthodox and the other evangelical Christian. The students at these schools may therefore have had greater exposure to Biblical phrasemes (although the final results of the survey do not support this). Other young people in the UK and Australia also participated, but their numbers were low. Despite early attempts to contact teachers in the UK, responses were not received from many until after the survey had been launched, and the youngest age group had to be extended slightly to cover those under 16, as many older students (year 13) were not available to participate due to examination commitments at the time of my UK school visits.

Two of the questions in the survey could have been more carefully phrased, although this was not evident from the pilot testing. One was the phraseme use question, for which one participant noted that there was no option for 'talking to one's partner/spouse'. This could perhaps have been subsumed under the options 'talking to friends your own age', 'talking to people younger than yourself' or 'talking to people older than yourself', but is an omission that should be remedied if the survey is repeated. The other problematic question was 'where would you use this idiom?', which prompted responses from participants who had no

previous knowledge of the phraseme but perhaps thought they would use it in future. (One of the young men in North Yorkshire, for example, liked the phrase *up the mulga* and seemed prepared to adopt it as a motivational slogan, yelling *up the mulga* with a raised fist and a big grin as though it were a football slogan.) A better phrasing of this question would therefore have been 'where do you use this idiom, if you are already familiar with it?'.

The question 'Where did you first hear this idiom?' was obviously hard to answer for many people. Many of the participants were in the older age ranges and could not remember when they had first heard a phraseme or in what circumstances. (One participant, when asked in a later question if they would use the phraseme when talking to people older than oneself, responded, 'You mean there are people older than me?!') The findings from the 16-22 age group are of note, however, as they give an idea of where EAL speakers might also hear the phrasemes.

Some of the older participants had trouble with the online format, and contacted me for reassurance that their responses had been recorded. Other participants completed paper copies of the surveys, and these had to be entered manually into Survey Monkey, which was time consuming. This provision did mean, however, that no one was excluded from participating on the basis of computing skills or Internet access.

As stated earlier, the sample was non-randomised, and so the results cannot be analysed statistically. However, the findings do paint a general portrait of phraseme use by different age groups in Australia and the UK, and provide a starting point for further analysis and discussion.

Conclusion

The large number of responses to the surveys was encouraging, and although the exact number of participants is unknown it is likely to be between 1000 and 2000. A much larger survey would of course give better results, but this would have required the resources of a program such as the English Project, or a large advertising campaign, perhaps through television or other media. This is something to be considered in the future.

The findings and discussion in the following chapters indicate how the methodology provided information to answer the research questions and highlight common areas of phraseme familiarity and use, particularly in regard to the generational and regional models.

Chapter Five

Findings

Introduction

This chapter reports on the data relating to the 84 phrasemes used as prompts in the questionnaire, including the phrasemes elicited from them and coverage of the original and elicited phrasemes by the Big 5. Where appropriate, comment is made on the relevance of these phrasemes to the target group of EAL students in the 16-22 age range in Australia.

Each phraseme will be treated in the order in which it appears in the questionnaire. Under each entry the following sub-categories are addressed:

Phrasemes in order of questionnaire
1. Familiarity
2. Interpretation
3. Frequency of use
4. Phrasemes most frequently elicited
5. Dictionary coverage

Prior to the discussion on each phraseme, a table will indicate the number of participants in each age group who responded either positively or negatively to the question on familiarity. These numbers sometimes varied slightly in the other

questions, but it was felt it would be too cumbersome in this chapter to show the number under each question response for each phraseme. For example, with the phraseme *to gild the lily*, three participants in the UK 23-30 group said they had heard the phraseme before, but only two of them responded to the question on frequency of use. Three is used as the participant number in the table.

Familiarity rates are based on whether participants said they had heard the phraseme before. The rates are expressed in graphs which compare responses from five different age groups in Australia and the UK. Overall familiarity rates are based on the figures for all age groups in Australia and the UK, and have been rounded to the nearest whole number, with rates of 0.5 rounded up. For a complete list of comparative familiarity rates, see Appendix 4.

For interpretation, participants were given a choice of four answers: a suggested answer; an opposite answer; an alternative (often literal) answer; or 'none of these'. Participants were not informed whether the boxes they were checking were suggested interpretations, their opposites, or an alternative. Interpretation is measured by whether participants checked the box giving the suggested answer. In some cases, however, participants felt that none of the choices offered was adequate. This could be because the phraseme had taken on a different meaning in their experience, or was used slightly differently in Australia compared to the UK. The choices given were also limited to the lowest common denominator of meaning, in order to limit the number of options, so subtlety of answers was not catered for and some participants preferred the answer 'none of these' as they did not feel the exact meaning had been given.

The frequency of use category is presented in table format, showing age groups and countries. 'Very often' given as a usage category by the 16-22 group

may often be taken with a figurative pinch of salt, since the occasional participant who ticked this box frequently indicated no prior knowledge or understanding of the phraseme. Most of the results in this chapter are based on the rates at which participants said they would use a phraseme 'never' or 'sometimes'. Again, average rates have been rounded to the nearest whole number, with 0.5 rounded up, so that percentages may occasionally total more or less than 100. For a complete list of comparative usage rates, see Appendix 5.

The phrasemes most frequently elicited (those with over 10 suggestions or 'tokens'), including variations on established phrasemes, are then addressed. Here it is the total number of participants who suggested the phraseme which is important, rather than a percentage of participants, as this was an open question in which participants wrote down any phrasemes that came to mind. In some cases, phrasemes with less than 10 tokens are also included in the discussion, where these were of particular interest or where fewer than 10 suggestions were made.

The final sub-category indicates the coverage given to the original and elicited phrasemes in the Big 5. For a list of all the phrasemes elicited in the questionnaires, please see the accompanying CD-Rom.

Presentation of results

1. Survey 1, Phraseme 1: *A wolf in sheep's clothing*

Total Australian participants: 232
Total UK participants: 466
Suggested interpretation: Someone bad looks good.
Dictionary inclusion: *CALD*, *LDOCE*, *MEDAL* and *OALD*

Table 1.1: Participant numbers for the phraseme *a wolf in sheep's clothing*

Australia	16-22	77
	23-30	21
	31-40	13
	41-60	65
	61+	56
	Total	**232**
UK	16-22	286
	23-30	28
	31-40	36
	41-60	100
	61+	16
	Total	**466**

1.1 Familiarity

This was one of the more familiar phrasemes in the questionnaire, with an average

familiarity rating of 87% in the UK and 90% in Australia across all age groups

(see Figure 1.1). Familiarity rose with age, but at least half the youngest group in

each location had heard the phraseme before and 81% or over of the older groups

were familiar with the phraseme.
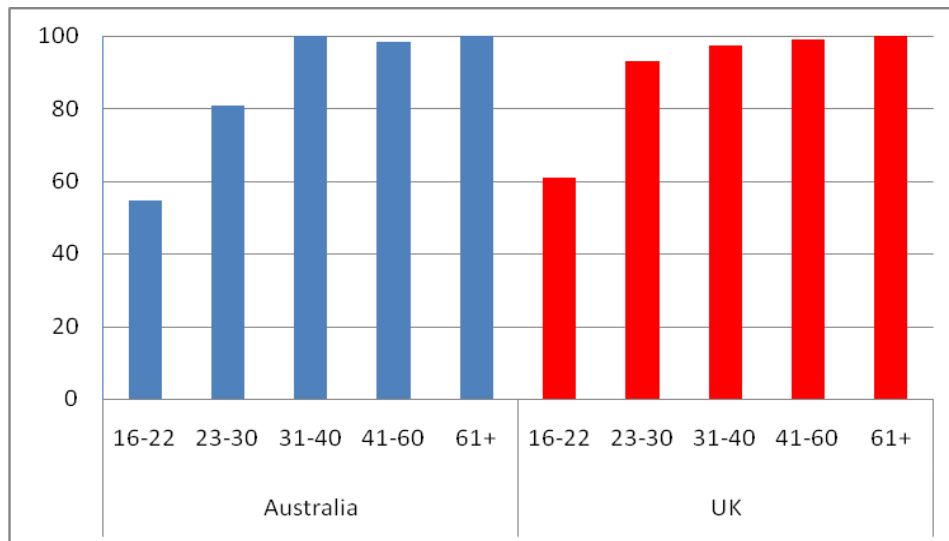
Figure 1.1: Familiarity of participants with the phraseme *a wolf in sheep's clothing* as a percentage of each age group's responses

1.2 Interpretation

This phraseme also proved easy to interpret, perhaps due to the high familiarity level. More Australian (90%) than UK participants (81%) gave the suggested answer (see Figure 1.2), but this may have been due to the larger number of younger participants in the UK, who were less familiar with the phraseme initially. A surprisingly large number of the UK 31-40 group (25%) gave the alternative meaning of 'someone looks like an animal'.
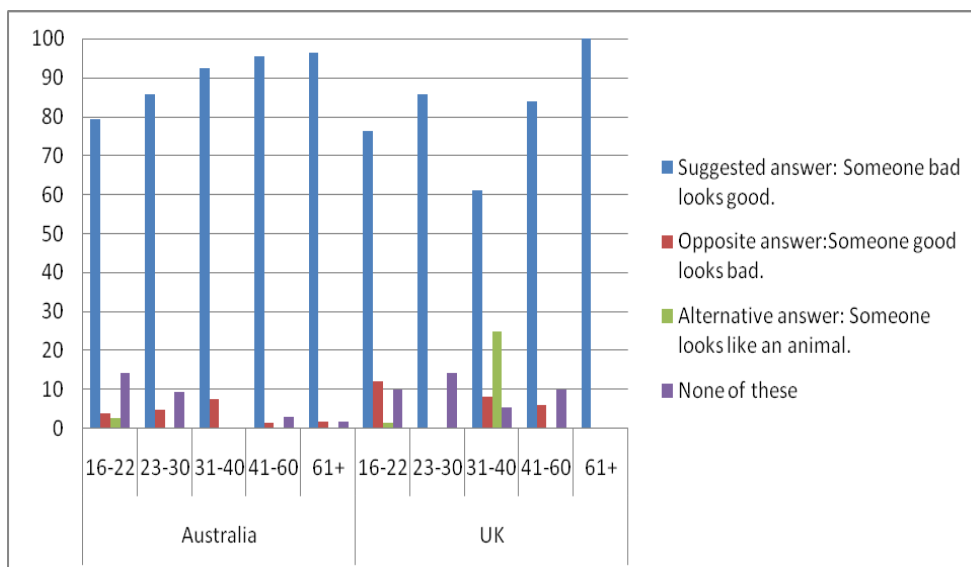
Figure 1.2: Interpretation of the phraseme a wolf in sheep's clothing as a percentage of each age group's responses

1.3 Frequency of use

It seems that this phraseme is used almost equally in the UK and Australia, as an average of 41% of Australian participants and 44% of UK participants said they would use it 'sometimes'. Almost no one said they would use it 'often' or 'very often'. As Table 1.2 indicates, usage increases with age, with the greatest professed usage among those aged over 31 in both locations.

Table 1.2: Frequency of use of the phraseme a wolf in sheep's clothing as a percentage of each age group's responses

Location	Age group	Never	Almost never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
Australia	16-22	55	26	14	5	0
	23-30	33	43	24	0	0
	31-40	0	46	46	8	0
	41-60	8	29	62	2	0
	61+	7	30	59	4	0
UK	16-22	45	37	17	0	1
	23-30	21	46	29	0	4
	31-40	6	47	44	3	0
	41-60	4	26	68	2	0
	61+	6	44	50	0	0

1.4 Phrasemes most frequently elicited

The phrasemes most frequently elicited here involved both sheep and wolves. Two of these were *the boy who cried wolf* (110 tokens) and its shorter version, *to cry wolf* (155 tokens), both meaning that someone calls for help when none is necessary, with the aim of deceiving other people. *To cry wolf* appears in Survey 3. The greatest number of these suggestions came from the youngest age group, with 70 suggesting *cry wolf* and 91 suggesting *the boy who cried wolf*. While this age group had a larger number of participants, the high suggestion rate for both phrasemes is noteworthy, compared to the amount of other phrasemes suggested by this age group throughout the questionnaire.

Mutton dressed (up) as lamb, referring to an older woman who dresses as a younger woman, was more popular in the UK (34 tokens compared to 23 from Australia), and particularly suggested by the youngest age group in both locations (21 tokens).

A sheep in wolf's clothing appeared so often (32 tokens) that it could be suggested this is becoming a phraseme in its own right. There is a 2007 children's book entitled *The sheep in wolf's clothing* by Helen Lester, with humorous illustrations by Lynn Munsinger, and a Google search for *sheep in wolf's clothing* on 20 November 2009 resulted in about 169,000 hits.

The wolf is at the door, with its reference to hunger or poverty, was suggested twice as often by Australian participants (17, compared to 7 in the UK), while the form *keep the wolf from the door* was suggested by 22 Australian and 39 UK participants.

1.5 Dictionary coverage

A wolf in sheep's clothing is found in *CALD*, *LDOCE*, *MEDAL* and *OALD*, reflecting its high familiarity and common usage.

To cry wolf is listed in all the Big 5, but its parent form *the boy who cried wolf* does not appear in any of them. It is perhaps more likely to be used as part of a simile (e.g. 'he's like the boy who cried wolf'), but is nevertheless commonly used according to my survey. *Mutton dressed (up) as lamb* appears in all the Big 5, and in each it is marked as a British English phraseme, although the findings here suggest it is also popular in Australia. *Keep the wolf from the door* appears in *CALD*, *LDOCE, MEDAL* and *OALD*, but the popular variant *the wolf is at the door* is not in any of the Big 5, perhaps because it is more familiar in Australia than the UK and the Big 5 tend to reflect British usage. *A sheep in wolf's clothing* has not yet made it to any of the dictionaries. This is an expression that would be worth tracking in the future, to see if it is indeed evolving as a phraseme in its own right.

2. Survey 1, Phraseme 2: *An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth*

Total Australian participants: 231
Total UK participants: 407
Suggested interpretation: Revenge
Dictionary inclusion: *CALD*, *LDOCE*, *MEDAL* and *OALD*

Table 2.1: Participant numbers for the phraseme *an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth*

Australia	16-22	73
	23-30	21
	31-40	13
	41-60	69
	61+	55
	Total	**231**
UK	16-22	246
	23-30	20
	31-40	32
	41-60	92
	61+	17
	Total	**407**

2.1 Familiarity

This very familiar phraseme is slightly better known in the UK than Australia, with a familiarity rating across the age groups of 96% compared to 91%. All the Australian young people (aged 16-22) claimed to have heard it before, as opposed to only 83% of this group in the UK. What is surprising in these findings is that the familiarity with this phraseme in Australia fell with age for the first three groups, rising again to 100% in the oldest age group (see Figure 2.1). The familiarity level in the UK remained consistently high, however, and even the youngest group gave a rating of 83%.
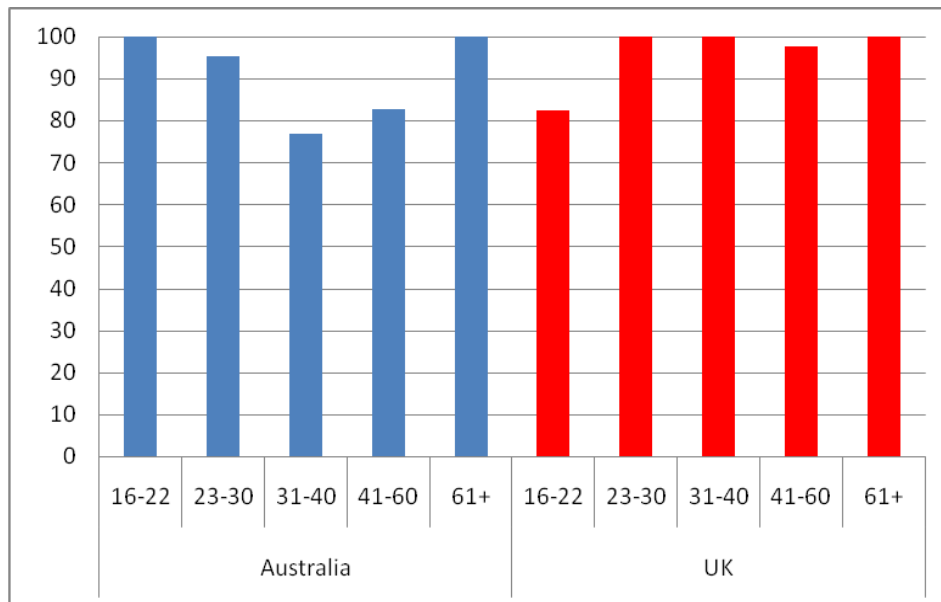
Figure 2.1: Familiarity with the phraseme *an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth* as a percentage of each age group's responses

2.2 Interpretation

The majority of the participants (91% in the UK and 88% in Australia) agreed with the suggested meaning of this phraseme (see Figure 2.2). However, 15% of the 31-40 group and 10% of the 41-60 group in Australia interpreted it as meaning 'forgiveness'. Others, mainly older speakers, felt that none of the alternatives given really encapsulated the meaning.
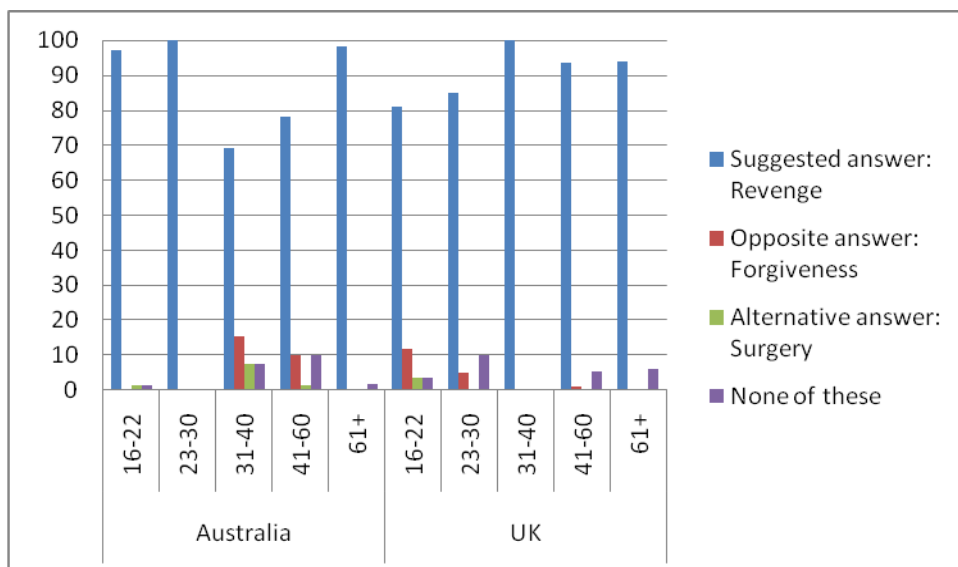
Figure 2.2: Interpretation of the phraseme *an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth* as a percentage of each age group's responses

2.3 Frequency of use

This phraseme is used equally in the UK (38% average 'sometimes') and Australia (37% average 'sometimes'). It seems to be used more overall by the youngest group in Australia (only 10% said they would never use it) than by the older groups, in particular the 31-40 group, of whom 46% said they would never use it (see Table 2.2). This is an unusually high usage rating by the youngest age group. By contrast, 12% of the Australian 41-60 group said they would use it often; this was the highest frequency given by any age group in either country. These findings indicate that the phraseme is in common use.

Table 2.2: Frequency of use of the phraseme *an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth* as a percentage of each age group's responses

Location	Age group	Never	Almost never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
Australia	16-22	10	45	41	3	1
	23-30	14	43	43	0	0
	31-40	46	15	31	8	0
	41-60	28	25	35	12	1
	61+	24	38	35	4	0
UK	16-22	28	33	35	3	2
	23-30	10	35	50	5	0
	31-40	22	50	25	3	0
	41-60	13	42	42	2	0
	61+	13	38	50	0	0

2.4 Phrasemes most frequently elicited

Keep/have an eye on someone, meaning to keep someone under surveillance, was suggested by 35 people, with the largest number (8) in the 41-60 group in the UK. *To turn a blind eye* (31 tokens), meaning that someone deliberately does not see something, proved popular as a suggestion by the youngest group in both Australia and the UK (16 tokens), as well as the 41-60 group in Australia (7 tokens). *Beauty is in the eye of the beholder*, referring to the subjectivity of the perception of what is beautiful, was offered by 29 people, 13 of them in the youngest group in both the UK and Australia. *Give someone the evil eye*, or simply *the evil eye*, meaning that someone can harm others by looking at them in a certain way, was suggested by 26 people, but more by UK participants, mostly in the 41-60 group. *See eye to eye* (17 tokens), meaning that people agree, was suggested most by the youngest group (11 people). *Apple of one's eye*, referring to a beloved person or object, was suggested by 13 people, five of them in the 16-22 group in the UK. *In the blink of an eye* (13 tokens)*,* referring to something which happens very quickly, was suggested most by the youngest group in Australia (4 people) and the 41-60 group in the UK (4 people).

Two phrasemes emerged as distinctive geographically. *An eye for an eye makes the whole world blind* (12 tokens), a phraseme attributed to Mahatma Gandhi meaning that revenge is ultimately destructive for everyone, was suggested solely by UK participants, predominantly in the youngest age group (8 tokens). *S/he's one eyed*, referring to someone as limited in their outlook, arose only in Australian answers (26 tokens), with equal coverage from the youngest and the oldest groups, suggesting a spread of familiarity in this country.

2.5 Dictionary coverage

An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth is found in *CALD, LDOCE, MEDAL* and *OALD*. The dictionary coverage is good for this popular phraseme.

Keep/have an eye on someone, *turn a blind eye, beauty is in the eye of the beholder, give someone the evil eye, see eye to eye* and *apple of one's eye* each appeared in all of the Big 5. However, *an eye for an eye makes the whole world blind* and *s/he's one eyed* were in none of them, even though they were suggested by 12 and 26 participants respectively. These two phrasemes might be worthy of an age and country label respectively, and could be included in the Big 5.

3. Survey 1, Phraseme 3: *As old as Methuselah*

Total Australian participants: 229
Total UK participants: 374
Suggested interpretation: He is very old.
Dictionary inclusion: *CALD*, *LDOCE* and *MEDAL*

Table 3.1: Participant numbers for the phraseme *as old as Methuselah*

Australia	16-22	75
	23-30	21
	31-40	13
	41-60	63
	61+	57
	Total	**229**
UK	16-22	222
	23-30	19
	31-40	30
	41-60	87
	61+	16
	Total	**374**

3.1 Familiarity

This phraseme started with low familiarity among the youngest group (20% in Australia and 18% in the UK) (see Figure 3.1), but rose to 100% familiarity in the oldest group in each location. It appears to be more familiar in Australia (72% average) than the UK (56% average).
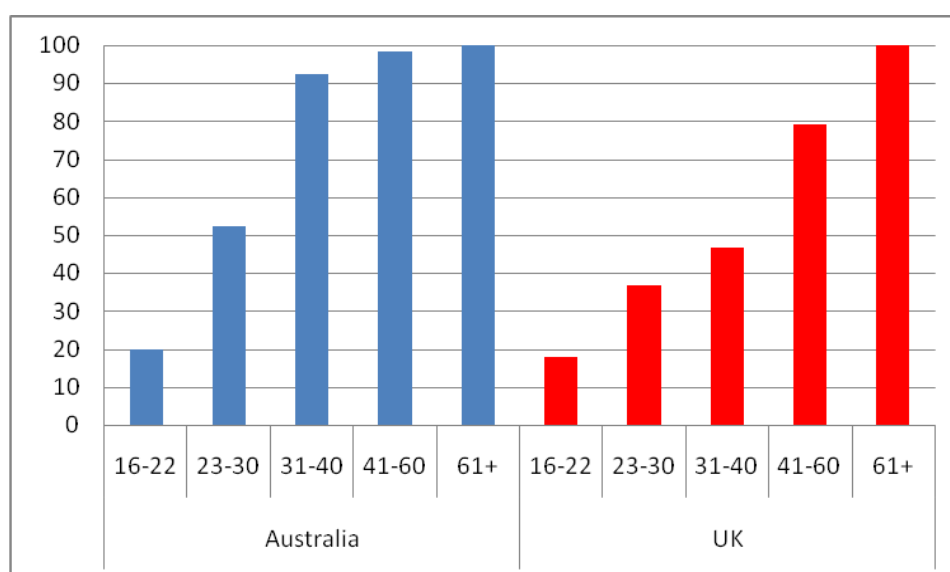
Figure 3.1: Familiarity with the phraseme *as old as Methuselah* as a percentage of each age group's responses

3.2 Interpretation

Interpretations for this phraseme were generally in line with the suggested answer, ranging from 69% to 100% agreement (see Figure 3.2). A large number of the

younger two groups and some of those in the 61+ group felt the alternative meaning of 'he is very old-fashioned' was more accurate, although several of the youngest group felt that none of the interpretation choices was correct. These interpretations may reflect the lower familiarity rating of this phraseme.
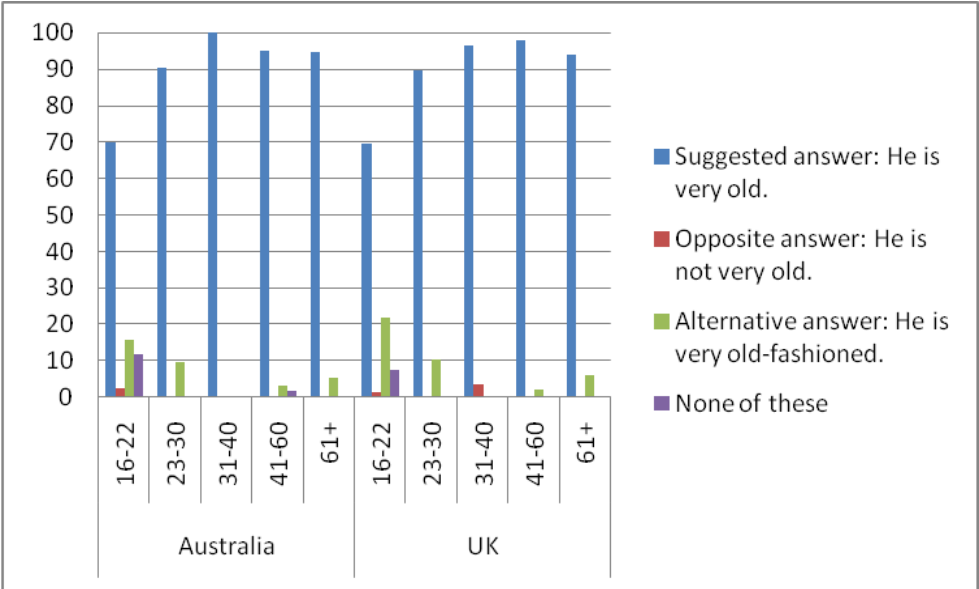
Figure 3.2: Interpretation of the phraseme *as old as Methuselah* as a percentage of each age group's responses

3.3 Frequency of use

This phraseme has a frequency of use ranging from 0 to 46% in the 'sometimes' category (see Table 3.2). More use is made by older groups than younger groups, and it appears to be used more commonly in Australia than the UK, which matches the higher level of Australian familiarity. Only one group (Australian 31-40) said they would never use it.

Table 3.2: Frequency of use for the phraseme *as old as Methuselah* as a percentage of each age group's responses

Location	Age group	Never	Almost never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
Australia	16-22	85	8	4	1	1
	23-30	76	19	5	0	0
	31-40	100	0	0	0	0
	41-60	35	40	25	0	0
	61+	19	32	46	4	0
UK	16-22	89	7	2	0	1
	23-30	78	17	6	0	0
	31-40	72	28	0	0	0
	41-60	45	42	12	1	0
	61+	25	56	19	0	0

3.4 Phrasemes most frequently elicited

Three phrasemes were commonly elicited from this prompt. *As old as the hills* received 88 tokens, from all age groups, but especially from those aged over 41, in particular in the UK (35 tokens in the 41-60 group). *As old as time (itself)* had 19 tokens over a range of age groups and in both locations. *When Adam was a boy* (7 tokens) was most popular in Australia, in the 41-60 group (3 tokens), with only one UK token, also from the 41-60 group.

3.5 Dictionary coverage

As old as Methuselah appears only in *CALD* and *LDOCE*, although the single word *Methuselah* appears in *MEDAL* with the definition 'someone who is very old' suggesting that this is a word with a figurative meaning. In the context of MELDs in Australia, the fact that this phraseme is still in use, even by younger groups, suggests that it is worth considering its inclusion in a MELD for Australia, especially as it was not necessarily easy to guess, even when accompanied by a picture of a very old man.

As old as the hills appears in *CALD, LDOCE, MEDAL* and *OALD.* Given its popularity across ages and locations, this is a phraseme which is well worth including in a MELD.

When Adam was a boy does not appear in any of the Big 5. Neither does *as old as time*, which was nevertheless suggested by 19 people and might be worthy of inclusion, although its transparency makes it easy to understand.

4. Survey 1, Phraseme 4: *To beat swords into ploughshares*

Total Australian participants: 225
Total UK participants: 246
Suggested interpretation: This is a time of peace
Dictionary inclusion: *CALD*, *COBUILD, LDOCE* and *OALD*

Table 4.1: Participant numbers for the phraseme to beat swords into ploughshares

Australia	16-22	73
	23-30	21
	31-40	13
	41-60	62
	61+	56
	Total	**225**
UK	16-22	189
	23-30	17
	31-40	24
	41-60	0
	61+	16
	Total	**246**

4.1 Familiarity

This phraseme was not very familiar to participants, with an overall recognition rate of 60% in Australia and 43% in the UK. The reason for the lower rate in the UK may well be the larger numbers of young people there who had not heard the phraseme before. Familiarity in the youngest group was 12% in Australia and 7% in the UK, but rose to 70% in Australia and 94% in the UK for the 61+ group (see Figure 4.1).
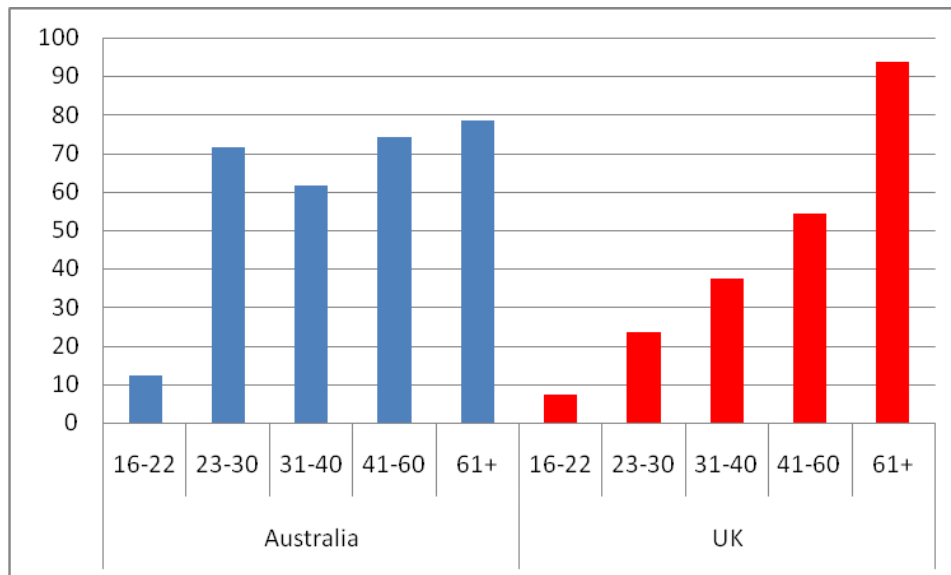
Figure 4.1: Participant familiarity with the phraseme *to beat swords into ploughshares* as a percentage of each age group's responses

4.2 Interpretation

None of the groups agreed consistently with the suggested meaning of this phraseme, and in fact many preferred the option 'none of these' in their choice of response (see Figure 4.2). There was also a large amount of opposite and alternative answers, particularly in the 16-40 age range in the UK and the 16-30 range in Australia. This suggests that the phraseme is hard to guess, perhaps because of the less well known element *ploughshares*.
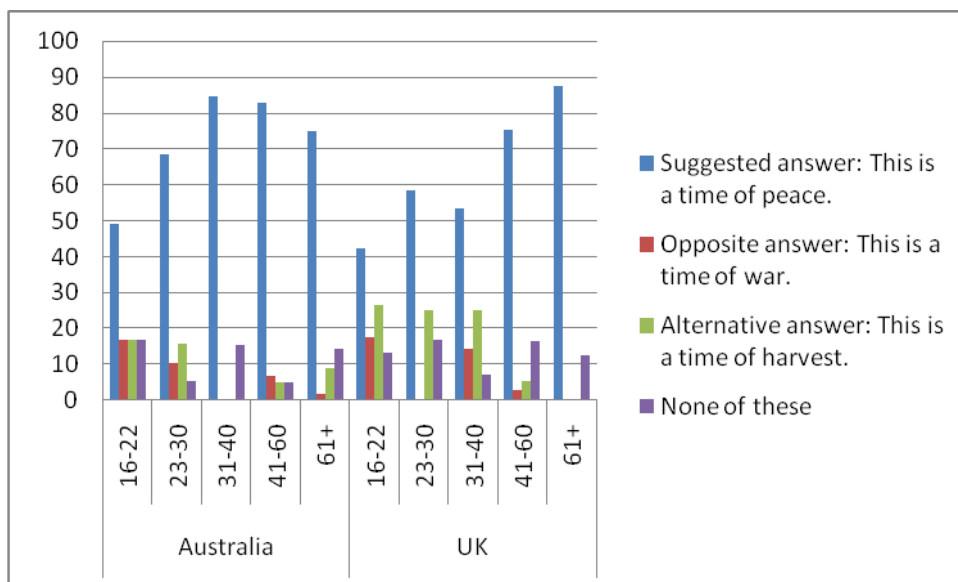
Figure 4.2: Interpretation of the phraseme *to beat swords into ploughshares* as a percentage of each age group's responses

4.3 Frequency of use

This phraseme is not frequently used by participants in either location (see Table 4.2), with an average of 61% saying they would never use it. The highest rating was 'sometimes' for 13% of the UK 41-60 group and the Australian 61+ group. Eighty per cent of participants in Australia and 85% of those in the UK said they would never use it. Only 2% of the youngest UK participants said they would use it, compared to 12% of the youngest Australians.

Table 4.2: Frequency of use for the phraseme *to beat swords into ploughshares* as a percentage of each age group's responses

Location	Age group	Never	Almost never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
Australia	16-22	88	7	5	0	0
	23-30	95	5	0	0	0
	31-40	85	15	0	0	0
	41-60	64	23	13	0	0
	61+	57	31	11	0	0
UK	16-22	98	0	1	0	0
	23-30	100	0	0	0	0
	31-40	93	7	0	0	0
	41-60	70	26	4	1	0
	61+	56	31	13	0	0

4.4 Phrasemes most frequently elicited

The pen is mightier than the sword, indicating that words can be more effective than physical power, was suggested by 71 participants of all ages in both locations, including 7 Australian and 17 UK participants in the 16-22 group. *To cross swords with someone*, meaning that people have an argument, was suggested by 50 participants, again of all ages and locations. Twenty-five people of all ages in both locations suggested *he who lives by the sword dies by the sword*, meaning that those who live by means of violence will also die violently. *Double edged sword*, referring to something that can act in two contradictory ways, was suggested by 9 Australians of different ages, but only 2 UK participants (both in the 16-22 age range).

4.5 Dictionary coverage

To *beat/turn swords into ploughshares* appears in all the Big 5 except *MEDAL*. The phraseme is thus generally well covered in the Big 5, but it would be useful to give some indication that this is not a phraseme used frequently, especially by the youngest age group.

The pen is mightier than the sword appears only in *CALD, MEDAL* and *OALD*, but could usefully be included in any MELD given its popularity even among the youngest age group. *To cross swords with someone* appears in all the Big 5. *He who lives by the sword dies by the sword* did not appear in any of the Big 5, but indications of its use in this survey suggest it might be worth including as a phraseme, although its meaning is reasonably transparent. *Double edged sword* appears in *CALD* in an example sentence but not as a separate phraseme. It is listed as a phraseme in the rest of the Big 5.

5. Survey 1, Phraseme 5: *To hide your light under a bushel*

Total Australian participants: 224
Total UK participants: 303
Suggested interpretation: Someone does not display their talents
Dictionary inclusion: *CALD*, *COBUILD, LDOCE* and *OALD*

Table 5.1: Participant numbers for the phraseme *to hide your light under a bushel*

Australia	16-22	72
	23-30	21
	31-40	13
	41-60	62
	61+	56
	Total	**224**
UK	16-22	160
	23-30	17
	31-40	30
	41-60	80
	61+	16
	Total	**303**

5.1 Familiarity

This phraseme was much more familiar to the two older age groups, with 100% familiarity in the 61+ group in each location, but only 32% familiarity for the youngest group in Australia and 23% for this group in the UK (see Figure 5.1). The overall average familiarity was 72%.
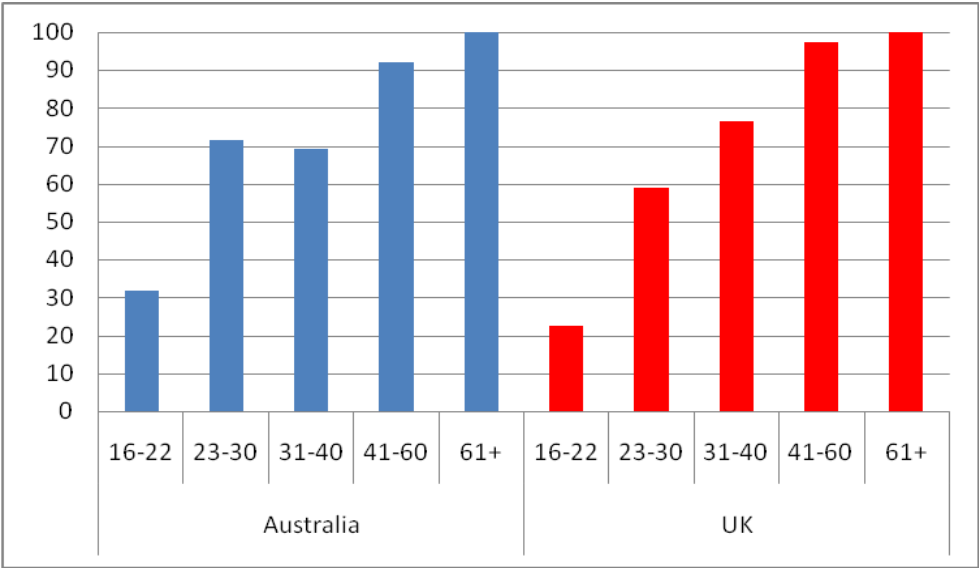
Figure 5.1: Familiarity with the phraseme *to hide your light under a bushel* as a percentage of each age group's responses

5.2 Interpretation

Nearly all the participants concurred with the suggested interpretation of this phraseme (see Figure 5.2), although 11% of the Australian 16-22 group and 8% of the UK 16-22 group chose 'none of these'. Generally, however, the phraseme was easy to guess even when it was not already familiar, probably due to the readily understandable verb *hide*.
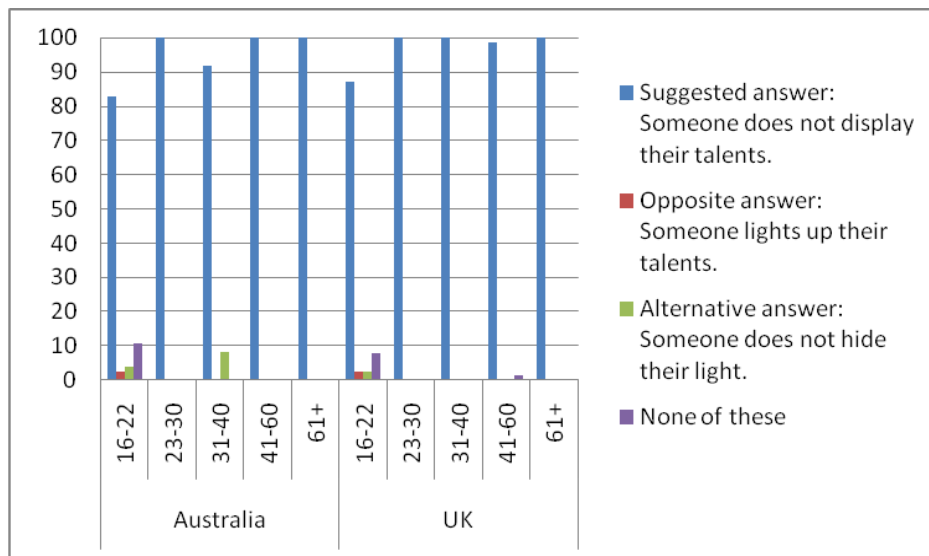
Figure 5.2: Interpretation of the phraseme *to hide your light under a bushel* as a percentage of each age group's responses

5.3 Frequency of use

This phraseme is used much more frequently by the older groups than the younger ones (see Table 5.2). Sixty-nine percent of those aged 16-22 said they would never use it, compared to 13% of those aged over 41. Of those aged over 41, 35% said they would use the phraseme sometimes, proving that it is still in use but not used frequently.

Table 5.2: Frequency of use for the phraseme *to hide your light under a bushel* as a percentage of each age group's responses

Location	Age group	Never	Almost never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
Australia	16-22	88	9	1	1	0
	23-30	76	19	5	0	0
	31-40	62	38	0	0	0
	41-60	27	38	32	3	0
	61+	17	43	38	2	0
UK	16-22	82	8	8	1	0
	23-30	65	29	6	0	0
	31-40	37	33	27	3	0
	41-60	16	33	44	6	0
	61+	50	23	27	0	0

5.4 Phrasemes most frequently elicited

The most common suggestion was *light at the end of the tunnel*, offered by 13 Australian and 20 UK participants of all ages, and referring to a glimmer of hope at the end of a difficult task. *As light as a feather*, meaning very light, was given by 16 people of all ages in both locations, while *to see the light*, meaning that someone suddenly understands something or is converted to something, was suggested by 7 Australians over 41 and 8 UK participants of all ages. *Many hands make light work*, which indicates that a task is made easier when more people work together, was suggested by only 3 Australians, all aged over 61, but 11 UK participants of all ages.

5.5 Dictionary coverage

The phraseme *to hide your light under a bushel* appears in *CALD, LDOCE, MEDAL* and *OALD.* In *OALD* it is marked as British English. The findings of this survey, however, suggest that the phraseme is equally well known in Australia and the UK.

Light at the end of the tunnel and *to see the light* are in all the Big 5. *As light as a feather* is in *CALD* and *LDOCE*. *Many hands make light work* appears only in *OALD*.

6. Survey 1, Phraseme 6: *To cast pearls before swine*

Total Australian participants: 206
Total UK participants: 310
Suggested interpretation: It is a waste to give people things they don't appreciate
Dictionary inclusion: *CALD*, *LDOCE*, *MEDAL* and *OALD*

Table 6.1: Participant numbers for the phraseme *to cast pearls before swine*

Australia	16-22	76
	23-30	0
	31-40	13
	41-60	62
	61+	55
	Total	**206**
UK	16-22	169
	23-30	17
	31-40	30
	41-60	78
	61+	16
	Total	**310**

6.1 Familiarity

This phraseme was generally unfamiliar to the two youngest age groups, but increased in familiarity with age (see Figure 6.1). It was recognised fairly equally across locations but had not been heard previously by 100% of any age group. Its average familiarity rating was 58%.
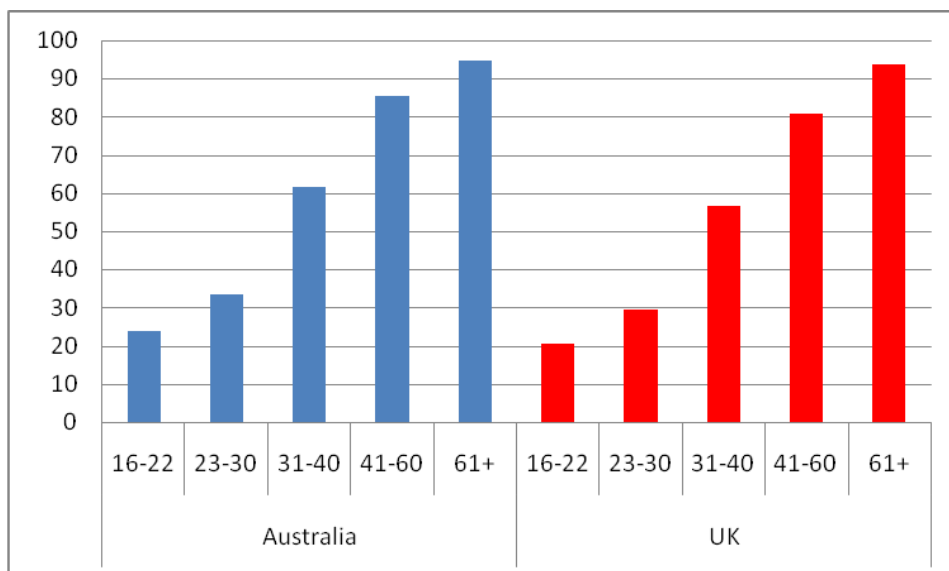
Figure 6.1: Familiarity with the phraseme *to cast pearls before swine* as a percentage of each age group's responses

6.2 Interpretation

The low familiarity rating for the youngest group may have made it harder to guess the meaning, as only 59% of this group on average agreed with the suggested interpretation and an average 26% gave the opposite meaning (see Figure 6.2). This may have been due to the possibly unfamiliar word *swine*. Most of the older participants interpreted the phraseme according to the suggested answer, including those in the 23-30 group, of whom a large number had no prior knowledge of the phraseme.
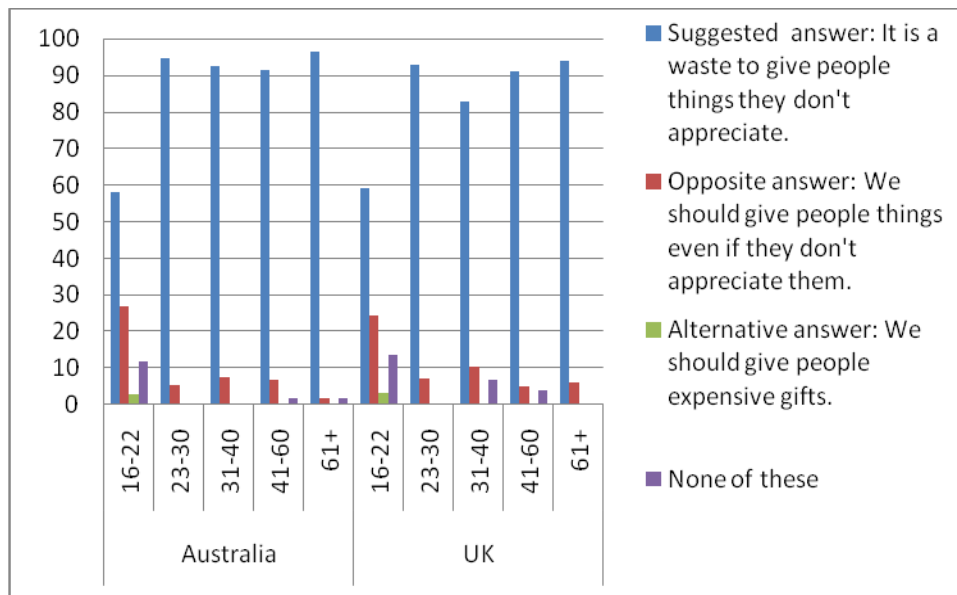
Figure 6.2: Interpretation of the phraseme *to cast pearls before swine* as a percentage of each age group's responses

6.3 Frequency of use

This phraseme does not appear to be in frequent use (see Table 6.2). The highest rating was a 38% response of 'sometimes' by the 61+ participants in the UK and 33% of this age group in Australia. Twenty-five per cent of those aged 31-60 in Australia said they would use it 'sometimes', compared to 18% in the UK. An average of 61% of participants said they would never use it.

Table 6.2: Frequency of use for the phraseme *to cast pearls before swine* as a percentage of each age group's responses

Location	Age group	Never	Almost never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
Australia	16-22	83	11	6	0	0
	23-30	85	10	5	0	0
	31-40	62	15	23	0	0
	41-60	36	32	27	5	0
	61+	28	35	33	4	0
UK	16-22	84	12	3	1	0
	23-30	80	20	0	0	0
	31-40	77	13	10	0	0
	41-60	49	24	25	1	0
	61+	19	44	38	0	0

6.4 Phrasemes most frequently elicited

Pearls of wisdom was a very popular phraseme, suggested by 84 people of all ages in both locations. This phraseme refers to clever remarks, and is often used ironically. *You can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear*, meaning that nothing beautiful will come from something ugly, was also well known, suggested by 42 people in both places, but by only one young person in Australia and one in the UK. The 41-60 group offered this the most, with 11 Australian and 15 UK tokens. Three Australian participants of different ages gave the variation *you can't make a silk purse out of a pig's ear*, as did 3 UK participants in the 41-60 group.

6.5 Dictionary coverage

To cast pearls before swine appears in *CALD, LDOCE, MEDAL* and *OALD*, with *LDOCE* and *OALD* also providing the alternative verb *throw*. Although this phraseme was not entirely familiar to all the participants, or used by many under the age of 61, it is given good dictionary coverage.

The popular suggestion *pearls of wisdom* appears only in *LDOCE, MEDAL* and *OALD*. *You can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear* appears in *CALD, MEDAL* and *OALD*. None of these dictionaries mentions the *pig* variation suggested by six of the participants.

7. Survey 1, Phraseme 7: *An albatross around the neck*

Total Australian participants: 216
Total UK participants: 300
Suggested interpretation: Something gets in the way
Dictionary inclusion: *LDOCE* and *MEDAL*

Table 7.1: Participant numbers for the phraseme *an albatross around the neck*

Australia	16-22	71
	23-30	20
	31-40	9
	41-60	66
	61+	50
	Total	**216**
UK	16-22	161
	23-30	17
	31-40	30
	41-60	76
	61+	16
	Total	**300**

7.1 Familiarity

The response rate to this phraseme was very unusual, in that while the average rate of familiarity was 50% in Australia and 57% in the UK, it was generally more familiar to younger rather than older Australian participants (see Figure 7.1). The UK, however, followed its more traditional pattern of greater familiarity in the older age groups. Could this be because the Australian students and those in 23-30 group had studied 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner' at school, while the 31-60 Australians and 16-30 UK participants had not? Alternatively, it could have been popular in the media shortly before the survey. A headline in the *Sydney Morning Herald* of 20 October 2008 cited on the InvestSMART webpage (O'Sullivan 2008) reads, 'AAPT the albatross around Telecom's neck'. It is unlikely, however, that large numbers of the youngest group at least would have been ardently examining the investment pages of a broadsheet newspaper or avidly exploring online investment sites. The phraseme also appears in the 2005 song *Albatross* by Paul Holden and LEALie Ahern, performed by Ophelia Hope, with the repeated lines 'Wearing an albatross around my neck / Makes no fashion sense'.
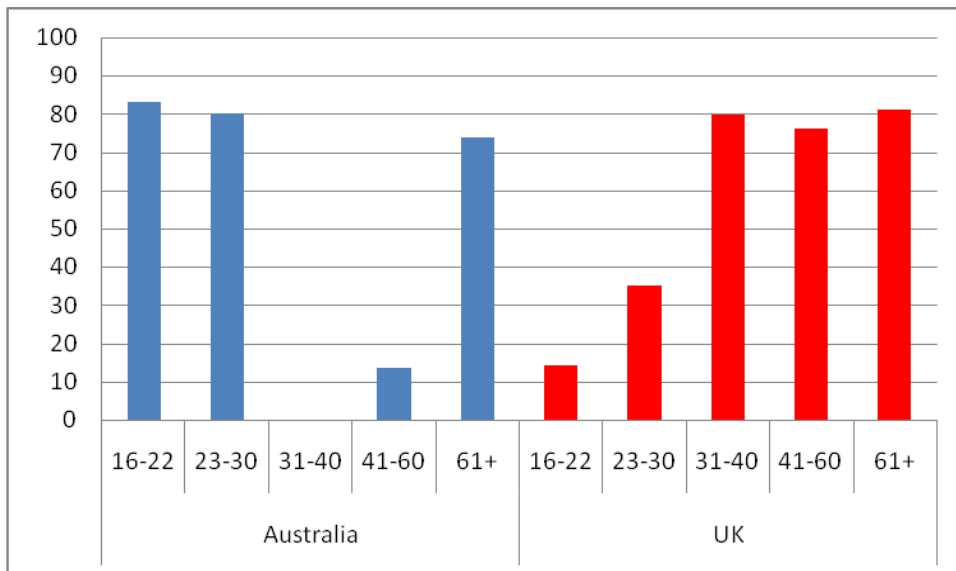
Figure 7.1: Familiarity with the phraseme *an albatross around the neck* as a percentage of each age group's responses

7.2 Interpretation

Despite the higher familiarity rate in the Australian youngest group, only 70% felt that the suggested answer was the best interpretation, with 30% of them choosing 'none of these' as the response (see Figure 7.2). It could be that they had heard the phraseme in a particular context with a different meaning. Most of the other groups also felt that the suggested answer was not necessarily the best interpretation, but nearly all of them understood that an albatross round the neck would at least not be comfortable.
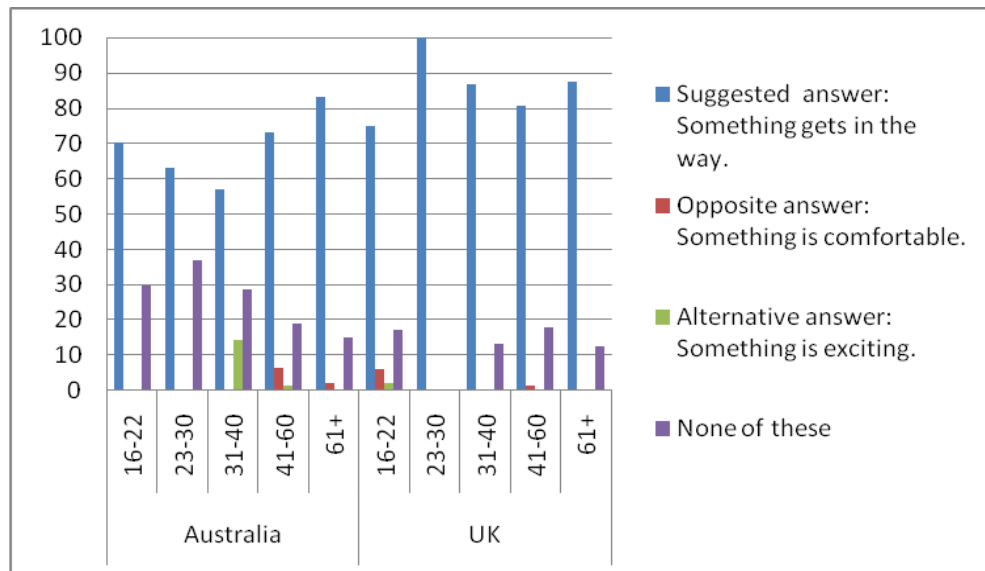
Figure 7.2: Interpretation of the phraseme *an albatross around the neck* as a percentage of each age group's responses

7.3 Frequency of use

This phraseme is not in frequent use, with 66% of all participants saying they would never use it (see Table 7.2). Around 10% of all participants said they would use it sometimes. These figures were evenly spread across the two locations, but there was a higher percentage (14%) of Australian young people who would use it, compared to their UK counterparts (3%).

Table 7.2: Frequency of use for the phraseme *an albatross around the neck* as a percentage of each age group's responses

Location	Age group	Never	Almost never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
Australia	16-22	54	31	14	1	0
	23-30	53	32	11	5	0
	31-40	75	13	13	0	0
	41-60	85	8	5	2	2
	61+	59	31	10	0	0
UK	16-22	88	8	3	1	0
	23-30	87	13	0	0	0
	31-40	50	40	10	0	0
	41-60	47	28	25	0	0
	61+	56	25	19	0	0

7.4 Phrasemes most frequently elicited

The most common phraseme suggested was *a millstone around the neck*, referring to something cumbersome and debilitating, offered by 14 people in Australia and 15 in the UK, all aged 23 or over. Another common alternative suggested by 8 Australian but only 2 UK participants was *a monkey on the back*, indicating something which makes life very difficult. One UK 31-40 participant and two Australians (aged 16-22 and 41-60) gave the alternative *a monkey on the shoulder*. An Australian in the oldest group gave another interpretation of *a monkey on the back* as meaning 'addicted to heroin'.

7.5 Dictionary coverage

COBUILD, LDOCE, MEDAL and *OALD* include *an albatross around the neck* under the headword *albatross*, although in *COBUILD* and *OALD* it is only given as part of an example and not as a phrase in its own right. In *CALD* the single word *albatross* is used figuratively, to mean something which causes problems. This coverage is relatively high for a phraseme that appears not to be used often today.

A millstone around the neck appears in all of the Big 5, reflecting its popularity as a phraseme suggested by 29 participants. *A monkey on the back* is given as an American phraseme in *LDOCE* but not included in the other dictionaries. *A monkey on the shoulder* does not appear in any of the Big 5.

8. Survey 1, Phraseme 8: *All that glitters is not gold*

Total Australian participants: 216
Total UK participants: 294
Suggested interpretation: This may not be what it looks like.
Dictionary inclusion: *CALD* and *OALD*

Table 8.1: Participant numbers for the phraseme *all that glitters is not gold*

Australia	16-22	68
	23-30	20
	31-40	12
	41-60	60
	61+	56
	Total	**216**
UK	16-22	155
	23-30	17
	31-40	29
	41-60	77
	61+	16
	Total	**294**

8.1 Familiarity

This phraseme had a high rate of familiarity among all groups except the youngest, with an average of 89% of all participants in both locations having heard it before (see Figure 8.1). One older participant, and possibly two younger ones who gave 'song lyrics' as their source, first heard it in Led Zeppelin's song *Stairway to heaven,* though it appears there in the positive form, *all that glitters is gold*. Several people, particularly the youngest group, who said they had first heard it at school, were keen to correct the form to *all that glisters is not gold*, and mentioned Shakespeare, and specifically *The merchant of Venice*, as the source, though one 41-60 UK dissenter said they had first come across it in 'Ben Johnson, I think' and one Australian aged 16-22 claimed it was in *Macbeth*. The more modern form of *all that glitters is not gold* was given in the elicitation question, since it is this form rather than *glisters* that appears in the MELDs.
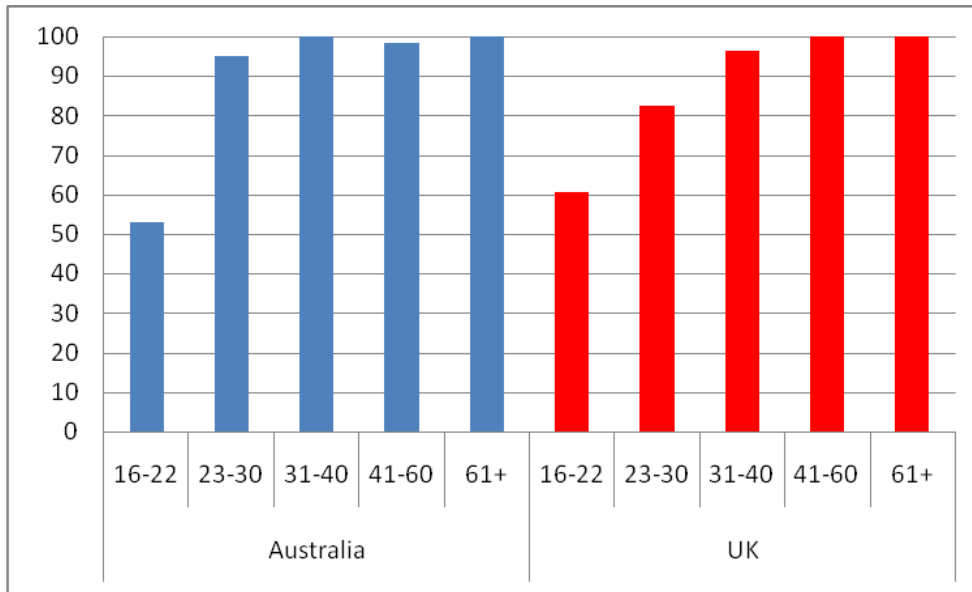
Figure 8.1: Familiarity with the phraseme *all that glitters is not gold* as a percentage of each age group's responses

8.2 Interpretation

The level of interpretation agreement was high, with an average of 87% giving the suggested answer (see Figure 8.2). It was obviously well known and, even for those who had not heard it before, quite easy to understand.
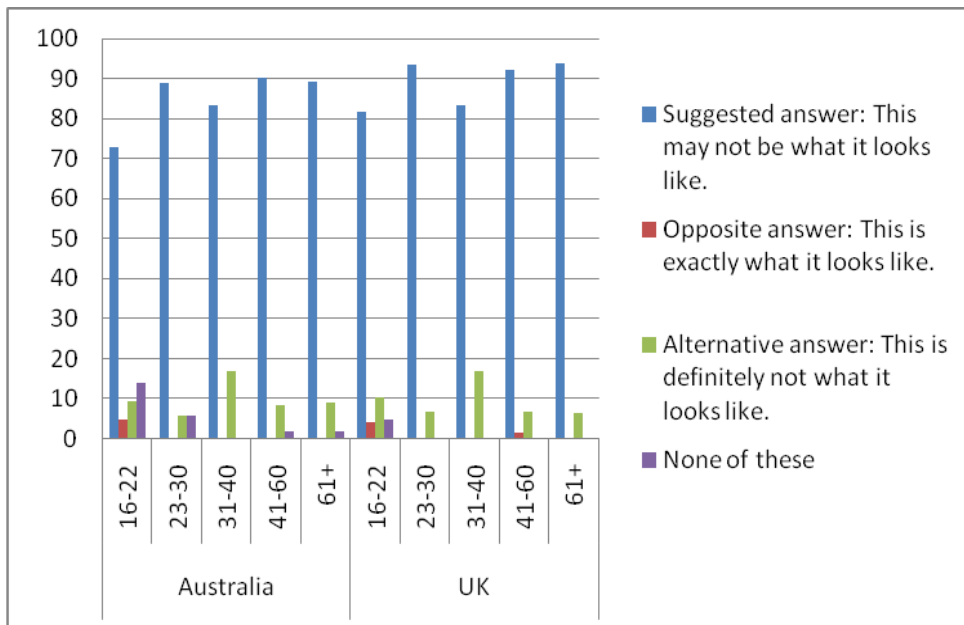
Figure 8.2: Interpretation of the phraseme *all that glitters is not gold* as a percentage of each age group's responses

8.3 Frequency of use

Only 29% of participants said they would never use this phraseme, and a comparatively large number (35% on average) said they would use it 'sometimes' (see Table 8.2). This was true across locations, and usage rose with age.

Table 8.2: Frequency of use of the phraseme *all that glitters is not gold* as a percentage of each age group's responses

Location	Age group	Never	Almost never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
Australia	16-22	53	27	20	0	0
	23-30	37	37	26	0	0
	31-40	25	33	33	8	0
	41-60	15	42	42	0	0
	61+	13	38	47	2	0
UK	16-22	53	27	16	3	1
	23-30	31	31	38	0	0
	31-40	23	37	33	3	3
	41-60	10	31	55	3	1
	61+	25	38	38	0	0

8.4 Phrasemes most frequently elicited

The most popular suggestion here was the phraseme *as good as gold*, meaning that someone behaves very well, given by 71 people of all ages in both locations. This was followed by 29 tokens of *don't judge a book by its cover* (15 of these from the 41-60s), meaning that appearances can be misleading. There were 22 tokens of *worth its weight in gold,* meaning that something is very valuable, and 12 tokens of *heart of gold*, referring to someone who is very kind hearted. Ten participants (eight of them from the UK) suggested *where there's muck there's brass*, meaning that there is money to be made from unpleasant jobs. This is sometimes extended disdainfully to mean that people who are uncouth may also be rich.

8.5 Dictionary coverage

Given the high familiarity and usage rates of *all that glitters is not gold*, it is surprising that it appears only in *CALD* and *OALD*. *OALD* also provides the alternative *all that glistens is not gold*. Perhaps the other dictionaries could include it in future editions, since it is clearly still in use and therefore likely to be heard by the target group, even among their peers.

As good as gold is listed as a phraseme in *CALD, COBUILD* and *OALD*. It appears only in an example under *good* in *LDOCE* and with a bold type heading but not as a phraseme under *good* in *MEDAL*. Given this phraseme's popularity, it seems that it might be given prominence in any learner's dictionary.

Don't judge a book by its cover appears in *CALD, LDOCE, MEDAL* and *OALD*. *Worth its weight in gold,* appears in *CALD*, *COBUILD*, *MEDAL* and *OALD*, this high coverage reflecting the phraseme's popularity. *A heart of gold*, appears in all the Big 5. *Where there's muck there's brass* is listed as a British phraseme in *CALD, MEDAL* and *OALD*.

9. Survey 1, Phraseme 9: *As mad as a March hare*

Total Australian participants: 213
Total UK participants: 293
Suggested interpretation: Madness
Dictionary inclusion: *CALD* and *OALD*

Table 9.1: Participant numbers for the phraseme *as mad as a March hare*

Australia	16-22	69
	23-30	19
	31-40	12
	41-60	60
	61+	53
	Total	**213**
UK	16-22	155
	23-30	17
	31-40	30
	41-60	75
	61+	16
	Total	**293**

9.1 Familiarity

This phraseme was very well known by the three oldest age groups (see Figure 9.1). Forty-five percent of the UK 16-22 participants and 32% of the Australians in that age group had heard it before. An average 81% of participants were familiar with the phraseme.
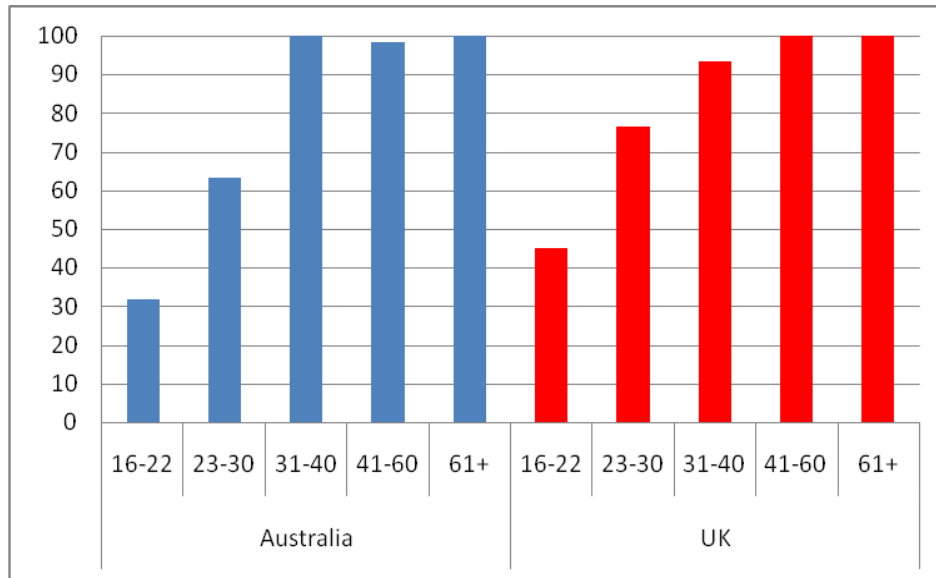
Figure 9.1: Familiarity with the phraseme *as mad as a March hare* as a percentage of each age group's responses

9.2 Interpretation

Despite the word *mad*, many people did not feel that the meaning of this phraseme related to insanity, with the UK participants in particular preferring the interpretation of *excitement* (see Figure 9.2).
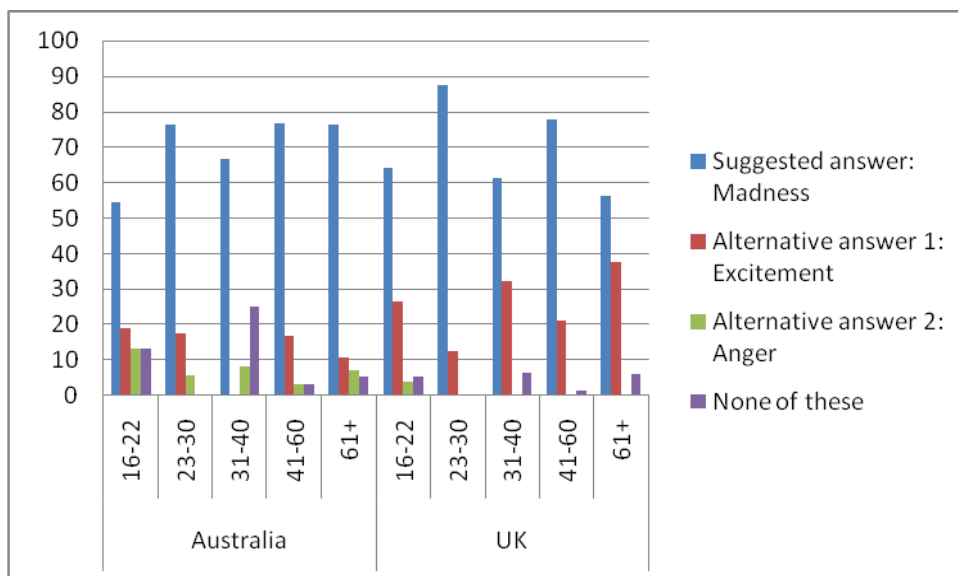
Figure 9.2: Interpretation of the phraseme *as mad as a March hare* as a percentage of each age group's responses

9.3 Frequency of use

This phraseme shows a varying rate of use, with roughly a third of those aged over 41 saying they would use it sometimes (see Table 9.2). On average, 58% of Australians said they would never use it, compared to 38% of those in the UK. It is therefore probably more popular in the UK, except with the youngest group, of whom 12% in Australia said they would use it 'sometimes', 'often' or 'very often'.

Table 9.2: Frequency of use of the phraseme *as mad as a March hare* as a percentage of each age group's responses

Location	Age group	Never	Almost never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
Australia	16-22	75	13	6	3	3
	23-30	84	5	5	5	0
	31-40	75	17	8	0	0
	41-60	35	35	28	2	0
	61+	19	39	35	7	0
UK	16-22	69	21	9	1	0
	23-30	38	44	13	6	0
	31-40	35	39	26	0	0
	41-60	23	41	33	3	0
	61+	25	44	31	0	0

9.4 Phrasemes most frequently elicited

Many suggestions were elicited from this phraseme, including variations on *a sandwich short of a picnic* (meaning someone is not quite *compos mentis*), which came in the Australian forms of *a sanga short of a picnic* and *a tinnie short of a slab*. (*Sanga* is an informal Australian word for *sandwich*, while a *tinnie* is a can of beer and a *slab* is a box of 24 cans of beer.) Another popular UK pattern was *as x as a box of y*, with suggestions of *as barmy as a box of bats* (one UK 41-60 participant), *as mad as a box of ferrets* (one UK 41-60 participant), *as mad as a box of frogs* (4 UK participants of varying ages), *as queer/ugly as a box of frogs* (one UK 31-40 participant) and *as mad as a box of squirrels* (one UK 31-40 participant). *As daft as a brush,* referring to silliness, was suggested by eight UK participants, all aged over 23, and one Australian in the 41-60 group. *As mad/funny/silly as a two-bob watch* was suggested by seven Australians aged over 41.

The most popular elicitation was *as mad as a hatter*, also referring to insanity, and also linked to *Alice's adventures in Wonderland*. Fifty-three Australians and 80 UK participants suggested this phraseme, with 23 tokens in the youngest age group in the UK and 7 in this group in Australia. *Beware the ides of March*, which derives from Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, was suggested by 28 Australians and 7 UK participants of all ages, including 3 from the youngest group. Further corpus research would reveal the contexts in which it is used. The British National Corpus, for example (consulted on 14 December 2009), gives four instances, two from UK newspapers and two from books. It seems to occur commonly in a sporting context, as exemplified by the *Plex* basketball website page entitled 'Beware the Ides of March (Madness)'.

Next most popular was the Australian phraseme *as mad as a cut snake*, suggested by 27 people in Australia, nearly all aged over 41. No UK participants suggested this phraseme, which refers to anger.

March comes in like a lion and goes out like a lamb was a popular saying with 11 people, five of them from the 61+ group in Australia and the rest from different age groups in the UK. It is a northern hemisphere phraseme, referring to the month of March, which can start tempestuously but end gently. The older Australians may therefore have brought it with them to Australia, or heard it from UK-born parents.

9.5 Dictionary coverage

As mad as a March hare appears only in *CALD* and *OALD*. The March Hare is listed in *LDOCE*, but only as a character in *Alice's adventures in Wonderland* and not as part of a phraseme. It could be given wider coverage in the MELDs given its popularity.

As mad as a hatter appears in *CALD, LDOCE, MEDAL* and *OALD*, reflecting its familiarity and popularity across countries and age groups. *Beware the ides of March* is mentioned only in *LDOCE,* under the entry for *the Ides of March*. Its suggestion by 35 participants, however, implies that it is still in current use as a phraseme. *As mad as a cut snake* does not appear in any of the Big 5, but is nevertheless likely to be encountered in Australia, though not necessarily used by the youngest age group. *March comes in like a lion and goes out like a lamb* does not appear in any of the Big 5.

10. Survey 1, Phraseme 10: *Back of Bourke*

Total Australian participants: 214
Total UK participants: 262
Suggested interpretation: Somewhere is very isolated
Dictionary inclusion: *MEDAL* and *OALD*

Table 10.1: Participant numbers for the phraseme *back of Bourke*

Australia	16-22	69
	23-30	19
	31-40	12
	41-60	60
	61+	54
	Total	**214**
UK	16-22	154
	23-30	17
	31-40	30
	41-60	45
	61+	16
	Total	**262**

10.1 Familiarity

This Australian phraseme was, understandably, much better known in Australia (see Figure 10.1). Indeed, it was almost completely unknown in the UK (3% average familiarity), with the highest rate of familiarity in the 41+ groups of whom an average 7% had encountered it previously. Even in Australia, it was almost totally unfamiliar to the youngest group, but very familiar to the three oldest groups, leading to an average familiarity there of 70%.
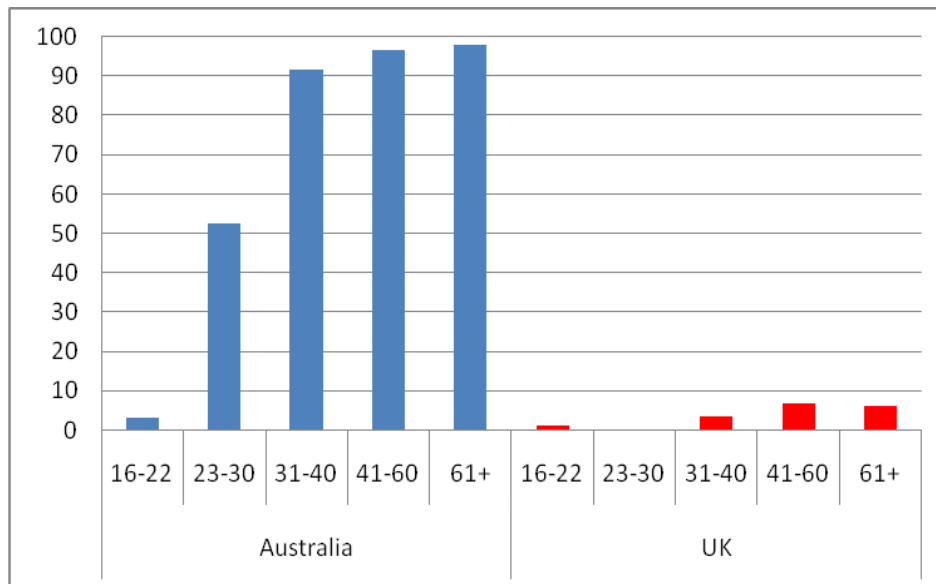
Figure 10.1: Familiarity with the phraseme back of Bourke as a percentage of each age group's responses

10.2 Interpretation

Despite the unfamiliarity of the phraseme, it did not prove difficult to interpret (see Figure 10.2), perhaps due to the clues in the accompanying picture, which showed an isolated scene in outback Australia. Even those who had never heard it before managed to reach at least 67% agreement with the suggested interpretation, with the UK young people outstripping their Australian peers in this regard.
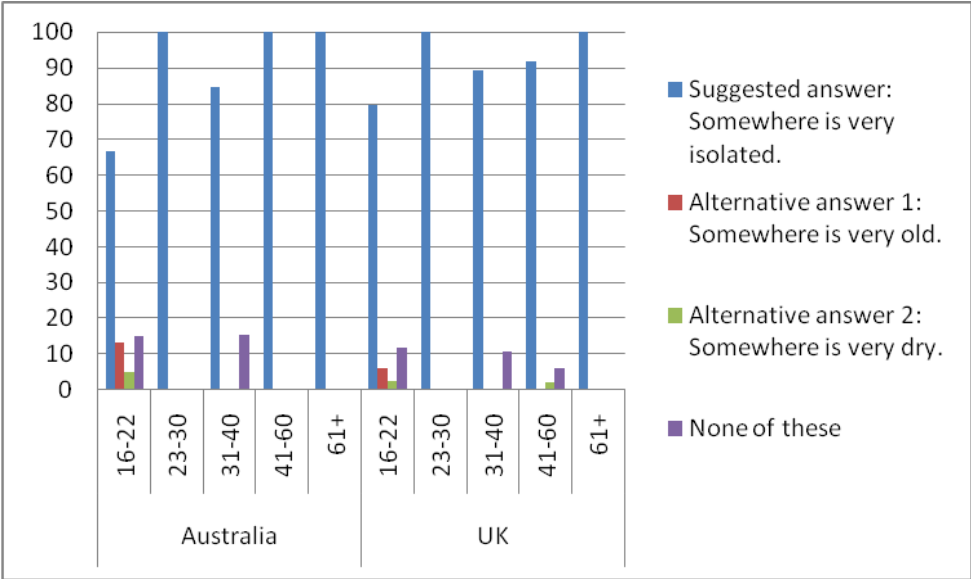
Figure 10.2: Interpretation of the phraseme *back of Bourke* as a percentage of each age group's responses

10.3 Frequency of use

Although understandably little used in the UK, this phraseme is obviously still current in Australia, especially among the 31+ groups (see Table 10.2). An average of 26% of participants in Australia said they would use it 'sometimes'. It is therefore likely to be encountered by the target group, though probably not among their peers.

Table 10.2: Frequency of use of the phraseme *back of Bourke* as a percentage of each age group's responses

Location	Age group	Never	Almost never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
Australia	16-22	76	8	1	3	1
	23-30	61	28	11	0	0
	31-40	50	17	33	0	0
	41-60	20	27	42	7	3
	61+	11	36	44	9	0
UK	16-22	97	1	1	1	0
	23-30	93	0	7	0	0
	31-40	97	0	3	0	0
	41-60	97	1	1	0	0
	61+	100	0	0	0	0

10.4 Phrasemes most frequently elicited

The most common elicitation here was another Australian phraseme, *beyond the Black Stump*, which had 67 tokens, all from Australians and mostly from the 41-60 and 61+ groups. This phraseme also means that somewhere is remote. There is a popular newspaper cartoon series entitled *Beyond the Black Stump*, which means that the phraseme may be familiar to more participants than those who suggested it.

Back of beyond, also referring to remoteness, had a total of 58 tokens, 19 of these from Australia and 39 from the UK. These were from all the age groups except the Australian 16-22 year olds.

Three more Australian phrasemes were also commonly elicited. The first was *out in woop-woop*, also referring to a remote location, with 18 tokens, especially from the 41+ groups. (Three variations of this were *dingo woop woop*, *gone to Ernawoopwoop* and *oona-whoop-whoop*, all suggested by Australians of different age groups, including the youngest.) Other Australian phrasemes were *busy as Bourke Street* (referring to a bustling location in Melbourne) with 9 tokens,

particularly from the 41+ groups, and *in the Never-Never* (also referring to remoteness) with 7 tokens from participants aged over 31.

Out in the sticks, again referring to remoteness, had 9 tokens, from both locations and all age groups except the youngest.

10.5 Dictionary coverage

Back of Bourke appears only in *MEDAL* and *OALD*. Given that this phraseme is still in popular use in Australia, it is one that should be included in a MELD for the Australian market.

Of the other Australian phrasemes, *beyond the Black Stump* and *in the Never-Never* appear only in *MEDAL*, while *busy as Bourke Street* does not appear in any of the Big 5. *Out in woop-woop* is in *MEDAL* and *OALD,* and appears in *CALD* as a noun (*woop-woop*), not a phraseme.

Back of beyond appears in *CALD, MEDAL, OALD. Out in the sticks* is in *CALD, COBUILD* and *OALD* as an example but not as a phraseme, and in *LDOCE* as a phraseme.

11. Survey 1, Phraseme 11: *To carry/take coals to Newcastle*
Total Australian participants: 212
Total UK participants: 288
Suggested interpretation: Something is unnecessary
Dictionary inclusion: *CALD, LDOCE, MEDAL* and *OALD*

Table 11.1: Participant numbers for the phraseme *to carry/take coals to Newcastle*

Australia	16-22	66
	23-30	19
	31-40	12
	41-60	59
	61+	56
	Total	**212**
UK	16-22	151
	23-30	16
	31-40	29
	41-60	76
	61+	16
	Total	**288**

11.1 Familiarity

This UK phraseme had fairly equal familiarity rates in both locations, but was little known by the youngest group, especially in Australia (see Figure 11.1). The average rate of familiarity for all participants was 62%.
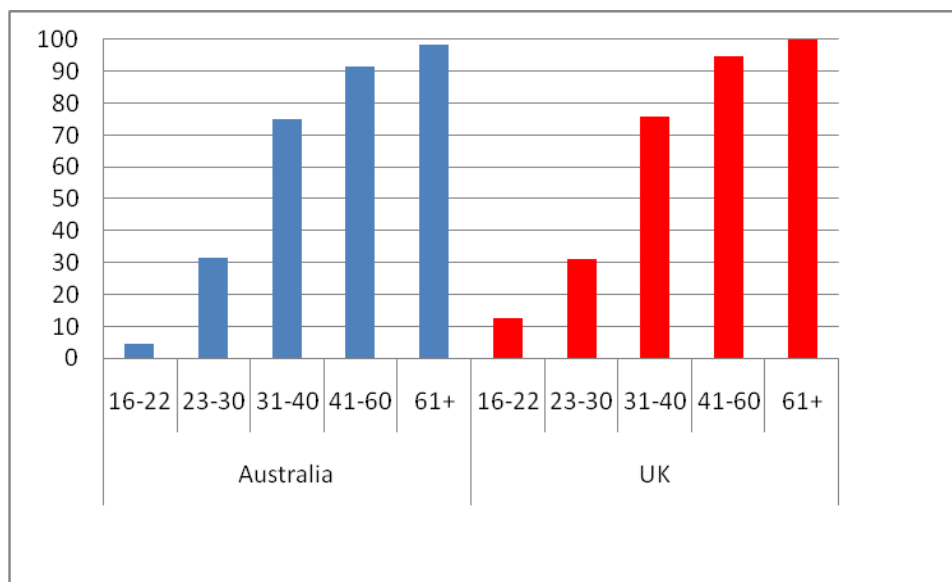
Figure 11.1: Familiarity with the phraseme *to carry/take coals to Newcastle* as a percentage of each age group's responses

11.2 Interpretation

Along with the low familiarity rate, this phraseme also proved difficult to guess (see Figure 11.2). Even among those who were familiar with it, there was not 100% agreement with the suggested answer, with many feeling that 'none of these' was more appropriate. There was also quite a high rate of 'opposite' interpretations, nearly all among those who did not already know the phraseme.
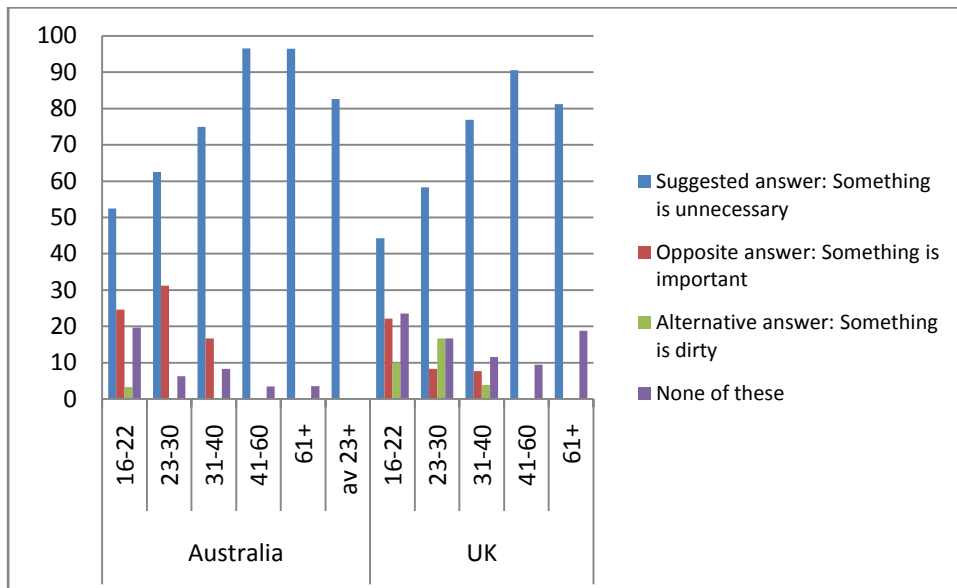
Figure 11.2: Interpretation of the phraseme *to carry/take coals to Newcastle* as a percentage of each age group's responses

11.3 Frequency of use

This phraseme appears to be used frequently by the older age groups in each location (see Table 11.2). In fact, all the UK participants in the 61+ indicated that they would use it at some time. It is therefore likely to be encountered by the target group, though probably not among their native English-speaking peers.

Table 11.2: Frequency of use of the phraseme *to carry/take coals to Newcastle* as a percentage of each age group's responses

Location	Age group	Never	Almost never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
Australia	16-22	79	6	10	3	1
	23-30	84	5	11	0	0
	31-40	67	33	0	0	0
	41-60	27	28	38	7	0
	61+	15	36	47	2	0
UK	16-22	90	5	4	1	1
	23-30	79	21	0	0	0
	31-40	46	36	18	0	0
	41-60	12	36	44	8	0
	61+	0	47	53	0	0

11.4 Phrasemes most frequently elicited

As black as coal, meaning that something is very dark, or dark coloured, elicited 27 tokens, 13 of these from the youngest group in the UK. *To walk on/over hot (burning) coals* had 26 tokens, from both locations and all age groups. This meahns that someone is prepared to do something very difficult for another person. *To haul/rake someone over the coals*, meaning to chastise someone verbally, had 17 tokens, and 5 of these were again from the UK 16-22 group.

Sell ice to the Eskimos, denoting a superfluous action, was popular in Australia, with 19 tokens there and 3 from the UK. Variations on this were *sell fridges to Alaska* (3 Australian, 1 UK), *sell fridges to Eskimos* (4 Australian), *sell ice to Iceland* (1 Australian), *sell icebergs to Eskimos* (1 Australian), *sell ice cream to an Eskimo* (1 Australian, 1 UK), *sell sand to the Arabs* (3 Australian, 5 UK)*, sand to the desert* (1 UK), *sand to the Sahara* (2 UK), *sell snow to Eskimos* (1 Australian, 4 UK) and *steel to Sheffield* (2 UK).

Teach your grandmother to suck eggs, also referring to an unnecessary action, had 8 tokens, all but one from the UK.

11.5 Dictionary coverage

To carry/take coals to Newcastle appears with the two verb alternatives in four of the Big 5, but is not listed in *COBUILD*. Dictionary coverage is good, given that the target group may hear this phraseme in Australia.

As black as coal and *to walk on/over hot (burning) coals* do not appear in any of the Big 5.

To haul/rake someone over the coals appears in *MEDAL, LDOCE* and *OALD,* with the *rake* variation given as American English usage. *Sell ice to the Eskimos*

does not appear in the Big 5, despite its popularity in Australia. Perhaps this is because the word *Eskimo* can now appear offensive. Nevertheless, it is still a common phraseme that needs to be decoded. *Teach your grandmother to suck eggs* is included, and marked as British English, in *CALD, LDOCE, MEDAL* and *OALD.*

12. Survey 1, Phraseme 12: *A fine/pretty kettle of fish*

Total Australian participants: 214
Total UK participants: 286
Suggested interpretation: This is a tricky situation
Dictionary inclusion: *CALD*

Table 12.1: Participant numbers for the phraseme *a fine/pretty kettle of fish*

Australia	16-22	67
	23-30	19
	31-40	12
	41-60	60
	61+	56
	Total	**214**
UK	16-22	150
	23-30	16
	31-40	29
	41-60	75
	61+	16
	Total	**286**

12.1 Familiarity

Despite its lack of inclusion in most of the Big 5, this phraseme had an average familiarity rate of 76%. Even the youngest group claimed over 50% familiarity in both locations. The Australian 23-30 year olds were particularly well acquainted with the phraseme compared to their UK peers and those in the 31-40 group in both locations. It was familiar to 100% of both the 61+ groups.
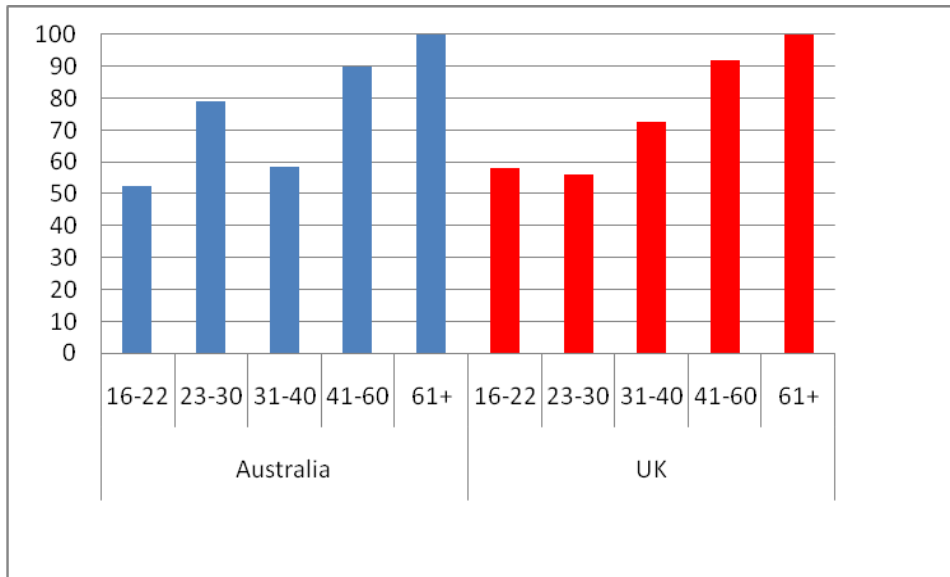
Figure 12.1: Familiarity with the phraseme *a fine/pretty kettle of fish* as a percentage of each age group's responses

12.2 Interpretation

In spite of the reasonably high familiarity ratings, this phraseme produced a variety of interpretations, particularly among the youngest group (see Figure 12.2). Those who chose the meaning 'this is a pleasant situation' may have been influenced by the word *pretty* and failed to spot the irony of the utterance. Those who chose 'this is a funny situation' may have been equating *funny* with *peculiar* rather than *humorous*.
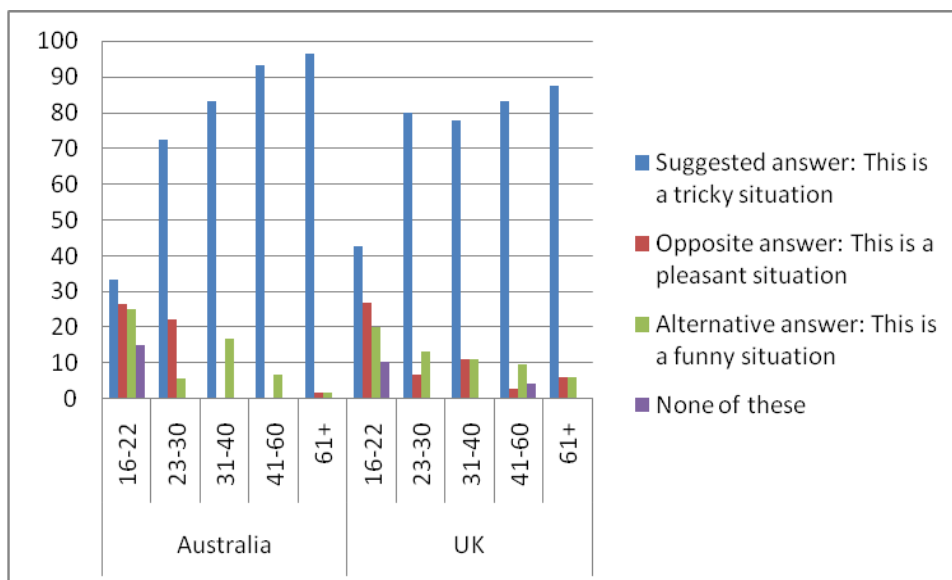
Figure 12.2: Interpretation of the phraseme *a fine/pretty kettle of fish* as a percentage of each age group's responses

12.3 Frequency of use

The highest use of the phraseme is among the 61+ groups in both locations, but especially in Australia, where only 28% of this group said they would never use it (see Table 12.2). The 'often' and 'very often' responses by the Australian 16-22 age group may be discounted, since the participants were not familiar with the phraseme and failed to guess its meaning. (However, it is just possible that they intended to use it in the future.)

Table 12.2: Frequency of use of the phraseme *a fine/pretty kettle of fish* as a percentage of each age group's responses

Location	Age group	Never	Almost never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
Australia	16-22	63	28	3	5	2
	23-30	67	22	11	0	0
	31-40	92	8	0	0	0
	41-60	57	30	13	0	0
	61+	28	49	21	2	0
UK	16-22	70	14	13	3	0
	23-30	73	13	7	7	0
	31-40	66	21	10	3	0
	41-60	44	36	18	3	0
	61+	44	25	31	0	0

12.4 Phrasemes most frequently elicited

The pot calling the kettle black, meaning that the person who criticises is just as imperfect as the one they are criticising, had the highest number of tokens, with 98 from Australia and 127 from the UK.

A different kettle of fish, meaning that something is very different to what was originally thought, had 12 Australian and 28 UK tokens. Eighteen of the UK responses were from the 16-22 group.

A watched kettle never boils was suggested by 20 Australians (mostly aged 41+) and 17 UK participants of different ages. (The related phraseme *a watched pot never boils* was given by 5 Australians and 2 people in the UK.) These two phrasemes mean that anxiously waiting for something to happen will only prolong the agony of waiting.

In a pickle, referring to being in a difficult situation, elicited 8 Australian and 3 UK tokens. Four of these were from the 23-30 groups.

12.5 Dictionary coverage

Only *CALD* includes *a fine/pretty kettle of fish*.

The pot calling the kettle black appears in *CALD, LDOCE, MEDAL* and *OALD*. None of the Big 5 includes *a watched kettle/pot never boils*, even though it appears to be in common use as a phraseme in both locations. *In a pickle* appears in *CALD, LDOCE, MEDAL* and *OALD* and is marked as old-fashioned in the first three, although my limited responses here suggest that it is at least familiar to the 23-30 group.

13. Survey 1, Phraseme 13: *Full steam ahead*

Total Australian participants: 210
Total UK participants: 280
Suggested interpretation: Someone is making good progress
Dictionary inclusion: *CALD, COBUILD, LDOCE, MEDAL* and *OALD*

Table 13.1: Participant numbers for the phraseme *full steam ahead*

Australia	16-22	66
	23-30	19
	31-40	12
	41-60	58
	61+	55
	Total	**210**
UK	16-22	146
	23-30	16
	31-40	28
	41-60	74
	61+	16
	Total	**280**

13.1 Familiarity

This proved to be the fourth most familiar phraseme in the whole questionnaire (see Appendix 4), with the youngest group demonstrating 85% prior knowledge in Australia and 88% in the UK, and all the other groups indicating 100% familiarity (see Figure 13.1).
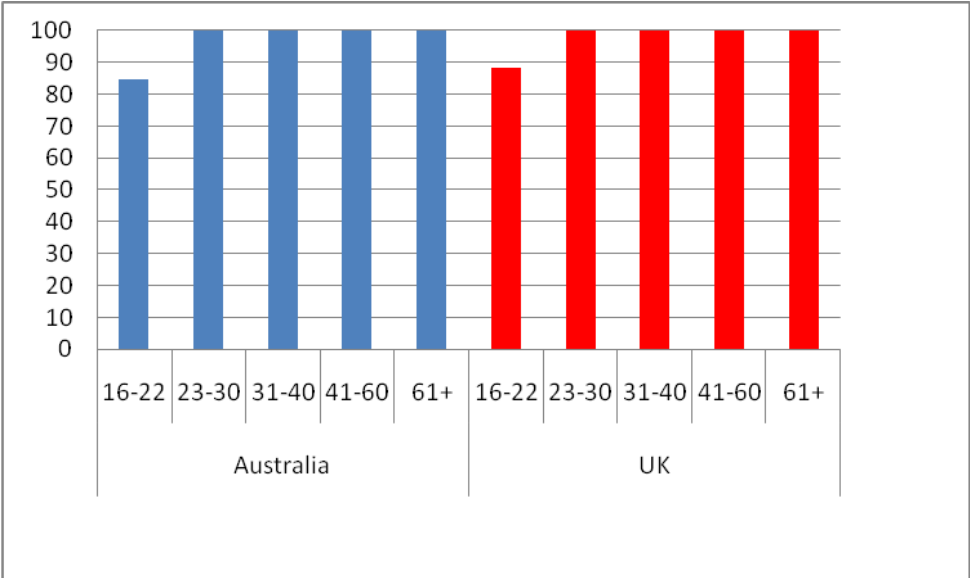
Figure 13.1: Familiarity with the phraseme *full steam ahead* as a percentage of each age group's responses

13.2 Interpretation

Only the 23-30 age group agreed 100% with the suggested answer that 'someone is making good progress' (see Figure 13.2). Others felt that none of the choices was entirely appropriate, perhaps because the suggested answer was linked to the accompanying picture and was not sufficiently broad in context and generalisability.
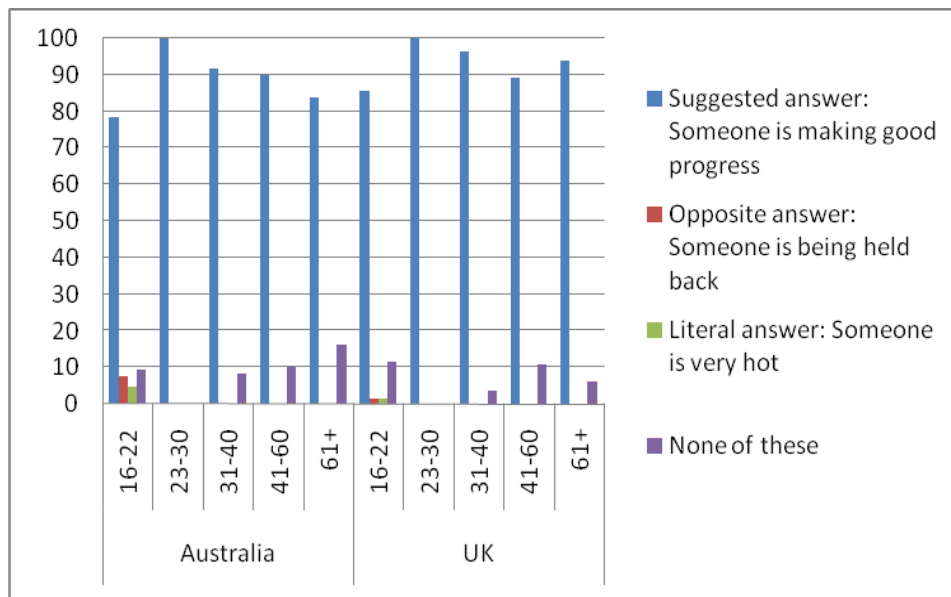
Figure 13.2: Interpretation of the phraseme *full steam ahead* as a percentage of each age group's responses

13.3 Frequency of use

This was the sixth most frequently used phrasemes in the questionnaire, used by all age groups and in both locations (see Table 13.2). Only 16% on average said they would never use it.

Table 13.2: Frequency of use of the phraseme *full steam ahead* as a percentage of each age group's responses

Location	Age group	Never	Almost never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
Australia	16-22	29	22	38	8	3
	23-30	5	37	32	21	5
	31-40	8	17	58	17	0
	41-60	17	30	43	8	2
	61+	23	28	40	6	4
UK	16-22	27	20	42	10	1
	23-30	6	50	25	19	0
	31-40	10	21	59	7	3
	41-60	11	37	43	9	0
	61+	6	38	56	0	0

13.4 Phrasemes most frequently elicited

Run out of steam, meaning 'to lose impetus', had 43 Australian and 40 UK tokens.

Let off steam, which means that someone vents their feelings, was suggested by 26 participants in Australia and 42 in the UK, of all age groups. These two phrasemes appear as prompts elsewhere in the questionnaire. *A head of steam* had 26 Australian and 18 UK tokens, from all age groups but especially those aged over 41. *To build up a head of steam* means that something is gaining impetus or becoming successful. *Under your own steam*, meaning that someone reaches a location or goal without outside help, was suggested by 10 people in Australia and 12 in the UK.

13.5 Dictionary coverage

Full steam ahead appears in all the Big 5. This comprehensive listing reflects the phraseme's continuing popularity.

Run out of steam and *let off steam* appear in all the Big 5, while *under your own steam* appears in all but *COBUILD*. *A head of steam* appears in *CALD, LDOCE* and *MEDAL*.

14. Survey 1, Phraseme 14: *To have someone's guts for garters*

Total Australian participants: 211
Total UK participants: 284
Suggested interpretation: Someone is angry
Dictionary inclusion: *CALD, LDOCE, MEDAL* and *OALD*

Table 14.1: Participant numbers for the phraseme *to have someone's guts for garters*

Australia	16-22	65
	23-30	19
	31-40	12
	41-60	60
	61+	55
	Total	**211**
UK	16-22	151
	23-30	15
	31-40	28
	41-60	74
	61+	16
	Total	**284**

14.1 Familiarity

This phraseme was very familiar to all except the youngest group in Australia (see Figure 14.1), with an overall rate of 91%. Although I had thought of it as an old-fashioned phraseme (in my own case, heard only from my English grandmother in the 1960s), and it is given as old-fashioned in *MEDAL*, the other dictionaries (*CALD, LDOCE* and *OALD*) do not give an old-fashioned label and it is clearly familiar to most participants, especially in the UK.
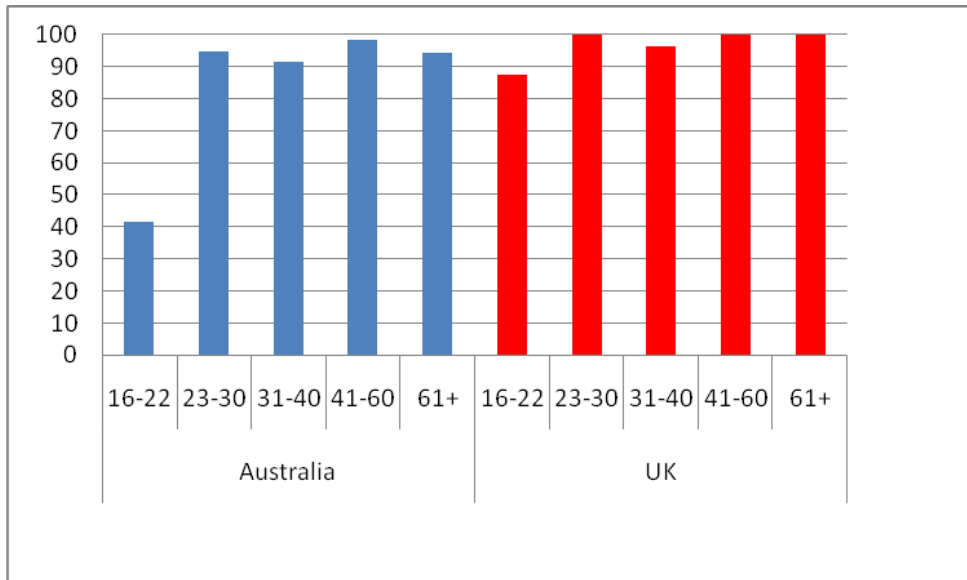
Figure 14.1: Familiarity with the phraseme *to have someone's guts for garters* as a percentage of each age group's responses

14.2 Interpretation

Agreement with the suggested answer was high, except among the youngest group in Australia, who were not initially familiar with the phraseme (see Figure 14.2). The word *guts*, with its connotations of greed, may have motivated 18% of the youngest Australians to choose the alternative answer 'someone is fat'. This suggests that the phraseme is relatively opaque.

Figure 14.2: Interpretation of the phraseme to have *someone's guts for garters* as a percentage of each age group's responses

14.3 Frequency of use

This phraseme, although it may be old-fashioned, is still used relatively frequently in the UK (see Table 14.2). It is also used in Australia, but more by those aged over 31. It may therefore be encountered by the target group in Australia, but not necessarily among their peers.

Table 14.2: Frequency of use of the phraseme *to have someone's guts for garters* as a percentage of each age group's responses

Location	Age group	Never	Almost never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
Australia	16-22	66	14	11	6	3
	23-30	72	17	11	0	0
	31-40	50	25	25	0	0
	41-60	40	38	18	2	2
	61+	44	33	22	0	0
UK	16-22	39	30	23	6	1
	23-30	20	33	40	7	0
	31-40	17	28	48	7	0
	41-60	19	36	36	7	1
	61+	25	38	38	0	0

14.4 Phrasemes most frequently elicited

The most popular suggestions were variations on *have guts* (22 tokens), *have the guts* (7 tokens) and *doesn't have the guts* (11 tokens), suggested by participants aged over 23 in both locations. All these refer to someone being brave enough to carry out an action. There were no other very popular suggestions, but *hate someone's guts*, meaning to dislike someone intensely, had 8 tokens; *spill one's guts*, meaning to unburden one's feelings, had 7 tokens from both Australia and the UK; and *rough as guts*, meaning someone is rough and uncouth, had 7 tokens, 5 of them from Australia.

14.5 Dictionary coverage

To have someone's guts for garters is well covered by the Big 5, appearing in all but *COBUILD*.

Have guts and its variations are listed as *takes guts* (*CALD*), *have the guts* (*LDOCE* and *OALD*) and both *have the guts* and *takes guts* in *MEDAL*. *Hate someone's guts* appears in all the Big 5. *Spill one's guts* appears in *CALD*, *LDOCE*, *MEDAL* and *OALD*, and is marked as a US phraseme in all of these, with *CALD* also listing it as an Australian phraseme. *Rough as guts* does not appear in the Big 5, but is marked in the *OED* as an Australianism, perhaps explaining its lack of inclusion in the MELDs.

15. Survey 2, Phraseme 1: *To fall on stony ground*

Total Australian participants: 143
Total UK participants: 135
Suggested interpretation: Something does not grow
Dictionary inclusion: *CALD*, *LDOCE*, *MEDAL* and *OALD*

Table 15.1: Participant numbers for the phraseme *to fall on stony ground*

Australia	16-22	40
	23-30	12
	31-40	12
	41-60	39
	61+	40
	Total	**143**
UK	16-22	61
	23-30	8
	31-40	15
	41-60	39
	61+	12
	Total	**135**

15.1 Familiarity

Except among the youngest age group, this phraseme was more familiar in the UK than Australia (see Figure 15.1), although only the oldest UK group expressed 100% familiarity.

Figure 15.1: Familiarity with the phraseme *to fall on stony ground* as a percentage of each age group's responses

15.2 Interpretation

There was no 100% agreement here with the suggested answer, which was perhaps closer to its Biblical origin than to a figurative meaning (although the *OALD* definition gives 'to fail to produce the result or the effect that you hope for;

to have little success', which is close to the suggested answer). No one, however, chose the opposite answer ('Something grows very well'), and few chose the alternative ('Something grows better on hard soil'), with many people preferring 'none of these' (see Figure 15.2). This probably indicates that they did have a specific meaning in mind, but did not feel that the suggested answer was sufficiently exact.

Figure 15.2: Interpretation of the phraseme *to fall on stony ground* as a percentage of each age group's responses

15.3 Frequency of use

This phraseme, although rarely used by the youngest group, is still used by the oldest group, especially in the UK, where only 8% said they would never use it (see Table 15.2). The target group are thus unlikely to encounter it among their peers, but may come across it from other sources.

Table 15.2: Frequency of use of the phraseme *to fall on stony ground* as a percentage of each age group's responses

Location	Age group	Never	Almost never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
Australia	16-22	80	20	0	0	0
	23-30	83	17	0	0	0
	31-40	83	8	8	0	0
	41-60	47	29	24	0	0
	61+	38	41	21	0	0
UK	16-22	78	15	7	0	0
	23-30	33	67	0	0	0
	31-40	60	33	7	0	0
	41-60	31	31	31	8	0
	61+	8	58	33	0	0

15.4 Phrasemes most frequently elicited

Fall on deaf ears, meaning that something goes unnoticed, had a total of 19 tokens from both locations, while *keep your feet on the ground,* meaning that someone should be realistic in their actions, had 9 tokens.

15.5 Dictionary coverage

To fall on stony ground appears in *CALD*, *LDOCE*, *MEDAL* and *OALD*. This is quite high coverage for a phraseme that was unfamiliar to many participants and little used by many.

Fall on deaf ears appears in all the Big 5, as does *keep your feet on the ground.*

16. Survey 2, Phraseme 2: *To rain fire and brimstone*

Total Australian participants: 143
Total UK participants: 118
Suggested interpretation: Judgement
Dictionary inclusion: *CALD* and *COBUILD*

Table 16.1: Participant numbers for the phraseme *to rain fire and brimstone*

Australia	16-22	42
	23-30	12
	31-40	12
	41-60	38
	61+	39
	Total	**143**
UK	16-22	54
	23-30	8
	31-40	14
	41-60	31
	61+	11
	Total	**118**

16.1 Familiarity

This phraseme was more familiar in Australia (average 78%) than the UK (average 58%) (see Figure 16.1). Unlike many of the phrasemes in the questionnaire, it was those in the 31-40 and 41-60 groups, and not the oldest group, who were the most familiar with it.
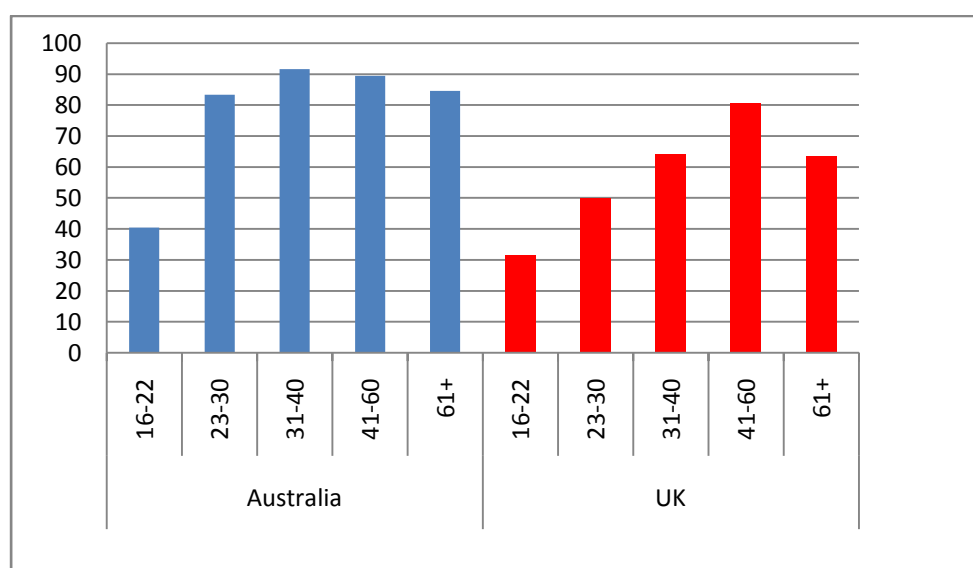
Figure 16.1: Familiarity with the phraseme *to rain fire and brimstone* as a percentage of each age group's responses

16.2 Interpretation

Perhaps because of the lower familiarity rates, agreement with the suggested answer did not reach 100%, though agreement was fairly high generally, at 85% (see Figure 16.2).
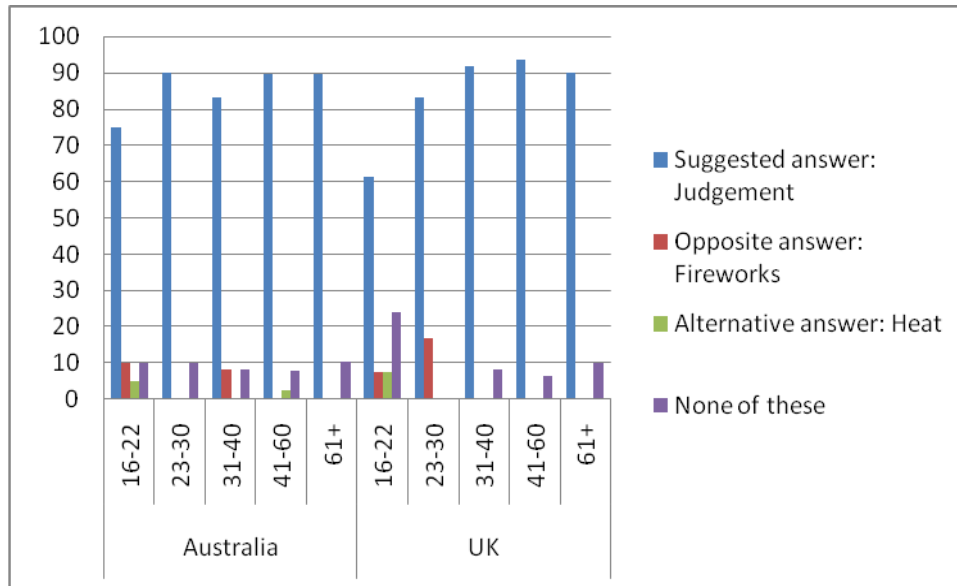
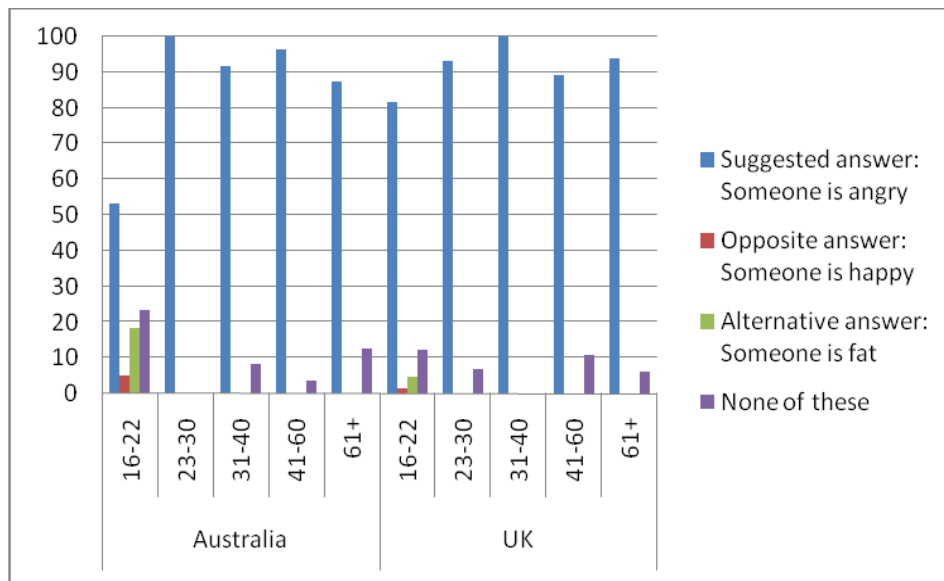Figure 16.2: Interpretation of the phraseme *to rain fire and brimstone* as a percentage of each age group's responses

16.3 Frequency of use

This phraseme appears not to be commonly used, and most of those who do use it gave their frequency rating as 'almost never', except for the Australian 41-60 group, who gave a 13% rating of 'sometimes' (see Table 16.2). It is therefore not likely to be encountered often by the target group.

Table 16.2: Frequency of use of the phraseme *to rain fire and brimstone* as a percentage of each age group's responses

Location	Age group	Never	Almost never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
Australia	16-22	73	20	3	5	0
	23-30	83	8	8	0	0
	31-40	58	42	0	0	0
	41-60	68	18	13	0	0
	61+	62	31	8	0	0
UK	16-22	81	17	2	0	0
	23-30	83	17	0	0	0
	31-40	100	0	0	0	0
	41-60	73	24	3	0	0
	61+	64	36	0	0	0

16.4 Phrasemes most frequently elicited

Thirty-two people suggested *there's no smoke without fire*, meaning that suspicions often have some foundation of truth. Thirteen Australians but only one UK participant gave the alternative *where there is smoke there is fire*.

It's raining cats and dogs was suggested by 27 people of all ages in both locations. This phraseme means that it is raining heavily. *To fight fire with fire,* meaning that someone tackles a situation by using similar means, had 9 Australian and 5 UK tokens, from a variety of age groups. *Out of the frying pan and into the fire*, meaning that someone goes from a bad situation to a worse, was suggested by 14 people in both locations, again from a variety of age groups. Twelve people suggested *to spread like wildfire*, meaning that something spreads very quickly, and eleven people suggested *to get on like a house on fire*, meaning that people have an excellent relationship.

16.5 Dictionary coverage

Fire and brimstone appears in *CALD* and *COBUILD*. Neither includes the verb *to rain*. The lack of coverage by the other three MELDs seems appropriate, since the phraseme is little used by participants in the survey.

There's no smoke without fire is in all the Big 5, but only *CALD, COBUILD* and *LDOCE* list the alternative *where there is smoke there is fire. It's raining cats and dogs* appears in *LDOCE* and *OALD,* and is marked as old-fashioned in *MEDAL*. *To spread like wildfire* and *to get on like a house on fire* are in all the Big 5. *To fight fire with fire* and *out of the frying pan and into the fire* are in all except *COBUILD*.

17. Survey 2, Phraseme 3: *To gird up one's loins*

Total Australian participants: 140
Total UK participants: 118
Suggested interpretation: To prepare for something difficult
Dictionary inclusion: *CALD*, *COBUILD, LDOCE, MEDAL* and *OALD*

Table 17.1: Participant numbers for the phraseme *to gird up one's loins*

Australia	16-22	41
	23-30	12
	31-40	11
	41-60	37
	61+	39
	Total	**140**
UK	16-22	53
	23-30	8
	31-40	14
	41-60	32
	61+	11
	Total	**118**

17.1 Familiarity

Familiarity with this phraseme rose steadily with age, ranging from 20% to 97% in Australia and 8% to 100% in the UK (see Figure 17.1). Overall, 66% of participants had heard it before.
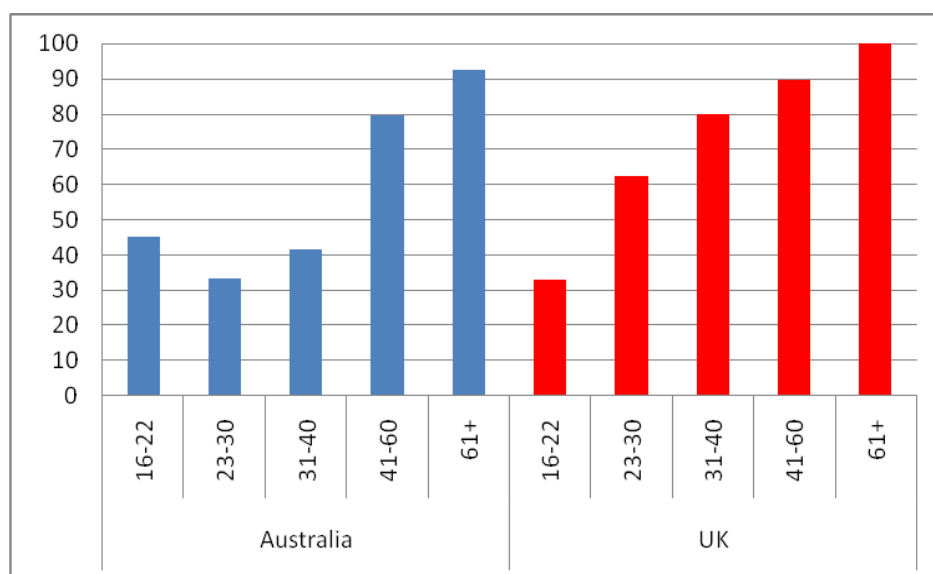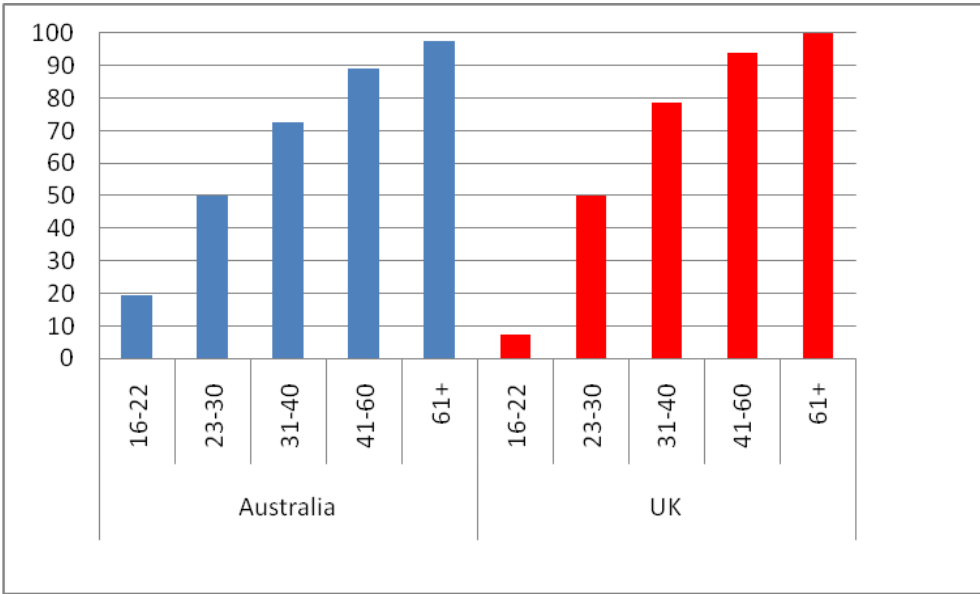
Figure 17.1: Familiarity with the phraseme *to gird up one's loins* as a percentage of each age group's responses

17.2 Interpretation

There was a range of agreement with the suggested answer (see Figure 17.2), with those choosing alternative 2, 'to prepare for a fight', possibly prompted by the illustration accompanying the phraseme, which showed someone rolling up their sleeves and getting ready for a fight.
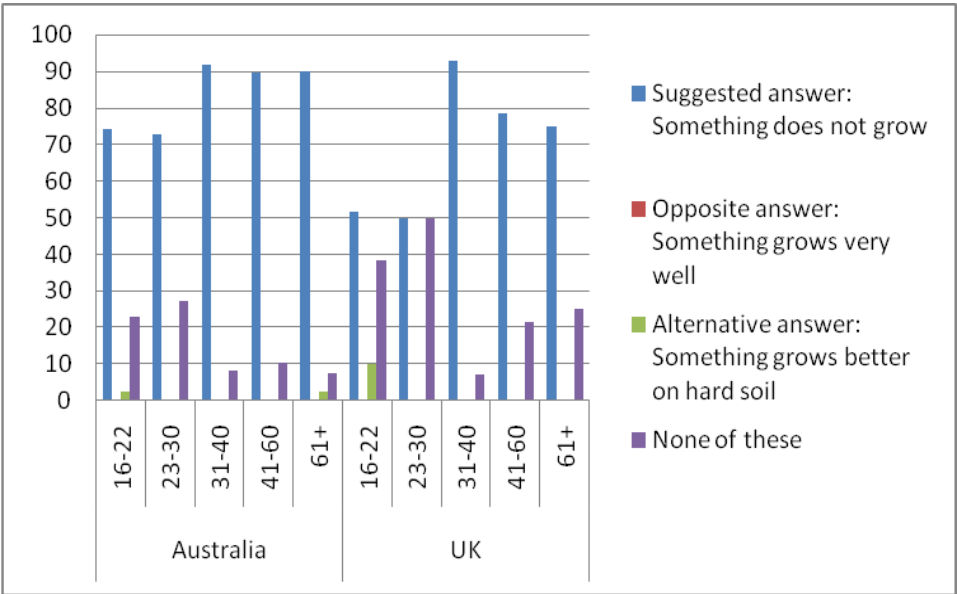

Figure 17.2: Interpretation of the phraseme *to gird up one's loins* as a percentage of each age group's responses

17.3 Frequency of use

This phraseme is not frequently used, with an average of only 14% of participants saying they would use it 'sometimes'. It is used most by the 41+ participants in Australia and the 41-60 group in the UK (see Table 17.2). It is therefore not likely to be encountered by the target group.

Table 17.2: Frequency of use of the phraseme *to gird up one's loins* as a percentage of each age group's responses

Location	Age group	Never	Almost never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
Australia	16-22	85	10	3	0	3
	23-30	73	9	18	0	0
	31-40	30	60	10	0	0
	41-60	47	36	14	3	0
	61+	24	39	37	0	0
UK	16-22	88	10	2	0	0
	23-30	67	33	0	0	0
	31-40	64	14	21	0	0
	41-60	19	41	30	7	4
	61+	36	55	9	0	0

17.4 Phrasemes most frequently elicited

The fruit of one's loins, referring to someone's offspring, elicited 45 tokens from both locations and all age groups. This was the only phraseme with a large number of tokens.

17.5 Dictionary coverage

To gird up one's loins appears in all the Big 5. This is perhaps unnecessarily good coverage for a little-used phraseme.

The fruit of my loins appears as a phraseme only in *CALD*, although the figurative meaning of *fruit* appears independently of *loins* in the other MELDs.

18. Survey 2, Phraseme 4: *To give up the ghost*

Total Australian participants: 138
Total UK participants: 112
Suggested interpretation: To die
Dictionary inclusion: *CALD*, *LDOCE*, *MEDAL* and *OALD*

Table 18.1: Participant numbers for the phraseme *to give up the ghost*

Australia	16-22	40
	23-30	11
	31-40	11
	41-60	37
	61+	39
	Total	**138**
UK	16-22	47
	23-30	8
	31-40	14
	41-60	32
	61+	11
	Total	**112**

18.1 Familiarity

This phraseme was 100% familiar to those aged over 31 in both locations (see Figure 18.1). The youngest group were less familiar with it, however, particularly those in the UK, who evidenced only 11% familiarity. Overall familiarity was 83%.
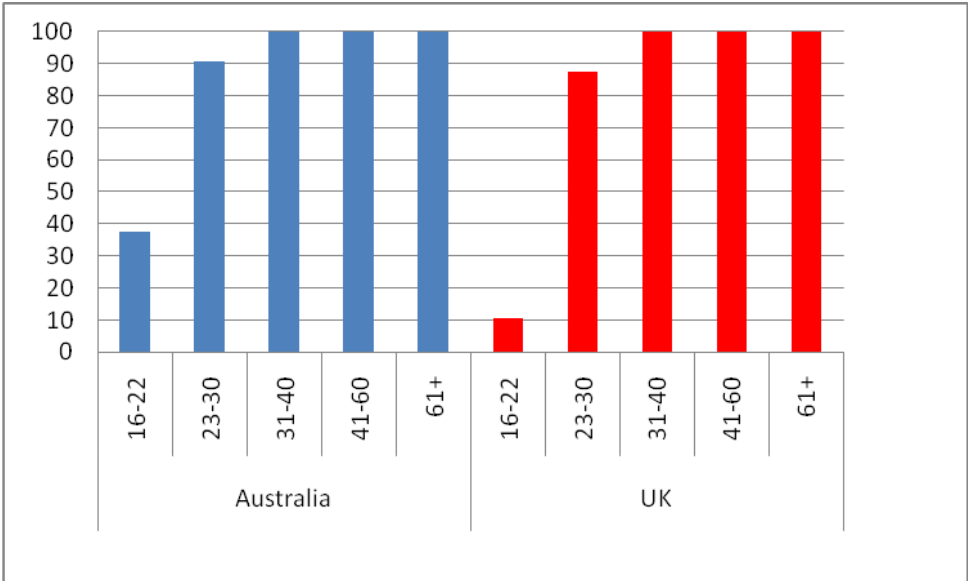
Figure 18.1: Familiarity with the phraseme *to give up the ghost* as a percentage of each age group's responses

18.2 Interpretation

Many people felt that the suggested answer, 'to die', was inadequate (see Figure 18.2), though it is in fact the meaning given in four of the Big 5. At least 23% of the youngest group, who were less familiar with the phraseme, guessed the meaning as 'to move quickly', indicating that this phraseme would be relatively opaque to the target group.
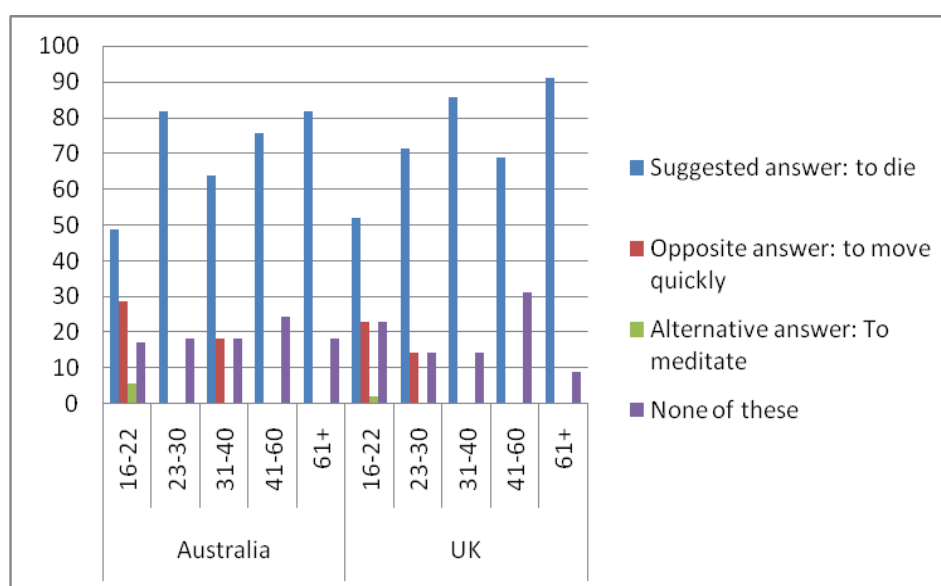
Figure 18.2: Interpretation of the phraseme *to give up the ghost* as a percentage of each age group's responses

18.3 Frequency of use

Although this phraseme is little used by the youngest groups, it is used relatively frequently by the older groups (see Table 18.2). Indeed, all the participants in the Australian 31-40 group said that they would use it at some time, and 35% of all participants said they would use it 'sometimes', placing it in eighteenth position in the questionnaire. It is therefore likely to be encountered by the target group, though probably not among their peers.

Table 18.2: Frequency of use of the phraseme *to give up the ghost* as a percentage of each age group's responses

Location	Age group	Never	Almost never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
Australia	16-22	79	13	8	0	0
	23-30	27	27	45	0	0
	31-40	0	36	55	9	0
	41-60	24	38	32	5	0
	61+	14	32	51	3	0
UK	16-22	78	11	9	2	0
	23-30	50	13	25	13	0
	31-40	14	43	36	7	0
	41-60	17	31	38	14	0
	61+	18	36	45	0	0

18.4 Phrasemes most frequently elicited

A ghost of a chance, meaning there is only a slight possibility of something happening, was the most popular suggestion, with 56 tokens from all age groups in both locations. Slight variations on *he looks like he saw a ghost,* meaning someone is pale and frightened, had 25 tokens, while the related *as white as a ghost* had 16.

To kick the bucket, also meaning 'to die', elicited 17 tokens in both locations, though not from the youngest group. *The ghost in the machine* had 15 tokens from both locations and from all ages except the youngest. This phrase means that people are composed of both mind and body, and was first used by the philosopher Gilbert Ryle in 1949 before becoming the title of a book by Arthur Koestler in 1967 (*OED*) and the title of an album by the music group Police in 1981. *To throw in the towel*, meaning 'to give up', had 10 tokens.

18.5 Dictionary coverage

To give up the ghost is listed in *CALD*, *LDOCE*, *MEDAL* and *OALD*. This is certainly a phraseme which needs to be in all MELDs, given its high familiarity and usage ratings.

A ghost of a chance appears in *CALD, COBUILD, LDOCE* and *MEDAL. He looks*

like he saw a ghost is in *CALD* and *MEDAL. As white as a ghost* and *the ghost in*

the machine do not appear at all in the Big 5.

To kick the bucket is listed in *CALD, LDOCE*, *MEDAL* and *OALD*, while *to throw*

in the towel is in all the Big 5.

19. Survey 2, Phraseme 5: *To have feet of clay*

Total Australian participants: 136
Total UK participants: 103
Suggested interpretation: Someone is disappointing
Dictionary inclusion: *CALD*, *LDOCE*, *MEDAL* and *OALD*

Table 19.1: Participant numbers for the phraseme *to have feet of clay*

Australia	16-22	39
	23-30	11
	31-40	11
	41-60	37
	61+	38
	Total	**136**
UK	16-22	42
	23-30	7
	31-40	14
	41-60	29
	61+	11
	Total	**103**

19.1 Familiarity

This phraseme was very unfamiliar to the youngest group but totally familiar to

the oldest (see Figure 19.1). Overall, 66% of participants had heard it before.
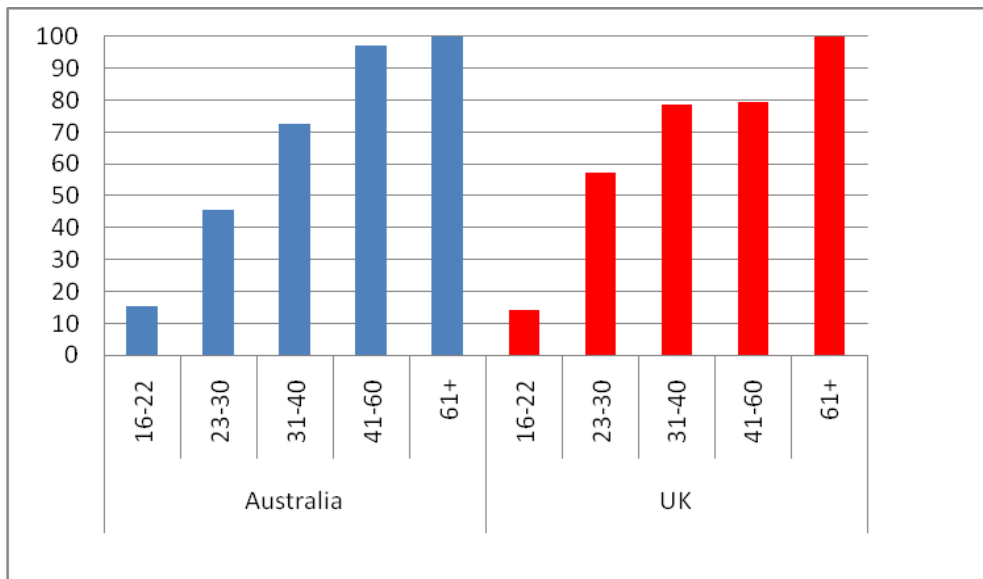
Figure 19.1: Familiarity with the phraseme *to have feet of clay* as a percentage of each age group's responses

19.2 Interpretation

Agreement with the suggested answer, 'someone is disappointing', was not high, with many who already knew the phraseme choosing 'none of these' (see Figure 19.2). A large percentage, especially in the youngest groups (59% in Australia and 50% in the UK), chose 'someone is strong', indicating that this phraseme is very opaque and would probably cause problems for the target group.
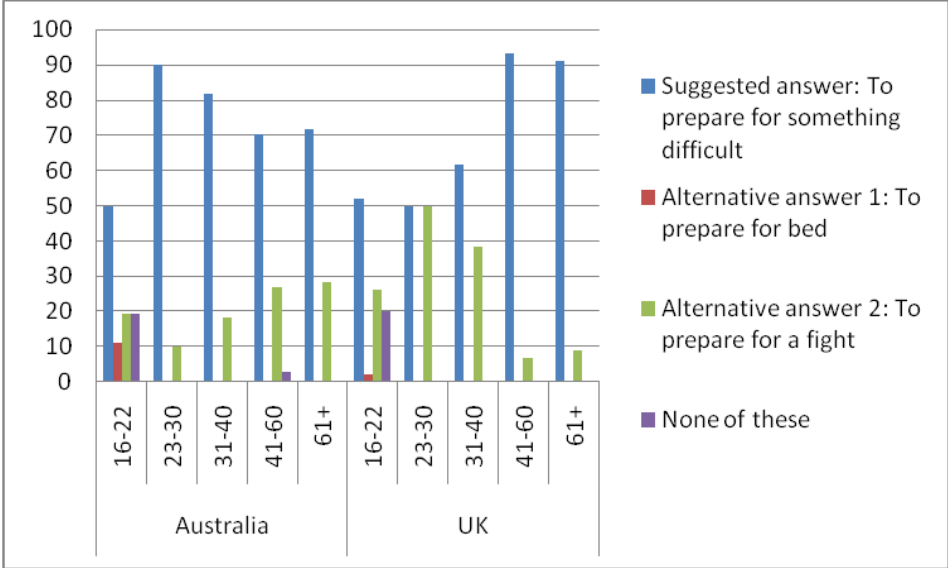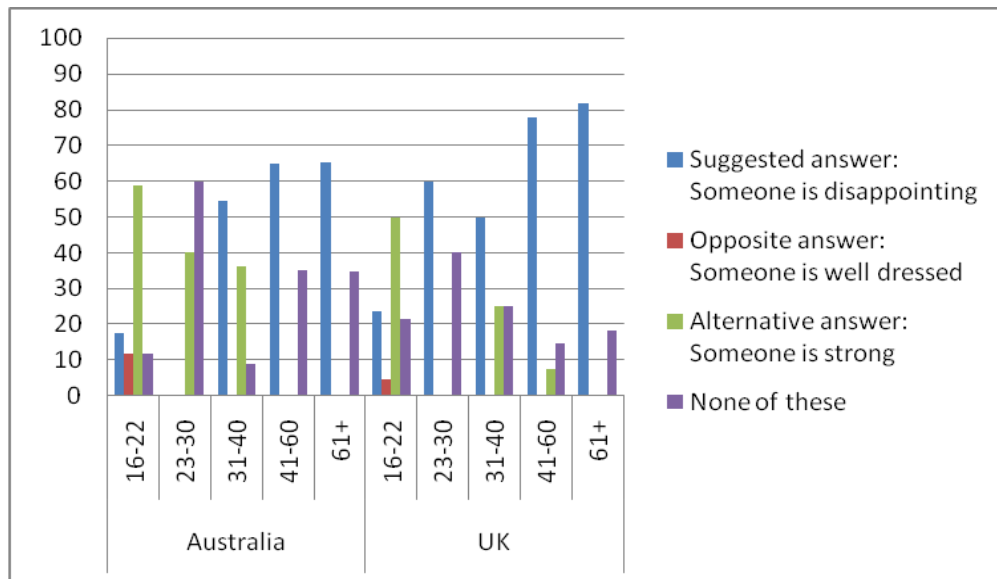
Figure 19.2: Interpretation of the phraseme *to have feet of clay* as a percentage of each age group's responses

19.3 Frequency of use

A third of participants said they would never use this phraseme, while another third said they would use it 'sometimes'. It is little used by the youngest group and unlikely to be encountered by the target group.

Table 19.2: Frequency of use of the phraseme *to have feet of clay* as a percentage of each age group's responses

Location	Age group	Never	Almost never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
Australia	16-22	86	11	3	0	0
	23-30	82	9	9	0	0
	31-40	45	27	18	9	0
	41-60	62	27	11	0	0
	61+	26	36	38	0	0
UK	16-22	95	5	0	0	0
	23-30	60	20	20	0	0
	31-40	79	14	7	0	0
	41-60	59	14	28	0	0
	61+	64	18	18	0	0

19.4 Phrasemes most frequently elicited

Feet firmly on solid ground, which means that someone is realistic and practical, was suggested by 36 people of different ages in both locations, while the shorter

feet on solid ground was suggested by 12 people, of whom 9 were in Australia.

Six feet under, referring to someone as dead and buried, was suggested by 11 Australians and one UK participant. *To stand on your own (two) feet*, which means that someone looks after and has responsibility for themselves, had 19 tokens overall, while *two left feet*, referring to clumsiness, had 11. *The world at one's feet*, meaning that someone has limitless opportunities or is greatly admired, had 10 tokens.

19.5 Dictionary coverage

To have feet of clay appears in *CALD, LDOCE, MEDAL* and *OALD*. This phraseme therefore has good dictionary coverage.

Feet on the ground and *to stand on your own (two) feet* appear in all the Big 5. *Two left feet* and *the world at one's feet* are in *CALD, LDOCE, MEDAL* and *OALD*, while *six feet under* is only in *CALD, MEDAL* and *OALD*.

20. Survey 2, Phraseme 6: *To hide a multitude of sins*

Total Australian participants: 134
Total UK participants: 106
Suggested interpretation: Something is hidden
Dictionary inclusion: *CALD, COBUILD, LDOCE, MEDAL* and *OALD*

Table 20.1: Participant numbers for the phraseme *to hide a multitude of sins*

Australia	16-22	38
	23-30	11
	31-40	11
	41-60	36
	61+	38
	Total	**134**
UK	16-22	43
	23-30	7
	31-40	14
	41-60	31
	61+	11
	Total	**106**

20.1 Familiarity

This phraseme had consistently higher familiarity rates in the UK, where 100% of all participants except the youngest group had heard it before, and even the youngest group evidenced 44% familiarity (see Figure 20.1). By contrast, no Australian group gave a 100% familiarity rating. The overall familiarity rate was 78%.

Figure 20.1: Familiarity with the phraseme *to hide a multitude of sins* as a percentage of each age group's responses

20.2 Interpretation

Agreement with the suggested answer varied, especially among the Australian participants, where only 51% of the oldest group felt that the suggested answer was satisfactory (see Figure 20.2). This group gave both the opposite and alternative answers a 16% rating, which suggests that the phraseme could have a range of meanings in Australia. The 41-60 group in Australia were also not entirely happy with the suggested answer, with 18% of them preferring either 'something is destroyed' or 'none of these'. In contrast, more UK participants agreed with the suggested answer. About 72% of the youngest group, many of

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whom had not heard the phraseme before, guessed the answer in accordance with

the suggested interpretation, perhaps prompted by the verb *hide*.
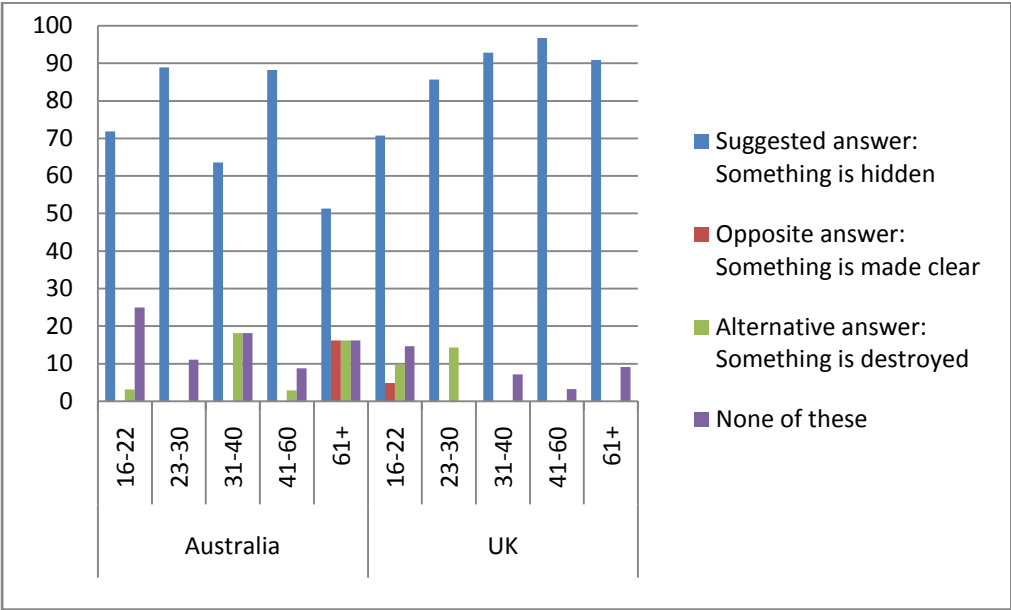
Figure 20.2: Interpretation of the phraseme *to hide a multitude of sins* as a percentage of each age group's responses

20.2 Frequency of use

This phraseme appears to be used slightly more frequently in the UK (average

33% 'sometimes') than Australia (average 24% 'sometimes') (see Table 20.2).

Table 20.2: Frequency of use of the phraseme *to hide a multitude of sins* as a percentage of each age group's responses

Location	Age group	Never	Almost never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
Australia	16-22	92	6	0	3	0
	23-30	60	10	20	10	0
	31-40	36	36	27	0	0
	41-60	40	26	29	6	0
	61+	24	26	45	5	0
UK	16-22	76	17	2	2	2
	23-30	29	43	29	0	0
	31-40	21	29	43	7	0
	41-60	7	36	46	7	4
	61+	18	36	45	0	0

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20.4 Phrasemes most frequently elicited

No phrasemes were commonly elicited, although the phraseme *to feed the multitude* evoked 14 Australian and 3 UK responses among the oldest two age groups.

20.5 Dictionary coverage

To hide a multitude of sins is included in all the Big 5. In each case, the alternatives *cover* and *hide* are given, and the phraseme is marked as often or always being used humorously. This coverage is good given the familiarity and usage ratings, which suggest that the target group are likely to come across the phraseme, occasionally even among their peers.

21. Survey 2, Phraseme 7: *Birds of a feather flock together*

Total Australian participants: 132
Total UK participants: 105
Suggested interpretation: Similar things attract each other
Dictionary inclusion: *CALD*, *COBUILD, LDOCE*, *MEDAL* and *OALD*

Table 21.1: Participant numbers for the phraseme *birds of a feather flock together*

Australia	16-22	37
	23-30	11
	31-40	11
	41-60	35
	61+	38
	Total	**132**
UK	16-22	43
	23-30	6
	31-40	14
	41-60	31
	61+	11
	Total	**105**

21.1 Familiarity

This was a very familiar phraseme, with even the youngest groups evidencing 70% familiarity in Australia and 77% in the UK (see Figure 21.1). All the older groups gave high familiarity ratings, with 100% for all those aged 23 and over in

the UK. Overall, familiarity reached 94%, making this the thirteenth most familiar phraseme in the questionnaire.
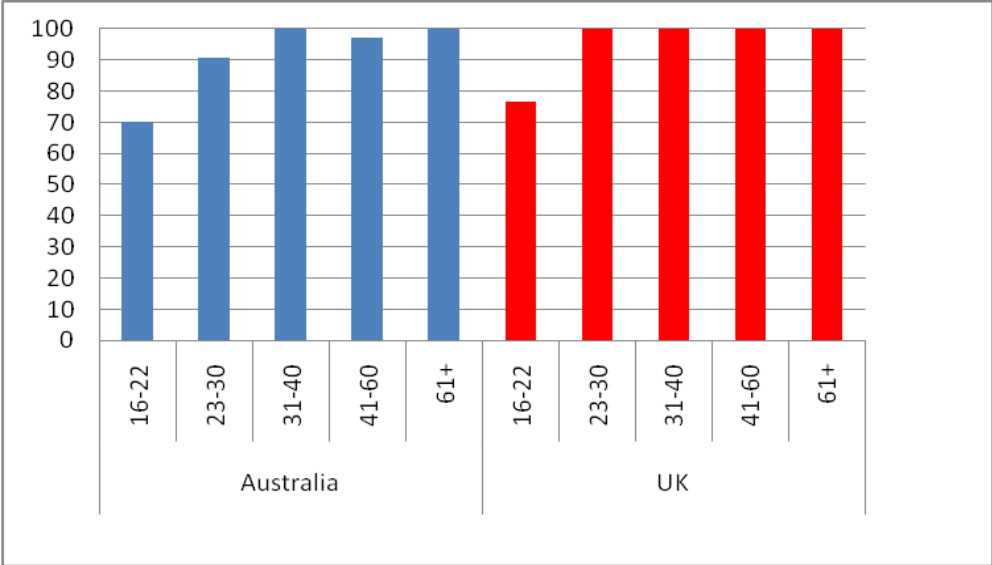
Figure 21.1: Familiarity with the phraseme *birds of a feather flock together* as a percentage of each age group's responses

21.2 Interpretation

There was very close agreement with the suggested answer across all age groups and in both locations (see Figure 21.2), indicating that this phraseme is well known and easy to understand.
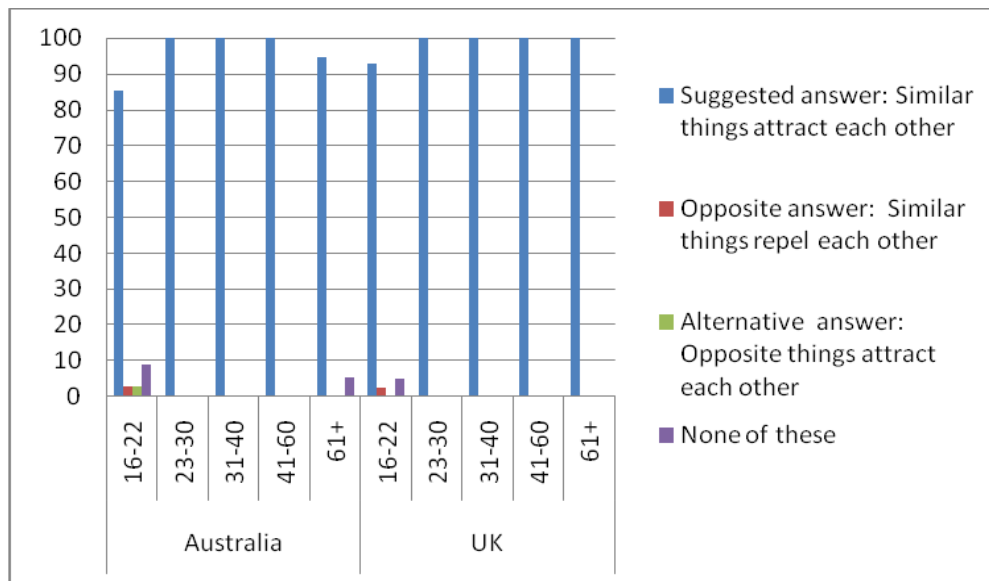
Figure 21.2: Interpretation of the phraseme *birds of a feather flock together* as a percentage of each age group's responses

21.3 Frequency of use

Although this phraseme is well recognised, it is not necessarily frequently used by all age groups (see Table 21.2). It appears to be used more often in Australia, where 41% of participants said they would use it 'sometimes', compared to 28% in the UK. About half of the youngest group indicated that they would use it at some point.

Table 21.2: Frequency of use of the phraseme *birds of a feather flock together* as a percentage of each age group's responses

Location	Age group	Never	Almost never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
Australia	16-22	46	27	24	3	0
	23-30	45	36	18	0	0
	31-40	18	27	55	0	0
	41-60	17	31	49	3	0
	61+	11	24	58	8	0
UK	16-22	43	24	26	5	2
	23-30	83	17	0	0	0
	31-40	43	36	21	0	0
	41-60	7	29	54	11	0
	61+	18	45	36	0	0

21.4 Phrasemes most frequently elicited

The two most common elicitations were *a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush* (33 tokens across age groups in both locations), which means that it is better to keep what one has than to risk losing it for something not yet in one's possession, and *as free as a bird* (11 tokens, with 5 of these from the UK 16-22 group), meaning that someone has no restrictions.

21.5 Dictionary coverage

Birds of a feather flock together is in all the Big 5. This dictionary coverage is good, given the phraseme's familiarity rating, although it is a little surprising that *CALD*'s otherwise comprehensive coverage does not list the phraseme under *bird* as the other MELDs do, but only under *feather*.

A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush appears in all the Big 5, but *as free as a bird* is only listed in *CALD*.

22. Survey 2, Phraseme 8: *Brave new world*

Total Australian participants: 131
Total UK participants: 104
Suggested interpretation: What an exciting place!
Dictionary inclusion: *COBUILD, LDOCE*, *MEDAL* and *OALD*

Table 22.1: Participant numbers for the phraseme *brave new world*

Australia	16-22	37
	23-30	12
	31-40	11
	41-60	35
	61+	36
	Total	**131**
UK	16-22	42
	23-30	6
	31-40	14
	41-60	31
	61+	11
	Total	**104**

22.1 Familiarity

This phraseme evidenced a high degree of familiarity among the older groups, and roughly 50% of the youngest groups had heard it previously (see Figure 22.1). Overall familiarity was 87%. Twenty-nine Australians and 24 UK participants, all aged 23 and over, said they had first heard the phraseme in either Shakespeare's *The tempest* or Aldous Huxley's book *Brave new world*. One UK participant in the youngest group said he had heard it via Bob Geldof. This may have been through a much-quoted newspaper article commenting on family law in the UK (Geldof 2003).
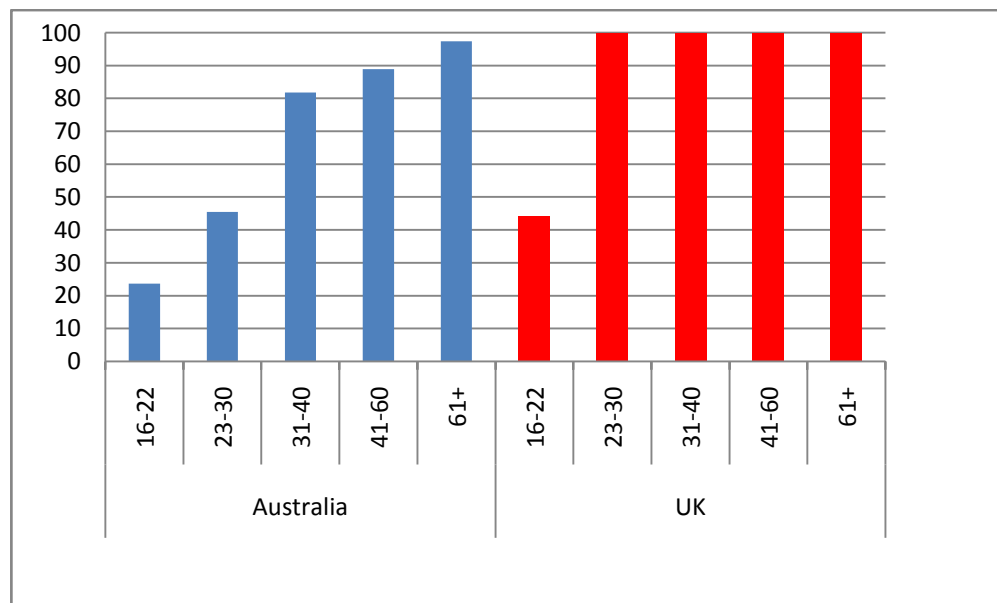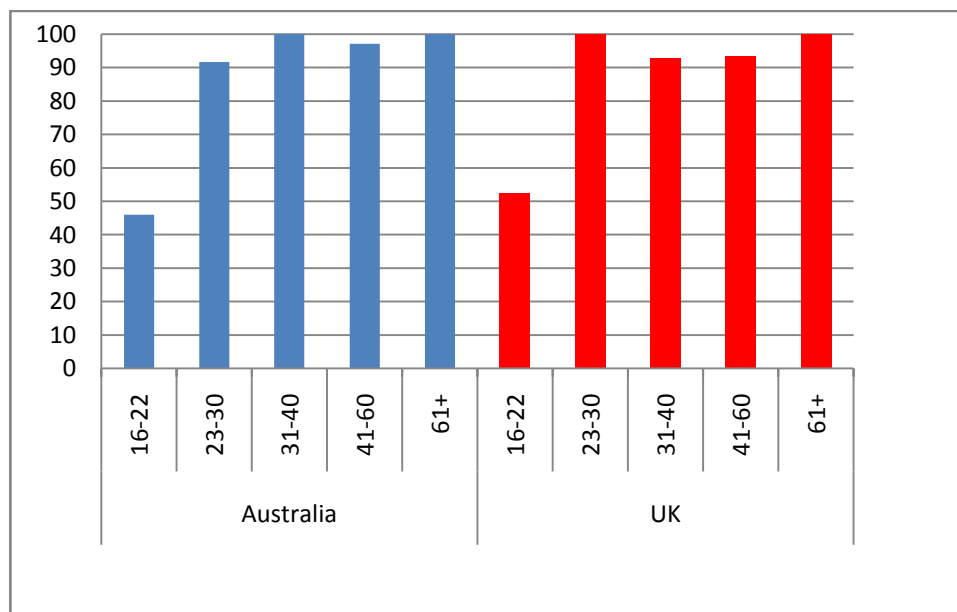

Figure 22.1: Familiarity with the phraseme *brave new world* as a percentage of each age group's responses

22.2 Interpretation

Agreement with the suggested answer varied among locations and age groups (see Figure 22.2).
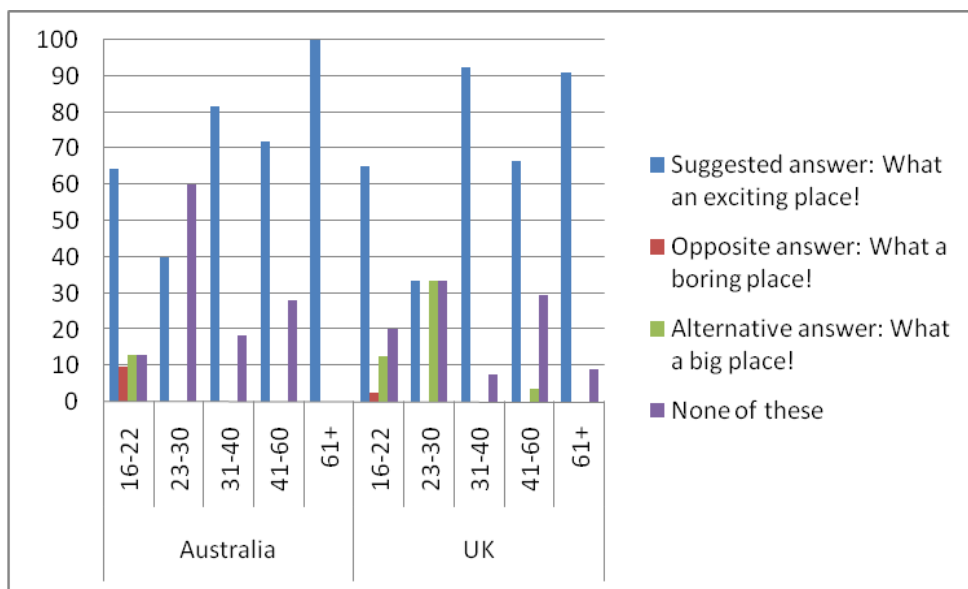
Figure 22.2: Interpretation of the phraseme *brave new world* as a percentage of each age group's responses

22.3 Frequency of use

This phraseme appears to be used more often in Australia than the UK, with a higher percentage of Australian participants saying they would never use it (see Table 22.2). The greatest use was among the Australian 31-40 group, of whom 45% said they would use it 'sometimes'.

Table 22.2: Frequency of use of the phraseme *brave new world* as a percentage of each age group's responses

Location	Age group	Never	Almost never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
Australia	16-22	80	14	3	3	0
	23-30	36	55	9	0	0
	31-40	27	18	45	9	0
	41-60	31	40	29	0	0
	61+	30	35	30	5	0
UK	16-22	67	24	7	0	2
	23-30	60	20	20	0	0
	31-40	79	14	7	0	0
	41-60	43	32	25	0	0
	61+	64	18	18	0	0

22.4 Phrasemes most frequently elicited

The phraseme most frequently elicited was *it's a small world*, meaning that the world is figuratively much smaller than we think, with 38 tokens from all age groups in both locations. Thirteen of these were from the Australian 41-60 group. *To have the world in one's hands*, which means that someone is responsible for many things, had 34 tokens, with 10 from the UK 16-22 group. *The world's your oyster*, indicating unlimited opportunity, had 33 tokens. *To have the world at one's feet*, which also refers to boundless opportunities, had 17 tokens. *To be on top of the world*, meaning to be very cheerful, had 14 tokens, seven of them from the Australian 61+ group.

22.5 Dictionary coverage

Brave new world appears in four of the Big 5; in *CALD* it is not listed as a phraseme but appears as the pre-modifier *brave new*. This is good coverage for a phraseme which is often heard but, judging from the interpretation data above, might be opaque to the target group.

The world's your oyster and *to be on top of the world* are in all the Big 5. *It's a small world* and *to have the world at one's feet* appear in *CALD, LDOCE, MEDAL* and *OALD.*

To have the world in one's hands is not listed in any of the Big 5. The large number of elicitations, especially among the youngest UK group, suggest that this may be an emerging phraseme. The original may have been based on the Christian song 'He's got the whole world in his hands', and extended to 'the whole world in my/your/our hands' owing to the general growth in concern over the environment, but this is only conjecture.

23. Survey 2, Phraseme 9: *To burn one's boats*

Total Australian participants: 131
Total UK participants: 102
Suggested interpretation: We cannot go back now
Dictionary inclusion: *CALD, LDOCE, MEDAL* and *OALD*

Table 23.1: Participant numbers for the phraseme *to burn one's boats*

Australia	16-22	38
	23-30	11
	31-40	11
	41-60	35
	61+	36
	Total	**131**
UK	16-22	41
	23-30	5
	31-40	14
	41-60	31
	61+	11
	Total	**102**

23.1 Familiarity

This phraseme appeared to be more familiar in the UK than Australia, with the only 100% familiarity rating coming from the UK 61+ group, closely followed by the UK 41-60 group, who rated it at 94% (see Figure 23.1). The youngest group in both locations gave only an average 18% familiarity rating. Overall familiarity was 58%, placing it low down in sixty-ninth position in the questionnaire.
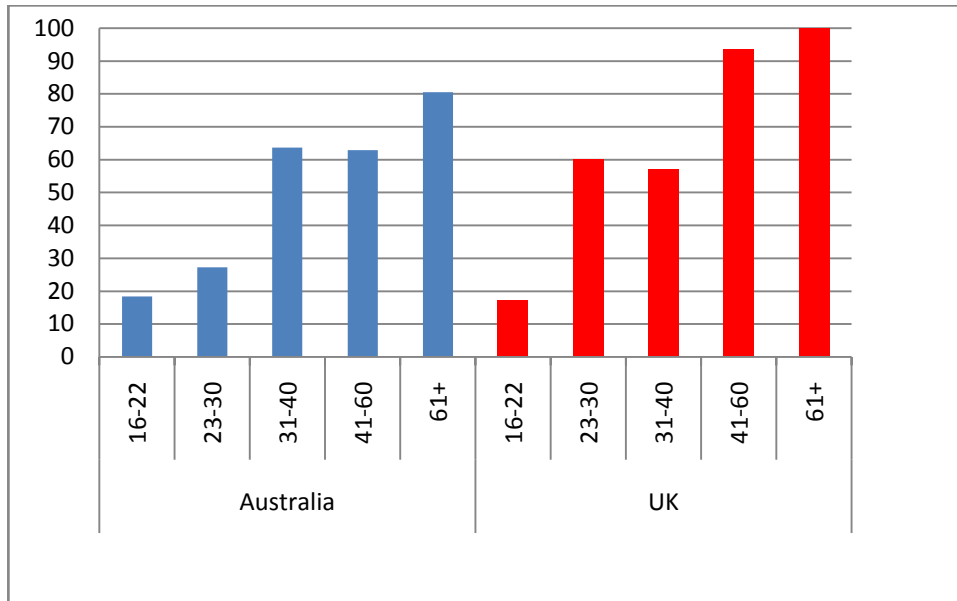
Figure 23.1: Familiarity with the phraseme *to burn one's boats* as a percentage of each age group's responses

23.2 Interpretation

Despite the low familiarity ratings, agreement with the suggested answer was high (see Figure 23.2). Hardly anyone chose the alternative answers, suggesting that this phraseme is easy to understand or to guess in context.

Figure 23.2: Interpretation of the phraseme *to burn one's boats* as a percentage of each age group's responses

23.3 Frequency of use

Usage of this phraseme is not high, except among the 61+ group in both locations and the UK 41-60 group (see Table 23.2). In fact, 62% of participants said they would never use it. This suggests that the target group may not encounter the phraseme very often.

Table 23.2: Frequency of use of the phraseme *to burn one's boats* as a percentage of each age group's responses

Location	Age group	Never	Almost never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
Australia	16-22	79	21	3	0	0
	23-30	82	0	9	9	0
	31-40	64	18	9	9	0
	41-60	62	15	24	0	0
	61+	31	28	39	3	0
UK	16-22	98	3	0	0	0
	23-30	80	0	20	0	0
	31-40	69	15	8	8	0
	41-60	25	21	46	7	0
	61+	27	36	36	0	0

23.4 Phrasemes most frequently elicited

By far the most popular elicitation was a phraseme with the same meaning, *to burn one's bridges*, which had 65 Australian and 33 UK tokens from all age groups. *All in the same boat,* meaning that everyone is in the same situation, had 10 Australian and 2 UK tokens from all age groups. *To rock the boat*, meaning 'to cause a disturbance', had 9 Australian and 1 UK token.

Whatever floats your boat, meaning 'whatever you like', had 5 Australian and 4 UK tokens, and 7 of these were from the youngest group, suggesting that this is a phraseme which may be gaining in popularity.

23.5 Dictionary coverage

To burn one's boats appears in *CALD, LDOCE, MEDAL* and *OALD*, giving good coverage.

All in the same boat and *to rock the boat* are in all the Big 5. *To burn one's bridges* appears in *CALD, LDOCE, MEDAL* and *OALD*, while *whatever floats your boat* is only in *CALD, MEDAL* and *OALD*.

24. Survey 2, Phraseme 10: *To be a box of birds*

Total Australian participants: 130
Total UK participants: 100
Suggested interpretation: Happiness
Dictionary inclusion: *MEDAL*

Table 24.1: Participant numbers for the phraseme *to be a box of birds*

Australia	16-22	36
	23-30	11
	31-40	11
	41-60	35
	61+	37
	Total	**130**
UK	16-22	40
	23-30	5
	31-40	14
	41-60	31
	61+	10
	Total	**100**

24.1 Familiarity

This phraseme was the least familiar in the questionnaire, with a rating of 1%. It was completely unknown in the UK and had only been heard by two people in Australia (see Figure 24.1).
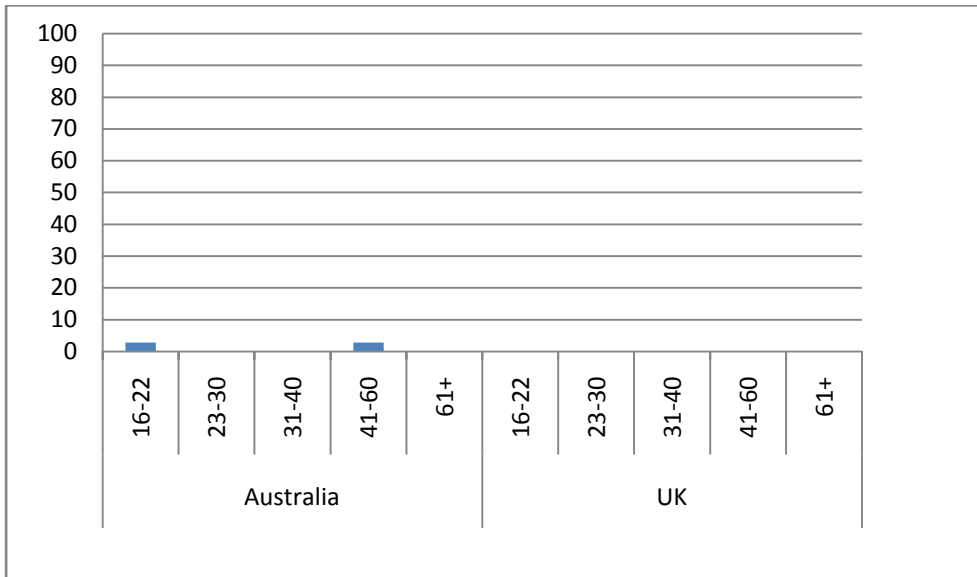
Figure 24.1: Familiarity with the phraseme *to be a box of birds* as a percentage of each age group's responses

24.2 Interpretation

This phraseme also proved very opaque, with the majority of participants choosing the alternative answer 'noisiness' as the best answer (see Figure 24.2).
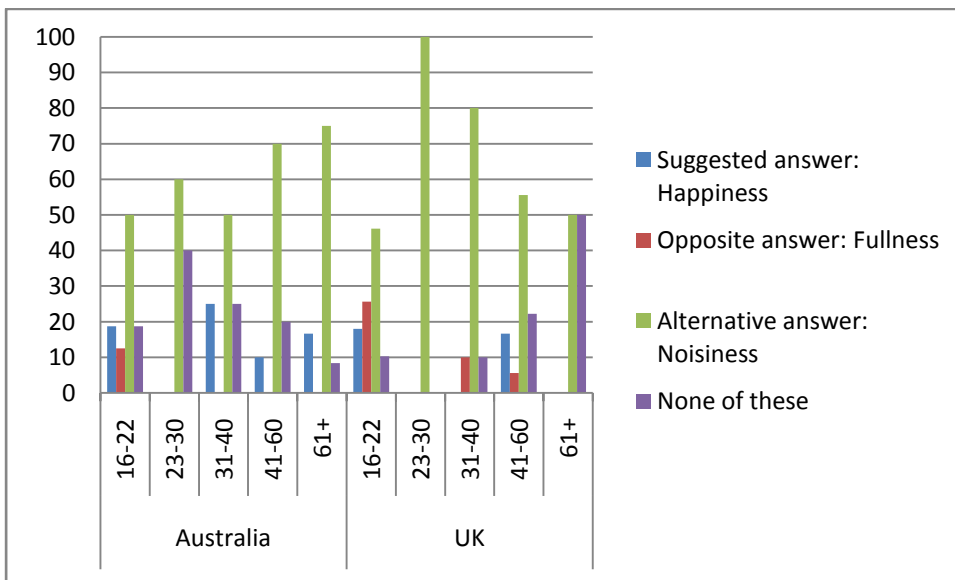
Figure 24.2: Interpretation of the phraseme *to be a box of birds* as a percentage of each age group's responses

24.3 Frequency of use

Although a few people in the youngest age group suggested that they would use this phraseme (see Table 24.2) this is unlikely, since only one had heard it before and they generally did not know what it meant. It was actually the least used phraseme in the whole questionnaire, with 99% of participants saying they would never use it.

Table 24.2: Frequency of use of the phraseme *to be a box of birds* as a percentage of each age group's responses

Location	Age group	Never	Almost never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
Australia	16-22	91	3	3	3	0
	23-30	100	0	0	0	0
	31-40	100	0	0	0	0
	41-60	97	0	3	0	0
	61+	100	0	0	0	0
UK	16-22	95	3	3	0	0
	23-30	100	0	0	0	0
	31-40	100	0	0	0	0
	41-60	100	0	0	0	0
	61+	100	0	0	0	0

24.4 Phrasemes most frequently elicited

To think outside the box, meaning that someone thinks creatively, had 43 tokens from all ages in both locations. *Box of tricks*, referring light-heartedly to the resources someone uses, had 17 tokens from all ages in both locations. *(To open) Pandora's box*, meaning that someone is suddenly faced by unexpected problems, had 16 tokens. *Out of the box* had 13 tokens, all from Australia, from those aged 31 or over. *LDOCE* defines *out of your box* as a British English phraseme meaning that someone is very drunk. *OALD*, meanwhile, has *to think out of the box* instead of *to think outside the box*. This alternative is also given by the *OED*. I am therefore not sure which if either of these meanings the Australian participants intended.

24.5 Dictionary coverage

To be a box of birds is listed only in *MEDAL*, under the word *box*. It is given there as Australian English. This low coverage by the MELDs is entirely reasonable, given the lack of use of the phraseme by participants in the survey.

Think outside the box appears in *CALD, LDOCE* and *MEDAL*, while *OALD* has *think out of the box*. *Box of tricks* appears only in *MEDAL* and *OALD*. O*pen Pandora's box* appears with or without the verb in *CALD, COBUILD, LDOCE* and *MEDAL*, while *out of your box* is only in *LDOCE*.

25. Survey 2, Phraseme 11: *To be up a gum tree*

Total Australian participants: 131
Total UK participants: 100
Suggested interpretation: To be in a difficult situation
Dictionary inclusion: *LDOCE, MEDAL* and *OALD*

Table 25.1: Participant numbers for the phraseme *to be up a gum tree*

Australia	16-22	37
	23-30	11
	31-40	11
	41-60	35
	61+	37
	Total	**131**
UK	16-22	40
	23-30	5
	31-40	13
	41-60	31
	61+	11
	Total	**100**

25.1 Familiarity

Although this phraseme contains what might be considered an Australian rather than a British referent (i.e. *gum tree*, referring to a eucalyptus tree, which is more commonly found in Australia), the phraseme is actually marked as British English in those MELDs where it is included. (*OED* does not mark it as any particular form of English, although the earliest references it gives are from the United States.) I certainly remember the phraseme from English children's literature,

such as *Jennings goes to school*, written in 1950 (Buckeridge 1950, p. 65). In the questionnaire results, the phraseme had equal familiarity in both Australia and the UK, with a fall in both locations from the 23-30 to the 31-40 age group. The average familiarity rate was 62%.
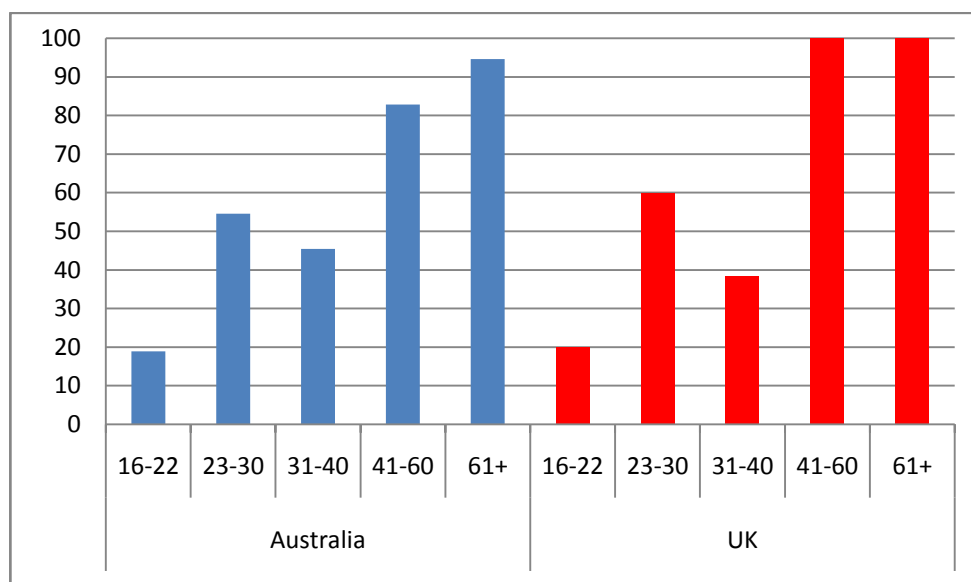
Figure 25.1: Familiarity with the phraseme *to be up a gum tree* as a percentage of each age group's responses

25.2 Interpretation

This phraseme was easy to interpret, even for those who hadn't heard it before, with a high 74% of the youngest group, many of whom had not heard it previously, agreeing with the suggested answer. The ease of interpretation may be connected with the similarity to the phraseme *up the creek*, which has the same meaning.

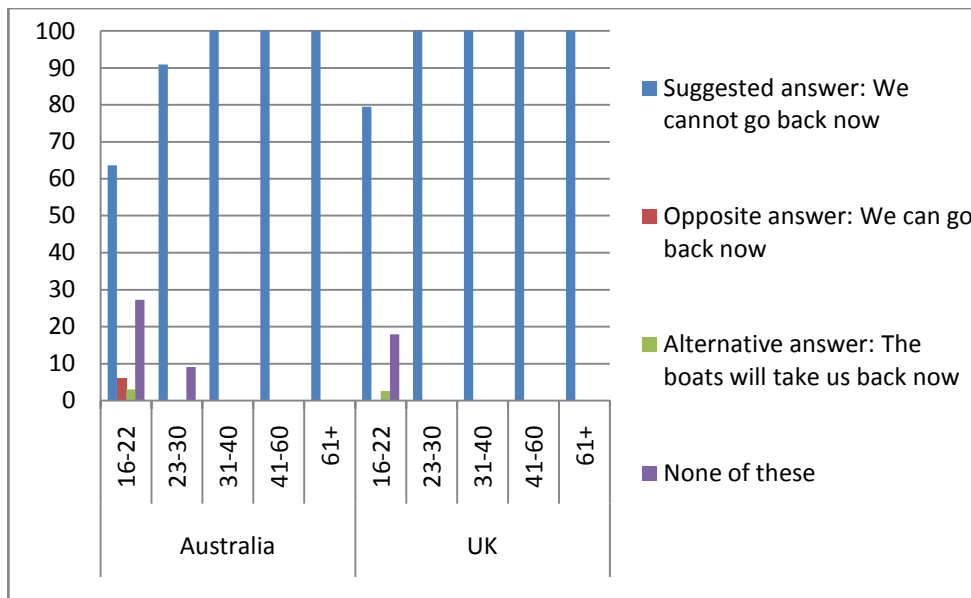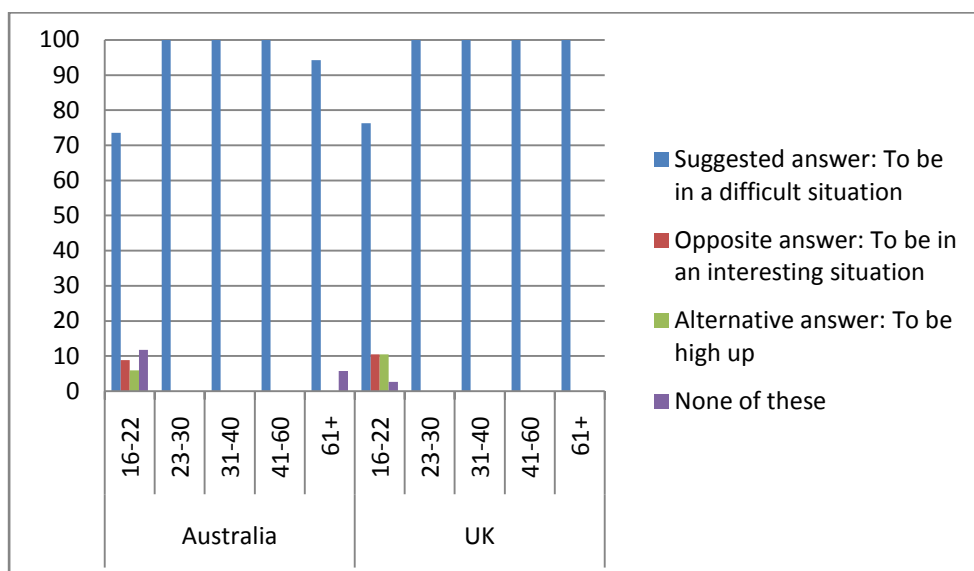Figure 25.2: Interpretation of the phraseme *to be up a gum tree* as a percentage of each age group's responses

25.3 Frequency of use

The phraseme is little used below the 41-60 group in either location (see Table 25.2), and 58% of participants said they would never use it. It is therefore not likely to be encountered by the target group.

Table 25.2: Frequency of use of the phraseme *to be up a gum tree* as a percentage of each age group's responses

Location	Age group	Never	Almost never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
Australia	16-22	83	11	6	0	0
	23-30	73	27	0	0	0
	31-40	64	27	9	0	0
	41-60	54	20	20	6	0
	61+	23	37	34	3	3
UK	16-22	88	8	3	3	0
	23-30	80	0	20	0	0
	31-40	80	7	13	0	0
	41-60	25	46	29	0	0
	61+	36	18	45	0	0

25.4 Phrasemes most frequently elicited

Up a creek without a paddle, meaning that someone is in trouble, was suggested by 44 participants from all but the youngest group, in both locations. The shorter version *up the creek* had 9 tokens, nearly all from Australians of all ages. *Up shit*

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creek without a paddle, which also means that someone is in trouble, had 17 tokens from Australia and five from the UK, from participants of all ages. The shorter *up shit creek* had 9 tokens, all but one from Australia. (Three Australian participants gave the uncomfortable variation *up shit creek in a barbed wire canoe*. The *without a paddle* extension also gave rise to two Australian tokens of the unlikely *up a gum tree without a paddle*.)

25.5 Dictionary coverage

To be up a gum tree appears in *LDOCE, MEDAL* and *OALD*. In all of these it is marked as British English. This coverage seems to be unnecessarily high, given the lack of usage in all but the oldest group.

Up the creek appears in all the Big 5, while the variation *without a paddle* appears in all except *CALD*. The less polite *up shit creek* is only in *LDOCE* and *MEDAL*, which both include the *without a paddle* variant.

26. Survey 2, Phraseme 12: *To grasp the nettle*

Total Australian participants: 133
Total UK participants: 98
Suggested interpretation: To tackle a difficult situation boldly
Dictionary inclusion: *CALD, LDOCE, MEDAL* and *OALD*

Table 26.1: Participant numbers for the phraseme *to grasp the nettle*

Australia	16-22	37
	23-30	11
	31-40	13
	41-60	35
	61+	37
	Total	**133**
UK	16-22	40
	23-30	5
	31-40	14
	41-60	28
	61+	11
	Total	**98**

26.1 Familiarity

This British phraseme was on average more familiar in the UK, where even 30% of the youngest group had heard it before, compared to only 3% of their Australian counterparts (see Figure 26.1). It is therefore interesting that the familiarity figures for the 31-40 group were greater in Australia (85%) than in the UK (64%). The number of participants in this age group was quite low, however (13 in Australia and 14 in the UK), which would account for the seemingly large discrepancy. The overall familiarity rate was 64%, making it only slightly more familiar than the preceding phraseme, *up a gum tree*.
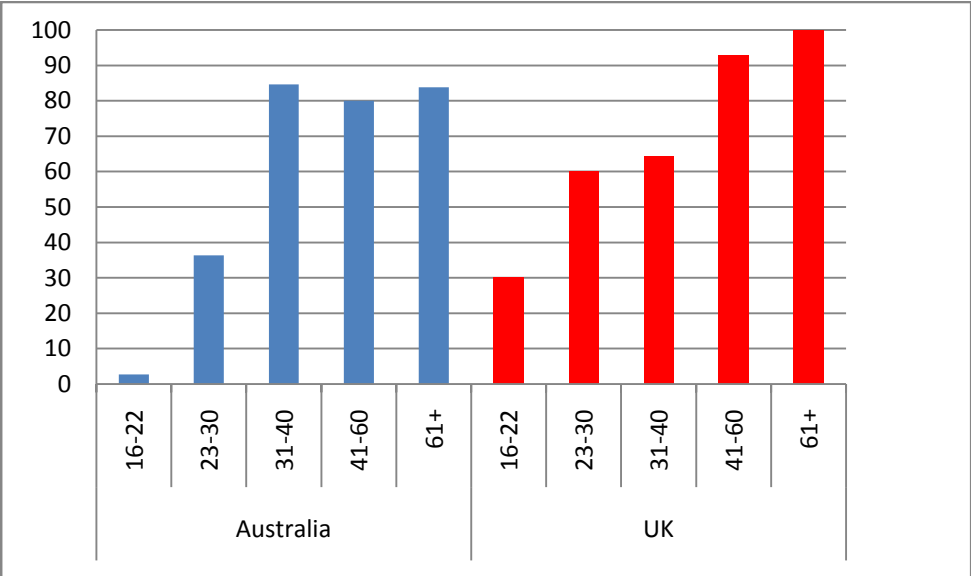
Figure 26.1 Familiarity with the phraseme *to grasp the nettle* as a percentage of each age group's responses

26.2 Interpretation

Even though many people had not heard this phraseme before, most had no trouble agreeing with the suggested answer (see Figure 26.2). This may have been due to the verb *grasp*, which has its own connotations of boldness.
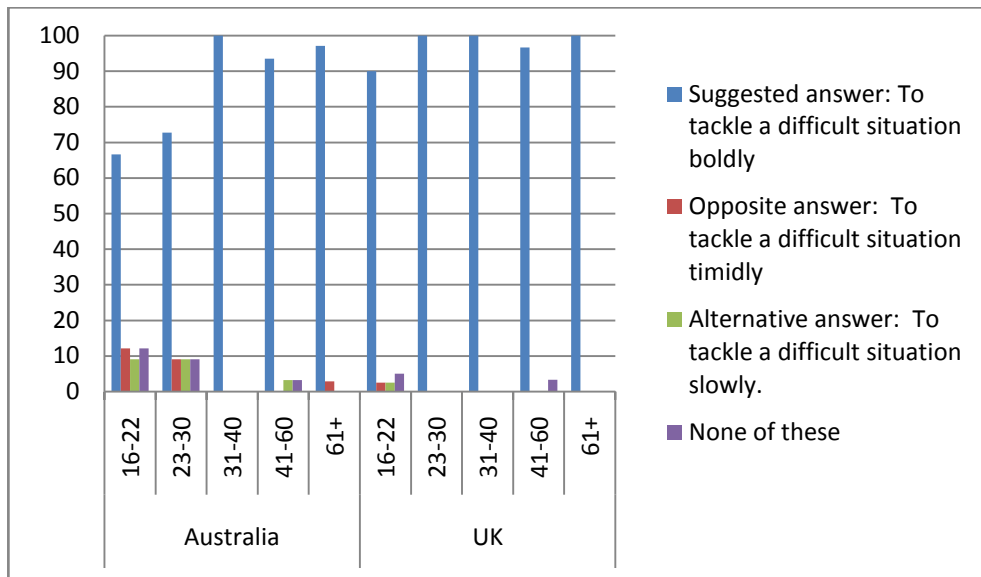
Figure 26.2 Interpretation of the phraseme *to grasp the nettle* as a percentage of each age group's responses

26.3 Frequency of use

This phraseme appears to be used most often by the UK 41-60 age group (see Table 25.2), although 61% of all participants said they would never use it at all.

Table 25.2: Frequency of use of the phraseme *to grasp the nettle* as a percentage of each age group's responses

Location	Age group	Never	Almost never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
Australia	16-22	92	5	3	0	0
	23-30	73	27	0	0	0
	31-40	64	9	18	9	0
	41-60	65	18	18	0	0
	61+	70	30	0	0	0
UK	16-22	75	15	8	3	0
	23-30	60	20	20	0	0
	31-40	50	29	21	0	0
	41-60	25	39	29	7	0
	61+	36	64	0	0	0

26.4 Phrasemes most frequently elicited

To take the bull by the horns, which also means to tackle a difficult situation boldly, had 28 tokens from all age groups in both locations. *To bite the bullet*, with the same meaning, had 12 tokens.

26.5 Dictionary coverage

To grasp the nettle appears *CALD, LDOCE, MEDAL* and *OALD*, in all of which it is marked as British English. The coverage is perhaps unnecessary for a phraseme that is not used very frequently.

To take the bull by the horns and *to bite the bullet* appear in all the Big 5.

27. Survey 2, Phraseme 13: *To get somewhere under one's own steam*

Total Australian participants: 131
Total UK participants: 100
Suggested interpretation: To get somewhere by yourself
Dictionary inclusion: *CALD, LDOCE, MEDAL* and *OALD*

Table 27.1: Participant numbers for the phraseme *to get somewhere under one's own steam*

Australia	16-22	37
	23-30	11
	31-40	11
	41-60	35
	61+	37
	Total	**131**
UK	16-22	39
	23-30	5
	31-40	14
	41-60	31
	61+	11
	Total	**100**

27.1 Familiarity

The lowest rate of familiarity here was again in the youngest group, with a rate of 35% in Australia and 44% in the UK (see Figure 27.1). Of the other participants, only three had not heard the phraseme before, leading to a very high overall familiarity rate of 85%.

Figure 27.1: Familiarity with the phraseme *to get somewhere under one's own steam* as a percentage of each age group's responses

27.2 Interpretation

Agreement with the suggested answer was also high, even among the youngest group, many of whom had not heard the phraseme before (see Figure 27.2). This suggests that this is a fairly transparent phraseme.

Figure 27.2: Interpretation of the phraseme *to get somewhere under one's own steam* as a percentage of each age group's responses

27.3 Frequency of use

This phraseme is used sometimes by 31% of participants, including some from all age groups in both locations (see Table 27.2).

Table 27.2: Frequency of use of the phraseme *to get somewhere under one's own steam* as a percentage of each age group's responses

Location	Age group	Never	Almost never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
Australia	16-22	81	3	14	3	0
	23-30	36	55	9	0	0
	31-40	27	27	45	0	0
	41-60	17	34	43	6	0
	61+	0	39	52	6	3
UK	16-22	75	13	8	3	3
	23-30	80	0	20	0	0
	31-40	36	29	21	14	0
	41-60	7	26	56	11	0
	61+	18	36	36	9	0

27.4 Phrasemes most frequently elicited

This phraseme elicited the same suggestions as Survey 1's *full steam ahead.* The phraseme *full steam ahead* itself occurred with 63 tokens, followed by *run out of steam* (36 tokens), *a head of steam* (30 tokens), *let off steam* (25 tokens) and *all steamed up* (22 tokens). The participants in Survey 2 were not necessarily the same as those in Survey 1, so their results are reported here independently. The other phraseme commonly elicited, but only from those aged 31 and over, was *use Shanks's pony,* meaning 'to go by foot'. This had 22 tokens.

27.5 Dictionary coverage

To get somewhere under one's own steam appears in all the Big 5 except for *COBUILD.* This is good coverage for this popular phraseme.

Full steam ahead, run out of steam, let off steam and *steamed up* appear in all the Big 5, and *under your own steam* is listed in all except *COBUILD. A head of*

steam is in *CALD, LDOCE* and *MEDAL*. *Shanks's pony* appears in *CALD,*

LDOCE and *OALD.*

28. Survey 2, Phraseme 14: *Give someone an inch and they'll take a yard/mile*

Total Australian participants: 132
Total UK participants: 102
Suggested interpretation: Some people take too much
Dictionary inclusion: *CALD, LDOCE, MEDAL* and *OALD*

Table 28.1: Participant numbers for the phraseme give someone an inch and they'll take a yard/mile

Australia	16-22	38
	23-30	11
	31-40	11
	41-60	35
	61+	37
	Total	**132**
UK	16-22	41
	23-30	5
	31-40	14
	41-60	31
	61+	11
	Total	**102**

28.1 Familiarity

This was the seventh most familiar phraseme in the questionnaire, with a 100%

familiarity rate for all age groups except the youngest. Even they evidenced 71%

and 83% familiarity in Australia and the UK respectively (see Figure 28.1).
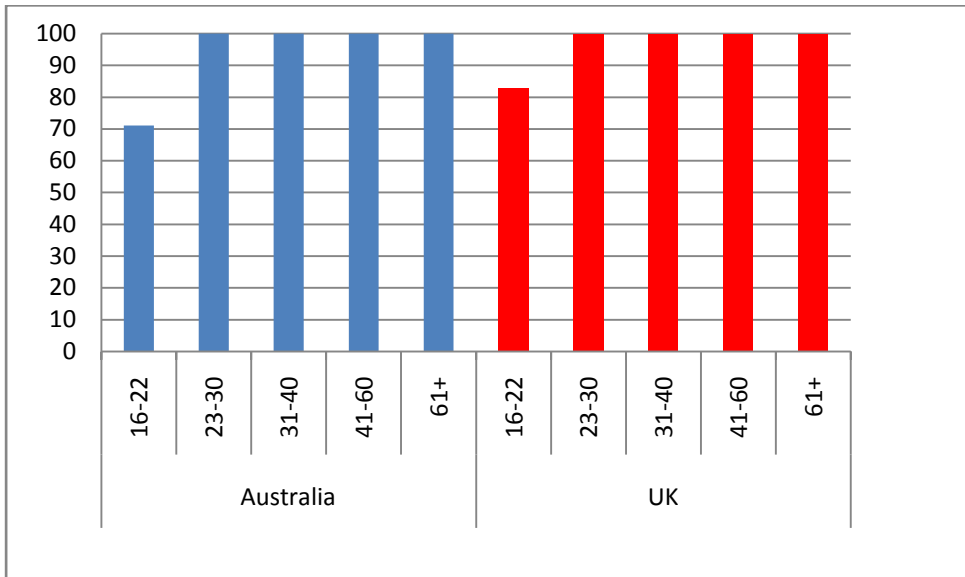
Figure 28.1: Familiarity with the phraseme *give someone an inch and they'll take a yard/mile* as a percentage of each age group's responses

28.2 Interpretation

Agreement on the meaning of this phraseme was also high (see Figure 28.2), with most people feeling that the suggested interpretation was the best one, and only a few preferring the option 'none of these'. The reference to older units of measurement obviously did not make the meaning opaque to younger participants.
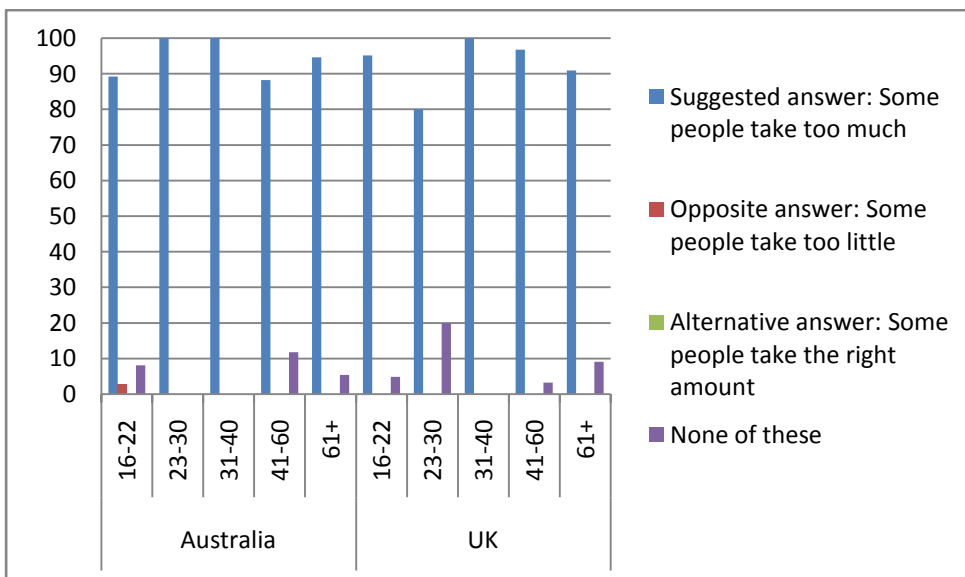
Figure 28.2: Interpretation of the phraseme *give someone an inch and they'll take a yard/mile* as a percentage of each age group's responses

28.3 Frequency of use

This phraseme had the sixth highest 'sometimes' rate in the questionnaire (average 43%), and only 16% of participants said they would never use it. Even 55% of the youngest group said they would use it at some time (see Table 28.2). The target group are therefore likely to encounter the phraseme, even among their peers.

Table 28.2: Frequency of use of the phraseme *give someone an inch and they'll take a yard/mile* as a percentage of each age group's responses

Location	Age group	Never	Almost never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
Australia	16-22	45	18	18	13	5
	23-30	18	27	45	9	0
	31-40	0	27	55	18	0
	41-60	6	34	51	6	3
	61+	8	42	44	3	3
UK	16-22	46	10	37	7	0
	23-30	0	40	40	20	0
	31-40	21	29	14	29	7
	41-60	0	25	61	14	0
	61+	18	18	64	0	0

28.4 Phrasemes most frequently elicited

Inch by inch, indicating that something moves very slowly, received 19 tokens, and *not move an inch*, meaning 'not move at all', received 7 tokens. These phrasemes appear as prompts in Surveys 3 and 6 respectively. One interesting metric variation suggested by an Australian in the 16-22 age group was *give an inch and take a metre*.

28.5 Dictionary coverage

Give someone an inch and they'll take a yard/mile appears in four of the Big 5 (*CALD, LDOCE, MEDAL* and *OALD*), but none of them gives the *metre* variation. Given its high familiarity and usage rates, this is a phraseme that should be included in any MELD.

Inch by inch is in all the Big 5, and *not move an inch* is in all except *COBUILD*.

This coverage is good, since these phrasemes appear to be in frequent use.

29. Survey 3, Phraseme 1: *In the land of Nod*

Total Australian participants: 141
Total UK participants: 74
Suggested interpretation: Someone is asleep
Dictionary inclusion: *CALD, LDOCE, MEDAL* and *OALD*

Table 29.1: Participant numbers for the phraseme *in the land of Nod*

Australia	16-22	38
	23-30	10
	31-40	12
	41-60	44
	61+	37
	Total	**141**
UK	16-22	28
	23-30	6
	31-40	10
	41-60	19
	61+	11
	Total	**74**

29.1 Familiarity

This phraseme proved to be very familiar to the participants, with ratings of 99% in the UK and 93% in Australia. It was the sixth most familiar phraseme in the questionnaire.
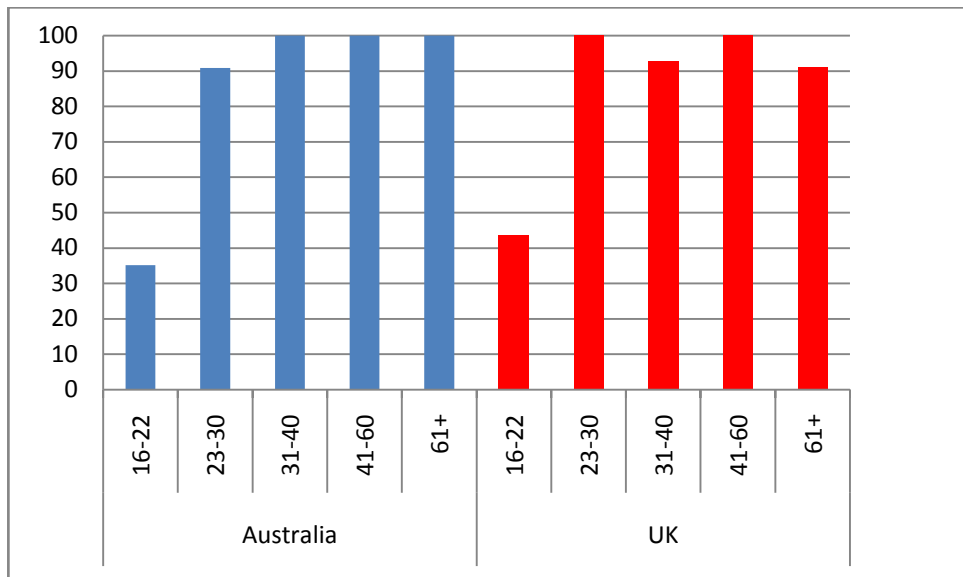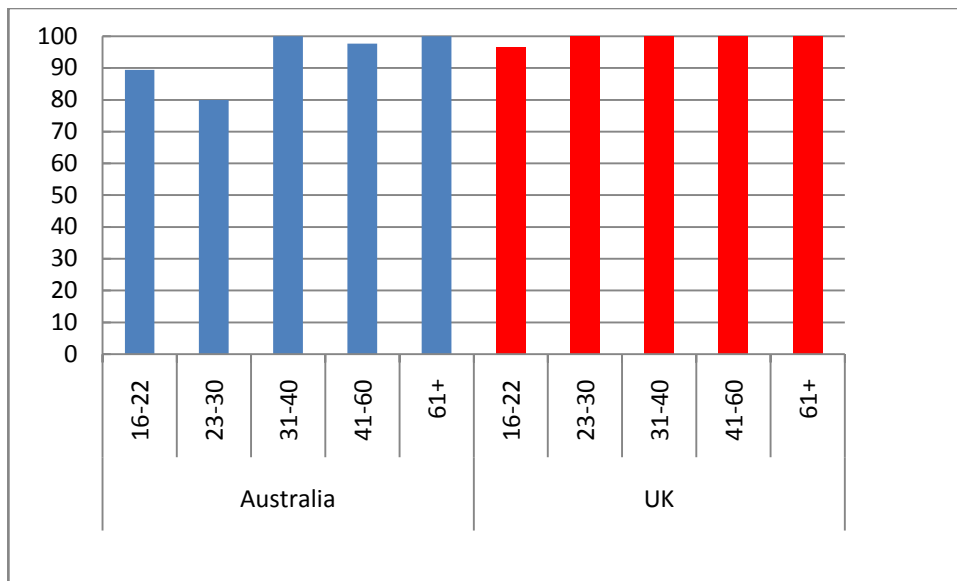
Figure 29.1: Familiarity with the phraseme *in the land of Nod* as a percentage of each age group's responses

29.2 Interpretation

Agreement with the suggested answer was almost 100%, probably owing to the high rate of familiarity and the picture, which denoted a man who appeared to be dozing. The related verb *to nod off* may also have had an influence. This phraseme may still be fairly opaque to the target group, however, who would not necessarily know the related phrasal verb.
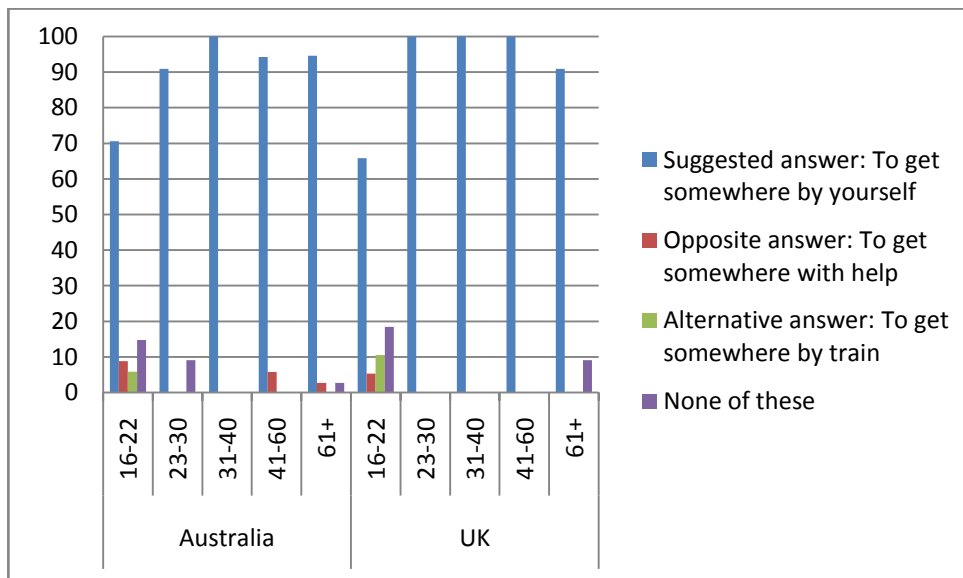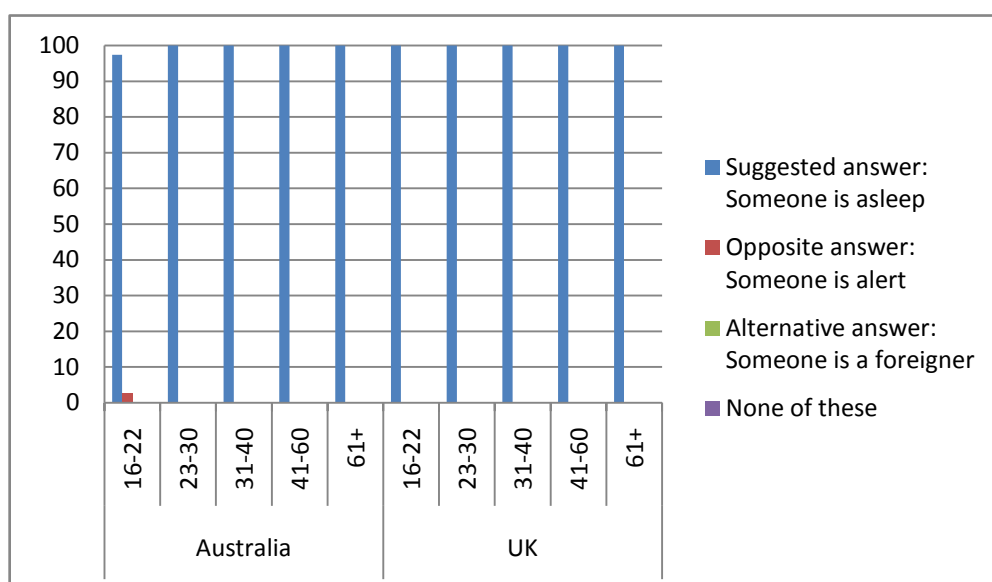
Figure 29.2: Interpretation of the phraseme *in the land of Nod* as a percentage of each age group's responses

29.3 Frequency of use

The highest usage of this phraseme is in the UK 31-40 group, of whom 20%, or 4 people, said they would use it 'often' (see Table 29.2). The 16-22 group also registered a fairly high frequency of use, especially in the UK, where 37% said they would use it 'sometimes' and 11% said they would use it 'often'. The average 'sometimes' usage for all age groups is 29%.

Table 29.2: Frequency of use of the phraseme *in the land of Nod* as a percentage of each age group's responses

Location	Age group	Never	Almost never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
Australia	16-22	53	26	18	3	0
	23-30	40	50	10	0	0
	31-40	33	58	8	0	0
	41-60	40	35	26	0	0
	61+	35	30	30	5	0
UK	16-22	15	33	37	11	4
	23-30	17	17	50	17	0
	31-40	20	30	20	20	10
	41-60	21	21	58	0	0
	61+	36	27	36	0	0

29.4 Phrasemes most frequently elicited

The most popular suggestions here were *to land on your feet*, meaning 'to come out of a difficult situation well', with 14 Australian and 1 UK token, all from those aged 31 and above. *Land of milk and honey*, which also appeared in Survey 5, and refers to a land of plenty, had 11 Australian and 1 UK token, from all but the youngest group. *No man's land*, referring to a place or situation that has no owners or clear-cut rules, had 9 Australian and 2 UK tokens, from all age groups. *To catch/have forty winks*, meaning 'to have a short sleep', had 6 Australian and 4 UK tokens, from all age groups

29. 5 Dictionary coverage

In the land of Nod appears in *CALD, LDOCE, MEDAL* and *OALD*. Given its popularity, it should be included in any MELD used in Australia.

Land on your feet appears in all the Big 5. *Land of milk and honey* appears in all except *COBUILD*. *No-man's-land* is listed as a noun in *CALD, LDOCE* and *MEDAL*, and *no-man's land* with only one hyphen appears in *COBUILD*. The fully hyphenated version appears in the paper version of *OALD7* but could not be located in the online version at the time of searching in March 2010. *Forty winks* appears as a noun phrase in all but *COBUILD*.

30. Survey 3, Phraseme 2: *To kill the fatted calf*
Total Australian participants: 140
Total UK participants: 71
Suggested interpretation: Someone wants to celebrate
Dictionary inclusion: *CALD* and *LDOCE*

Table 30.1: Participant numbers for the phraseme *to kill the fatted calf*

Australia	16-22	38
	23-30	10
	31-40	11
	41-60	44
	61+	37
	Total	**140**
UK	16-22	25
	23-30	6
	31-40	10
	41-60	19
	61+	11
	Total	**71**

30.1 Familiarity

This phraseme rose in familiarity with age (see Figure 30.1), with the youngest group being the least familiar, especially in the UK (12%). The average familiarity was 70%.

Figure 30.1: Familiarity with the phraseme *to kill the fatted calf* as a percentage of each age group's responses

30.2 Interpretation

Agreement with the suggested answer was higher in Australia than the UK (see Figure 30.2). The youngest UK group in particular found the meaning hard to guess, and ranked the suggested answer equal lowest, with the alternative answer,

and below the opposite answer and the choice 'none of these'. This indicates that

the phraseme is very opaque and would pose problems for the target group.

Figure 30.2: Interpretation of the phraseme *to kill the fatted calf* as a percentage of each age group's responses

30.3 Frequency of use

Although this phraseme is virtually unused by participants under the age of 30, usage rises with age (see Table 30.2), indicating that the target group might possibly hear it from older speakers though not from their peers.

Table 30.2: Frequency of use of the phraseme *to kill the fatted calf* as a percentage of each age group's responses

Location	Age group	Never	Almost never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
Australia	16-22	95	5	0	0	0
	23-30	100	0	0	0	0
	31-40	75	8	17	0	0
	41-60	43	39	18	0	0
	61+	16	49	27	8	0
UK	16-22	100	0	0	0	0
	23-30	100	0	0	0	0
	31-40	89	11	0	0	0
	41-60	26	53	21	0	0
	61+	27	27	45	0	0

30.4 Phrasemes most frequently elicited

There were no frequent elicitations for this phraseme. *To kill the goose that lays the golden egg* had 6 Australian and 1 UK token, all from the older age groups.

30.5 Dictionary coverage

To kill the fatted calf appears only in *CALD* and *LDOCE*. Although the phraseme is quite opaque it is not used frequently by younger age groups in Australia, so this lack of coverage by the MELDs seems reasonable. *To kill the goose that lays the golden egg* appears in all the Big 5 except *COBUILD*.

31. Survey 3, Phraseme 3: *Like a lamb to the slaughter*

Total Australian participants: 140
Total UK participants: 71
Suggested interpretation: Innocence
Dictionary inclusion: *CALD, LDOCE, MEDAL* and *OALD*

Table 31.1: Participant numbers for the phraseme *like a lamb to the slaughter*

Australia	16-22	37
	23-30	11
	31-40	12
	41-60	43
	61+	37
	Total	**140**
UK	16-22	26
	23-30	5
	31-40	10
	41-60	19
	61+	11
	Total	**71**

31.1 Familiarity

This phraseme was very familiar to most of the participants, though slightly better known in the UK than Australia (see Figure 31.1). The average familiarity rate was 94%, putting it at tenth place in the questionnaire.
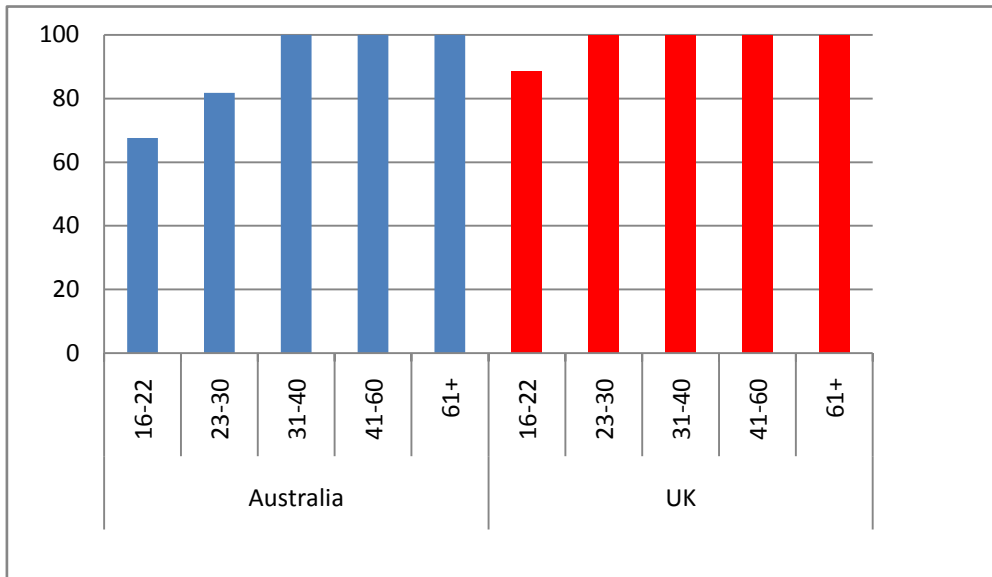
Figure 31.1: Familiarity with the phraseme *like a lamb to the slaughter* as a percentage of each age group's responses

31.2 Interpretation

Only the UK 23-30 group agreed 100% with my suggested meaning of 'innocence'. Some people took a different perspective and chose the alternative answer of 'wickedness', while others felt that none of the answers was entirely appropriate (see Figure 31.2).
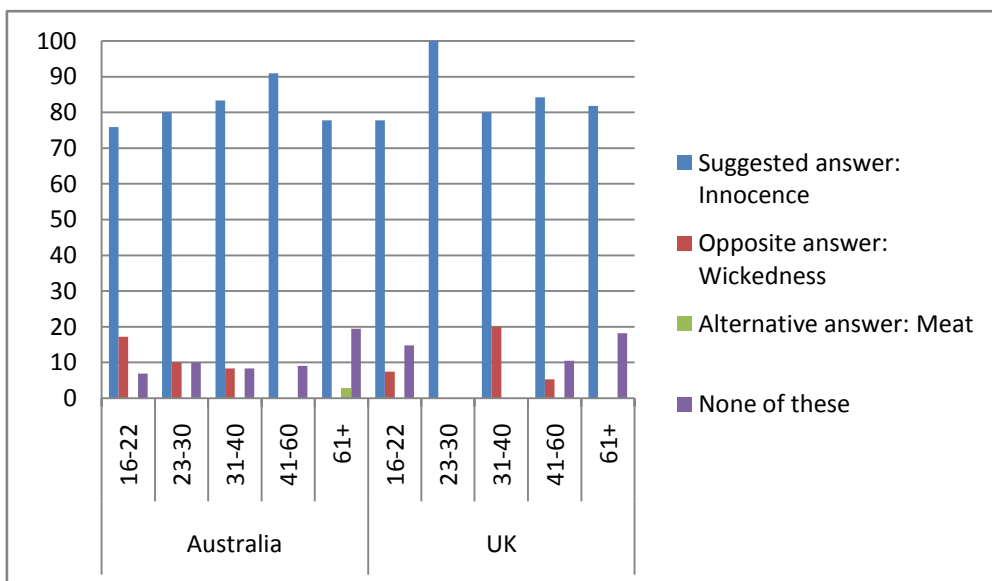
Figure 31.2: Interpretation of the phraseme *like a lamb to the slaughter* as a percentage of each age group's responses

31.3 Frequency of use

Many people said they would use this phraseme at some point, with an average of 37%, including some of the youngest group, saying they would use it 'sometimes' (see Table 31.2). It is thus quite likely to be encountered by the target group.

Table 31.2: Frequency of use of the phraseme *like a lamb to the slaughter* as a percentage of each age group's responses

Location	Age group	Never	Almost never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
Australia	16-22	74	11	14	0	0
	23-30	20	30	50	0	0
	31-40	25	33	42	0	0
	41-60	23	36	39	2	0
	61+	8	44	44	3	0
UK	16-22	42	35	19	4	0
	23-30	40	40	20	0	0
	31-40	30	40	30	0	0
	41-60	5	32	58	5	0
	61+	27	27	45	0	0

31.4 Phrasemes most frequently elicited

Mutton dressed as lamb, referring to an older woman who dresses in inappropriately youthful clothes, was the most common suggestion, with 12 tokens from Australia and 4 from the UK, representing all age groups. One UK 16-22 year old gave the alternative *lamb dressed as mutton*.

The other common suggestions were *sacrificial lamb*, referring to something which is offered as a sacrifice to prevent others being harmed, with 9 tokens, and *may as well be hung for a sheep as for a lamb*, meaning that if one is going to be punished then a bigger offence might as well be committed, with 8 tokens from the two oldest groups in Australia.

31.5 Dictionary coverage

Like a lamb to the slaughter appears in *CALD, LDOCE, MEDAL* and *OALD*. As a phraseme in common use it would be important to include it in a MELD used in Australia.

Mutton dressed as lamb is in all the Big 5. *Sacrificial lamb* appears as a phraseme in *CALD, COBUILD* and *MEDAL,* and as an example but without an explanation under *sacrificial* in *LDOCE* and *OALD. May as well be hung for a sheep as for a lamb* appears only in *CALD.*

32. Survey 3, Phraseme 4: *To live off the fat of the land*

Total Australian participants: 134
Total UK participants: 71
Suggested interpretation: There is plenty to eat
Dictionary inclusion: *CALD, LDOCE, MEDAL* and *OALD*

Table 32.1: Participant numbers for the phraseme *to live off the fat of the land*

Australia	16-22	35
	23-30	9
	31-40	12
	41-60	42
	61+	36
	Total	**134**
UK	16-22	26
	23-30	5
	31-40	10
	41-60	19
	61+	11
	Total	**71**

32.1 Familiarity

This phraseme, like many others, was unfamiliar to the youngest group but very familiar to the oldest three groups (see Figure 32.1). The 23-30 year olds in Australia appeared to be more familiar with it than those in this age group in the UK, but the numbers of participants were small and it is therefore hard to make generalisations. The average familiarity rate was 82%.
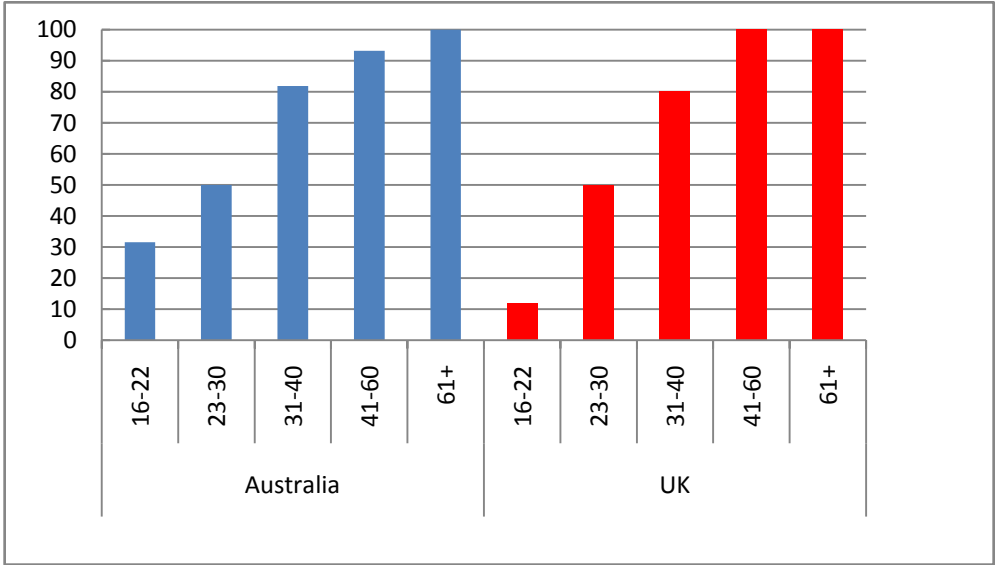
Figure 32.1: Familiarity with the phraseme *to live off the fat of the land* as a percentage of each age group's responses

32.2 Interpretation

Agreement with the suggested answer varied (see Figure 32.2), and even those who had heard the phraseme before indicated that the opposite meaning 'there is not much to eat' was more appropriate. The UK youngest group chose from all four answers, the alternative 'there is nothing nice to eat' being perhaps culturally tied to Western cuisine, where meat fat is often seen as unpleasant.
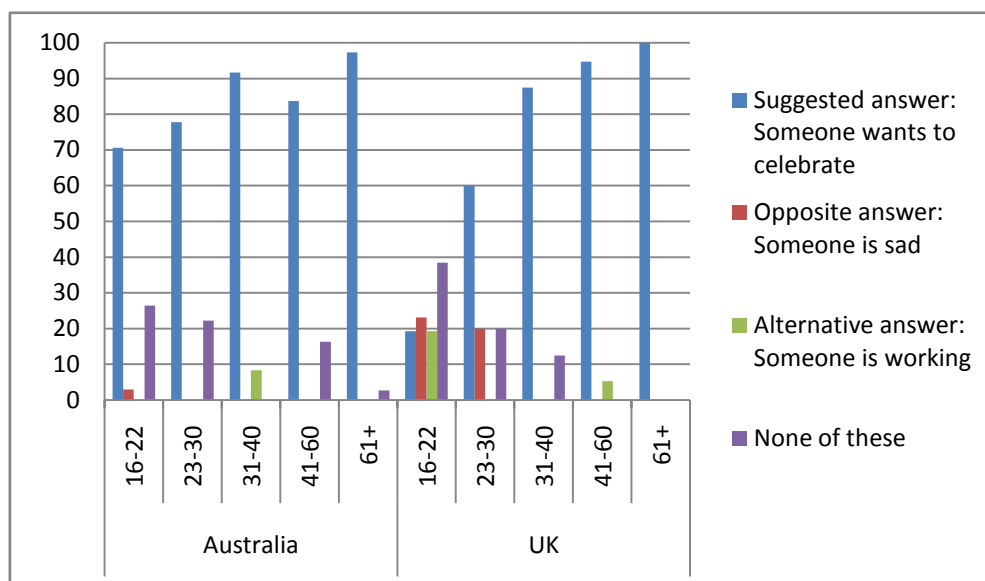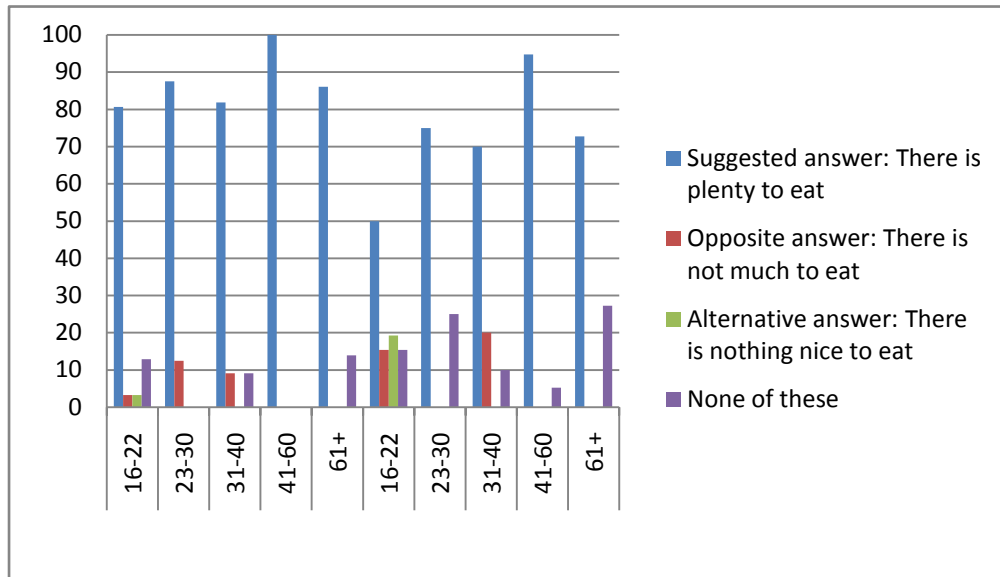
Figure 32.2: Interpretation of the phraseme *to live off the fat of the land* as a percentage of each age group's responses

32.3 Frequency of use

This phraseme appears to be used more frequently in Australia than the UK, especially among those aged 41 and over (see Table 32.2). Overall, only 12% of participants said they would use it 'sometimes', meaning that the phraseme might possibly be heard by the target group, but not from their peers.

Table 32.2: Frequency of use of the phraseme *to live off the fat of the land* as a percentage of each age group's responses

Location	Age group	Never	Almost never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
Australia	16-22	94	3	3	0	0
	23-30	56	33	11	0	0
	31-40	58	42	0	0	0
	41-60	43	33	24	0	0
	61+	11	39	44	6	0
UK	16-22	81	19	0	0	0
	23-30	80	20	0	0	0
	31-40	70	30	0	0	0
	41-60	16	53	26	5	0
	61+	36	45	9	9	0

32.4 Phrasemes most frequently elicited

The most popular phraseme elicited was *to live high off/on/in the hog*, meaning 'to live a luxurious life', with 10 tokens from the two oldest groups in Australia and 2 from those groups in the UK. Next was *to chew the fat,* meaning 'to chat at length', which had 6 Australian and 6 UK tokens, all from a variety of age groups. *To kill the fatted calf*, which had appeared earlier in the same survey, had 8 Australian and 3 UK tokens, while *to live the life of Riley*, meaning 'live a life of ease', had 6 Australian and 3 UK tokens from a variety of ages.

32.5 Dictionary coverage

To live off the fat of the land appears in *CALD, LDOCE, MEDAL* and *OALD*. This coverage is good for a familiar phraseme.

To live high off/on the hog is marked as US usage in *CALD*, but does not appear in the rest of the Big 5. *To chew the fat* is listed in all the Big 5 except *COBUILD*. *To kill the fatted calf* appears only in *CALD* and *LDOCE*, while *to live the life of Riley* appears in all except *OALD*.

33. Survey 3, Phraseme 5: *Man cannot live by bread alone*

Total Australian participants: 133
Total UK participants: 71
Suggested interpretation: We need more than one thing to survive
Dictionary inclusion: *CALD* and *MEDAL*

Table 33.1: Participant numbers for the phraseme *man cannot live by bread alone*

Australia	16-22	34
	23-30	9
	31-40	11
	41-60	42
	61+	37
	Total	**133**
UK	16-22	26
	23-30	5
	31-40	10
	41-60	19
	61+	11
	Total	**71**

33.1 Familiarity

While roughly half of the youngest group had heard this phraseme before, it was completely familiar to the three oldest groups in Australia but not to those in the UK (see Figure 33.1), where three people said they had not encountered it previously. An average of 86% of all participants said they had heard it before.
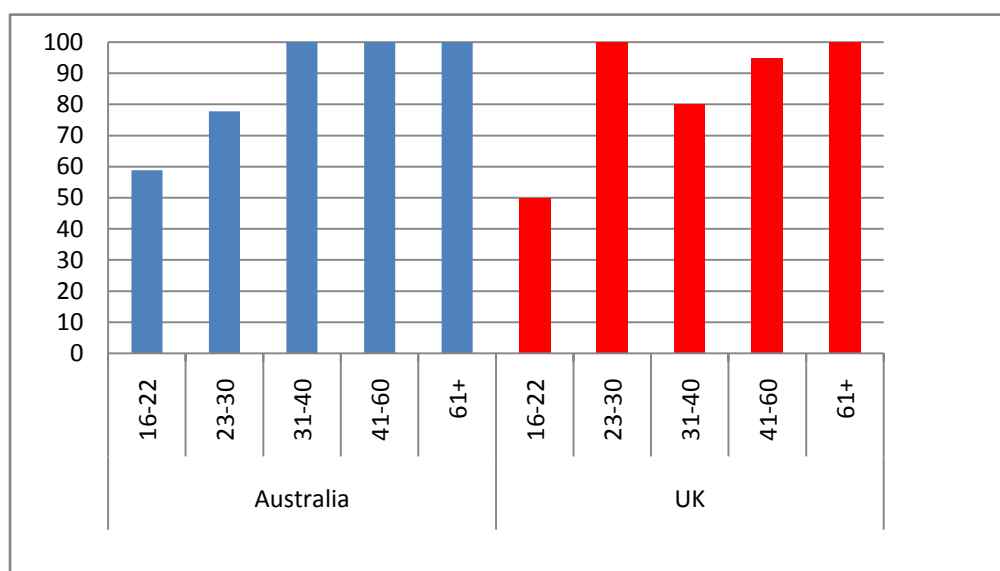
Figure 33.1: Familiarity with the phraseme *man cannot live by bread alone* as a percentage of each age group's responses

33.2 Interpretation

Agreement with the suggested answer, which matched the definitions in *CALD* and *MEDAL*, was high (see Figure 33.2), with only a few people feeling that

'none of these' was a better suggestion and no one choosing the alternative answers. This phraseme is therefore quite transparent and would probably not cause a problem to the target group.

Figure 33.2: Interpretation of the phraseme *man cannot live by bread alone* as a percentage of each age group's responses

33.3 Frequency of use

This phraseme appears to be used by all age groups, but more frequently in Australia than in the UK (see Table 33.2). Forty-seven per cent of participants said they would never use it.

Table 33.2: Frequency of use of the phraseme *man cannot live by bread alone* as a percentage of each age group's responses

Location	Age group	Never	Almost never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
Australia	16-22	65	24	12	0	0
	23-30	44	44	11	0	0
	31-40	33	50	17	0	0
	41-60	23	45	33	0	0
	61+	22	35	41	3	0
UK	16-22	81	15	4	0	0
	23-30	80	20	0	0	0
	31-40	80	20	0	0	0
	41-60	28	39	33	0	0
	61+	18	64	18	0	0

33.4 Phrasemes most frequently elicited

No other phrasemes were commonly elicited here.

33.5 Dictionary coverage

Man cannot live by bread alone appears only in *CALD* and *MEDAL*. Since it is used 'sometimes' by many participants, including those in the Australian 16-22 age group, it is a phraseme which is worth including in a MELD for use in Australia.

34. Survey 3, Phraseme 6: *Not to know someone from Adam*

Total Australian participants: 125
Total UK participants: 66
Suggested interpretation: You do not know what someone looks like
Dictionary inclusion: *CALD, LDOCE, MEDAL* and *OALD*

Table 34.1: Participant numbers for the phraseme *not to know someone from Adam*

Australia	16-22	35
	23-30	9
	31-40	12
	41-60	32
	61+	37
	Total	**125**
UK	16-22	23
	23-30	4
	31-40	10
	41-60	19
	61+	10
	Total	**66**

34.1 Familiarity

This phraseme seemed to be slightly more familiar in the UK than Australia, especially among the youngest age group (see Figure 34.1). An average of 80% of participants said they had heard it before.
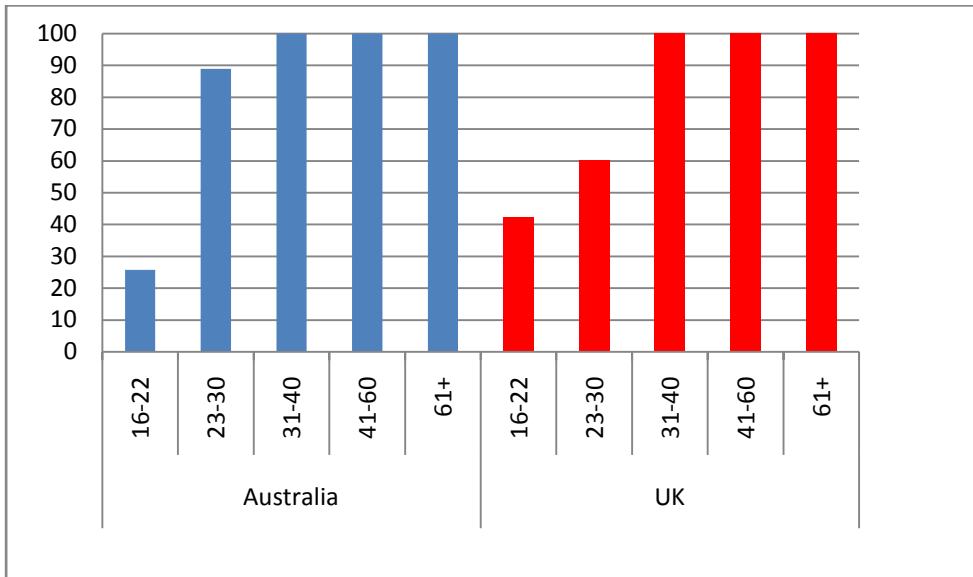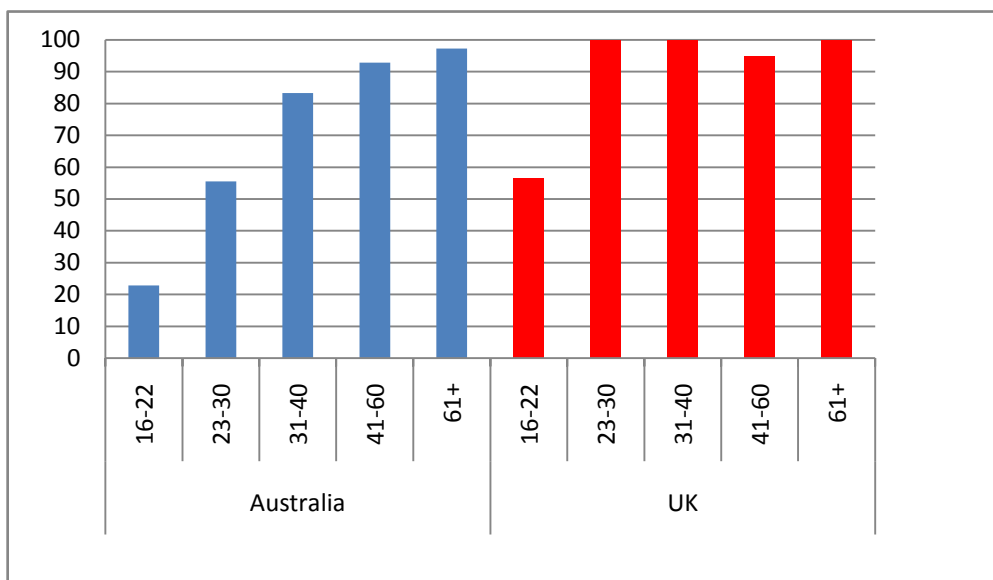
Figure 34.1: Familiarity with the phraseme *not to know someone from Adam* as a percentage of each age group's responses

34.2 Interpretation

Agreement with the suggested answer was high, except among the youngest Australian group (see Figure 34.2), many of whom had not heard the phraseme before. This indicates that the phraseme may be opaque to the target group. The Biblical reference to Adam may be lost on those unfamiliar with the phraseme, making it harder to guess.
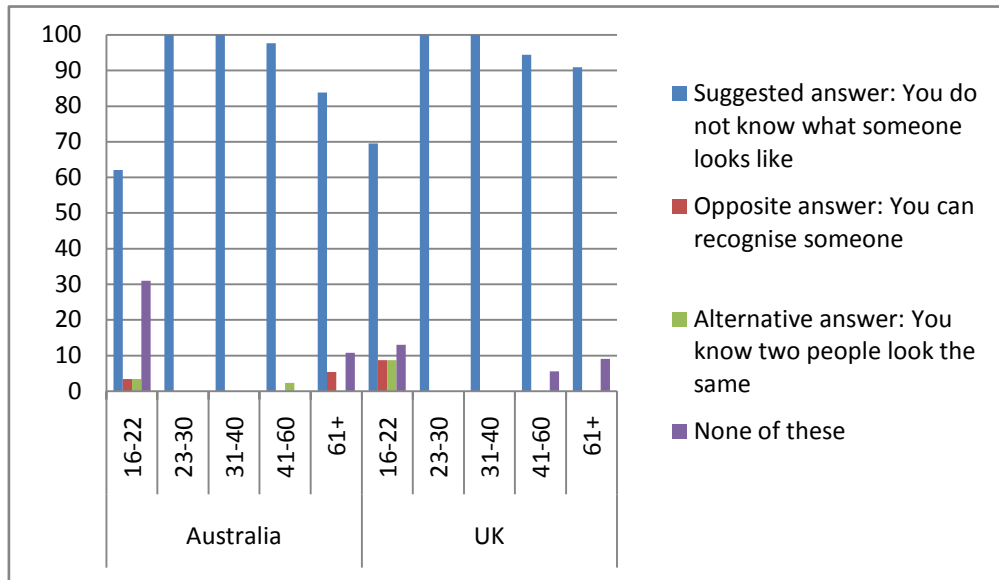
Figure 34.2: Interpretation of the phraseme *not to know someone from Adam* as a percentage of each age group's responses

34.3 Frequency of use

A quarter of participants (26%) said they would use this phraseme 'sometimes' (see Table 34.2), indicating that the target group are likely to encounter it, though probably not among their peers.

Table 34.2: Frequency of use of the phraseme *not to know someone from Adam* as a percentage of each age group's responses

Location	Age group	Never	Almost never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
Australia	16-22	91	3	6	0	0
	23-30	67	11	22	0	0
	31-40	58	17	25	0	0
	41-60	40	35	20	3	3
	61+	22	32	38	5	3
UK	16-22	77	9	14	0	0
	23-30	33	33	0	33	0
	31-40	10	60	30	0	0
	41-60	11	33	44	11	0
	61+	18	18	64	0	0

34.4 Phrasemes most frequently elicited

Since/before/when Adam was a lad/boy, indicating a long period of time, had 17 tokens from the Australian 41-60 group, 5 Australian tokens from other groups and 2 UK tokens.

Not to know someone from a bar of soap, again meaning that someone is completely unknown, had 17 Australian tokens, all from the three oldest groups.

As naked as Adam (in the garden), meaning that someone is completely naked, elicited 9 Australian tokens from the two oldest groups and 3 UK tokens from a variety of ages.

34.5 Dictionary coverage

Not to know someone from Adam appears in *CALD, LDOCE, MEDAL* and *OALD*. This coverage is important, given that the phraseme is relatively unfamiliar to the youngest group, and not necessarily easy for them to guess, but used quite frequently by older groups.

Since/before/when Adam was a lad/boy does not appear in any of the Big 5, although its suggestion by 24 people indicates that it is a popular phraseme. *Not to know someone from a bar of soap* is also not listed in the Big 5, perhaps because it appears to be more of an Australian phraseme, judging by the survey results. *As naked as Adam* is also not listed.

35. Survey 3, Phraseme 7: *To cry wolf*

Total Australian participants: 136
Total UK participants: 66
Suggested interpretation: Someone is being deceptive
Dictionary inclusion: *CALD, COBUILD, LDOCE, MEDAL* and *OALD*

Table 35.1: Participant numbers for the phraseme *to cry wolf*

Australia	16-22	37
	23-30	9
	31-40	12
	41-60	42
	61+	36
	Total	**136**
UK	16-22	24
	23-30	4
	31-40	9
	41-60	18
	61+	11
	Total	**66**

35.1 Familiarity

This was the second most familiar phraseme in the questionnaire, with all but 11% of the youngest Australians expressing complete familiarity (see Figure 35.1). The average familiarity rate was 99%.
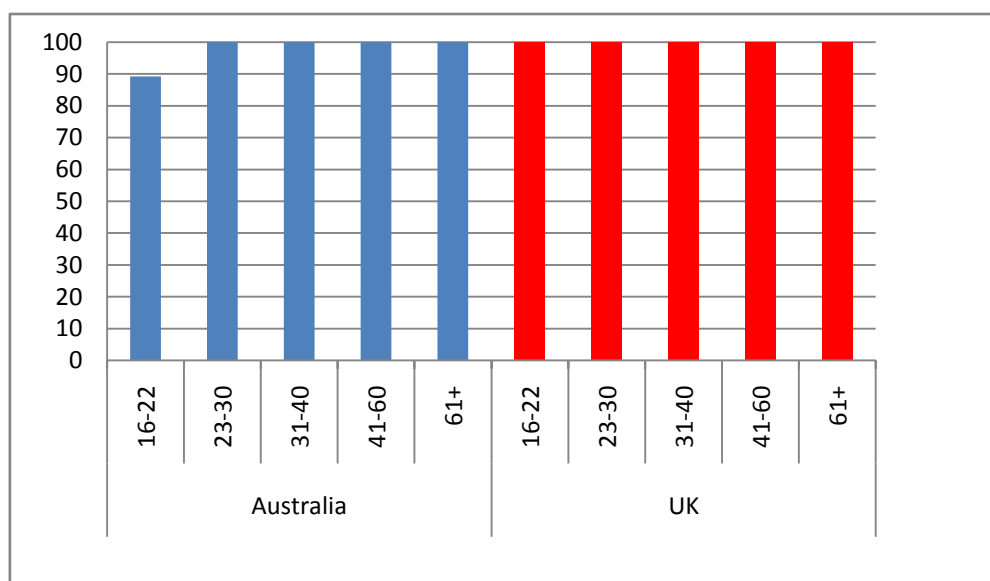
Figure 35.1: Familiarity with the phraseme to cry wolf as a percentage of each age group's responses

35.2 Interpretation

Despite high familiarity, many people did not agree with the suggested answer 'someone is being deceptive' and felt that none of the suggestions was satisfactory

(see Figure 35.2). No one, however, was at pains to give a different answer, as they had occasionally been with some of the other phrasemes.
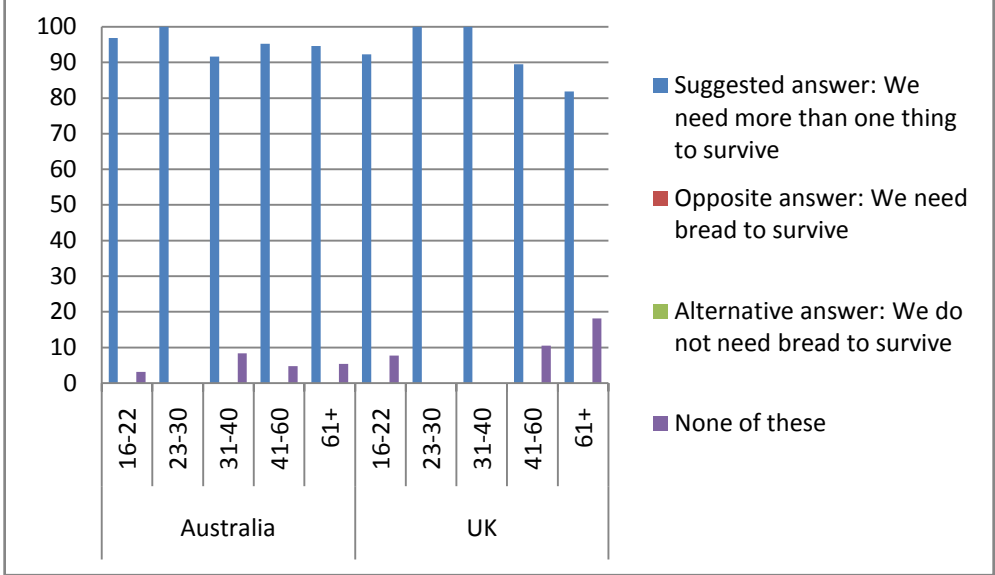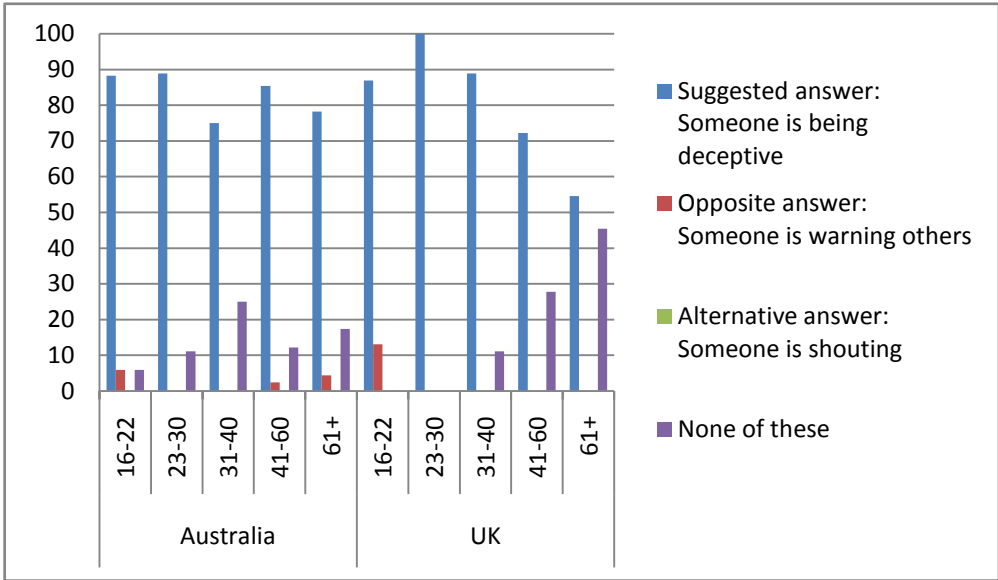

Figure 35.2: Interpretation of the phraseme *to cry wolf* as a percentage of each age group's responses

35.3 Frequency of use

This phraseme evidenced a high frequency of use, with 43% of people saying they would use it 'sometimes', including many from the 16-22 group (see Table 35.2). This, together with the high non-agreement with the suggested answer, suggests that the phraseme will be encountered by the target group but is likely to be opaque.

Table 35.2: Frequency of use of the phraseme *to cry wolf* as a percentage of each age group's responses

Location	Age group	Never	Almost never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
Australia	16-22	21	32	35	9	3
	23-30	11	33	56	0	0
	31-40	9	36	36	18	0
	41-60	10	29	54	7	0
	61+	6	39	50	6	0
UK	16-22	36	27	32	5	0
	23-30	0	50	50	0	0
	31-40	13	75	13	0	0
	41-60	6	33	50	11	0
	61+	27	18	55	0	0

35.4 Phrasemes most frequently elicited

The main phrasemes elicited here were the same as those elicited by *a wolf in sheep's clothing* (see point 1.1). *A wolf in sheep's clothing* itself had 69 Australian and 36 UK tokens, from all age groups. *Keep the wolf from the door* had 17 Australian and 11 UK tokens, from all age groups but mainly from those aged 41 and over. *A sheep in wolf's clothing* had 7 Australian and 2 UK tokens.

35.5 Dictionary coverage

Cry wolf is listed in all the Big 5. This coverage is necessary for a phraseme which might be encountered by the target group.

Wolf in sheep's clothing appears in all the Big 5 except *COBUILD*, but *a sheep in wolf's clothing* is not listed in any of the Big 5. *Keep the wolf from the door* appears in *CALD, LDOCE, MEDAL* and *OALD*.

36. Survey 3, Phraseme 8: *The cupboard is/was bare*

Total Australian participants: 131
Total UK participants: 62
Suggested interpretation: There is no food
Dictionary inclusion: *CALD, MEDAL* and *OALD*

Table 36.1: Participant numbers for the phraseme *the cupboard is/was bare*

Australia	16-22	33
	23-30	9
	31-40	12
	41-60	41
	61+	36
	Total	131
UK	16-22	23
	23-30	3
	31-40	9
	41-60	18
	61+	9
	Total	62

36.1 Familiarity

This phraseme was very familiar, with an average rate of 90%. The youngest group in the UK were slightly more familiar with it than the youngest group in Australia (see Figure 36.1).
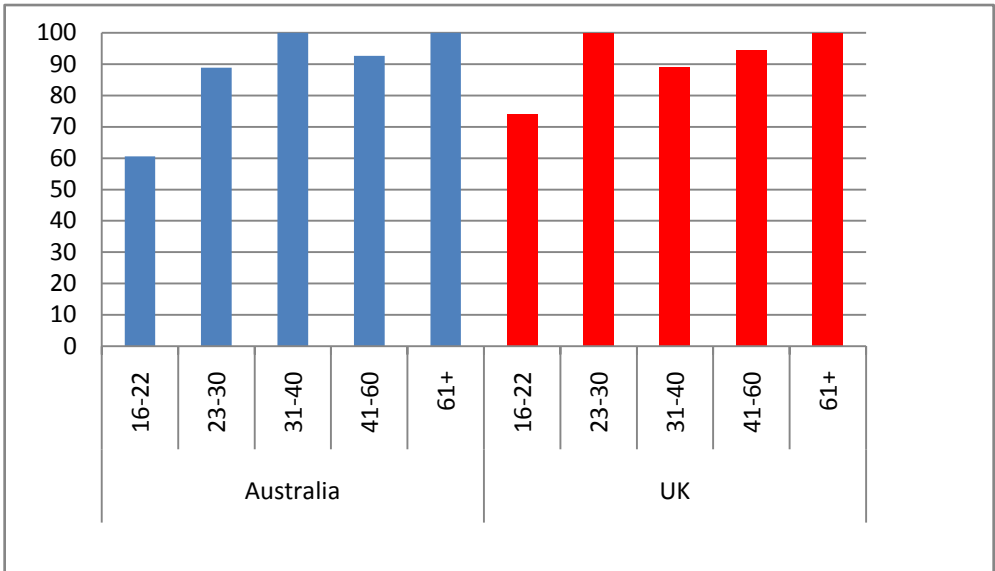
Figure 36.1: Familiarity with the phraseme *the cupboard is/was bare* as a percentage of each age group's responses

36.2 Interpretation

Agreement with the suggested answer was quite high, although several Australian participants felt that 'none of these' was a better option (see Figure 36.2).

Figure 36.2: Interpretation of the phraseme *the cupboard is/was bare* as a percentage of each age group's responses

36.3 Frequency of use

All except the UK 23-30 group said they would use this phraseme 'sometimes' (see Table 36.2), indicating that the target group are likely to hear it among all age groups in Australia. The average rate of 'sometimes' use was 25%.

Table 36.2: Frequency of use of the phraseme *the cupboard is/was bare* as a percentage

Location	Age group	Never	Almost never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
Australia	16-22	65	12	21	3	0
	23-30	33	33	33	0	0
	31-40	42	25	33	0	0
	41-60	25	43	30	3	0
	61+	17	31	44	8	0
UK	16-22	70	13	17	0	0
	23-30	33	67	0	0	0
	31-40	38	50	13	0	0
	41-60	18	35	47	0	0
	61+	45	45	9	0	0

36.4 Phrasemes most frequently elicited

Cupboard love, meaning that someone loves someone else because of material benefits, had 13 Australian and 12 UK tokens. *A skeleton in the cupboard*, indicating secret shame, had 16 Australian and 4 UK tokens.

36.5 Dictionary coverage

Although this phraseme appears to be in quite frequent use by those surveyed, it is listed in only three of the Big 5, in *CALD, MEDAL* and *OALD*. Given the survey responses, this is a phraseme which should appear in a MELD used in Australia.

Cupboard love appears in *CALD, MEDAL* and *OALD*, while *a skeleton in the cupboard* appears in all the Big 5.

37. Survey 3, Phraseme 9: *Discretion is the better part of valour*

Total Australian participants: 131
Total UK participants: 65
Suggested interpretation: You do not have to fight
Dictionary inclusion: *CALD, LDOCE, MEDAL* and *OALD*

Table 37.1: Participant numbers for the phraseme *discretion is the better part of valour*

Australia	16-22	33
	23-30	9
	31-40	12
	41-60	41
	61+	36
	Total	**131**
UK	16-22	23
	23-30	4
	31-40	9
	41-60	18
	61+	11
	Total	**65**

37.1 Familiarity

This phraseme was slightly better known in the UK (see Figure 37.1), but largely unknown to the youngest age group in either location. An average of 70% of all participants had heard it before.
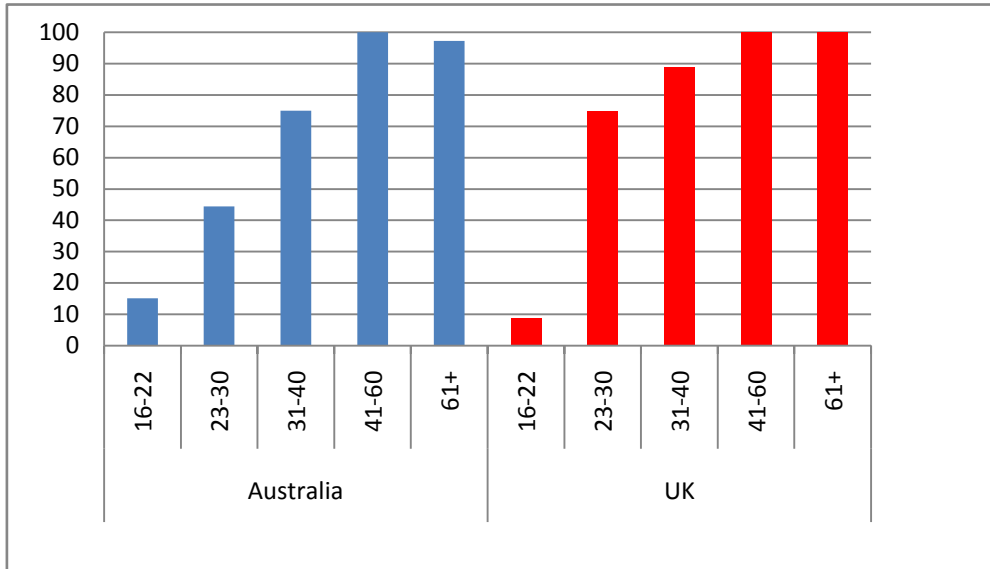
Figure 37.1: Familiarity with the phraseme *discretion is the better part of valour* as a percentage of each age group's responses

37.2 Interpretation

Agreement with the suggested answer was generally high (see Figure 37.2), although several people felt that 'none of these' was a better alternative.
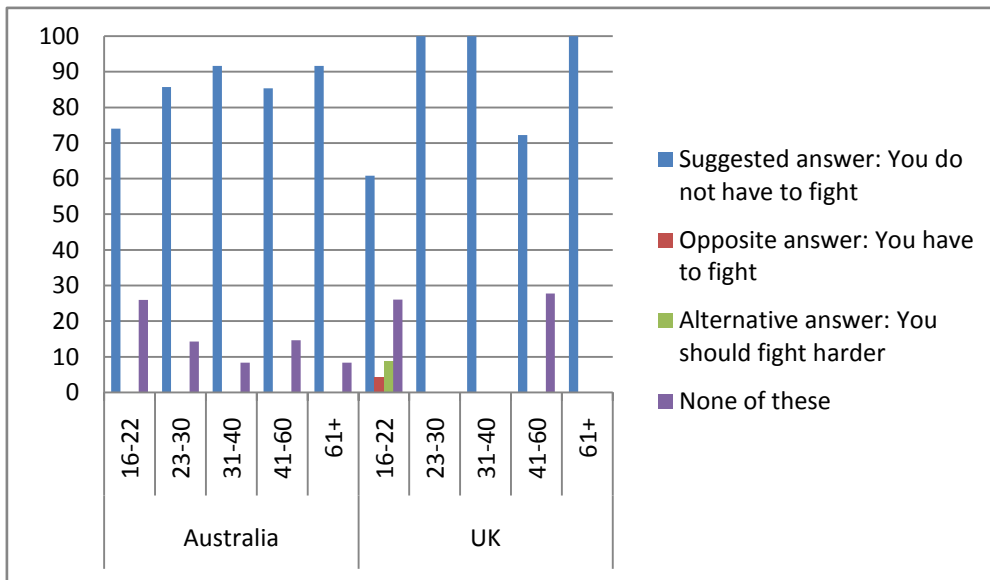
Figure 37.2: Interpretation of the phraseme *discretion is the better part of valour* as a percentage of each age group's responses

37.3 Frequency of use

Although little used by the youngest group, there were high frequencies of use among the older groups, especially those aged over 61, of whom 67% of Australians and 45% of UK participants said they would use it 'sometimes' (see Table 37.2). Overall, 27% of participants said they would use it 'sometimes'.

Table 37.2: Frequency of use of the phraseme *discretion is the better part of valour* as a percentage of each age group's responses

Location	Age group	Never	Almost never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
Australia	16-22	88	9	3	0	0
	23-30	56	22	22	0	0
	31-40	42	8	33	17	0
	41-60	35	25	38	3	0
	61+	6	28	67	0	0
UK	16-22	96	4	0	0	0
	23-30	75	0	25	0	0
	31-40	63	38	0	0	0
	41-60	28	33	33	6	0
	61+	27	27	45	0	0

37.4 Phrasemes most frequently elicited

The only phraseme commonly elicited was *he who fights and runs away lives to fight another day*, suggested by 8 Australians and 3 people in the UK, all aged over 31.

37.5 Dictionary coverage

Discretion is the better part of valour is listed in *CALD, LDOCE, MEDAL* and *OALD*. It does not appear in *COBUILD*, but its unfamiliarity to the youngest group and frequency of use by the older groups suggest it could usefully be included in a MELD for Australia.

He who fights and runs away lives to fight another day appears in *CALD*, while the shorter form *live to fight another day* is in *MEDAL*.

38. Survey 3, Phraseme 10: *To come a gutser*

Total Australian participants: 130
Total UK participants: 64
Suggested interpretation: To fail
Dictionary inclusion: *OALD*

Table 38.1: Participant numbers for the phraseme *to come a gutser*

Australia	16-22	33
	23-30	9
	31-40	12
	41-60	40
	61+	36
	Total	130
UK	16-22	23
	23-30	4
	31-40	9
	41-60	18
	61+	10
	Total	64

38.1 Familiarity

This phraseme was virtually unknown in the UK, where only one person in the 61+ group had heard it before. It was well known by all but the youngest group in Australia, however (see Figure 38.1). The overall Australian familiarity rate was 57%, while the UK familiarity rate was only 2%.
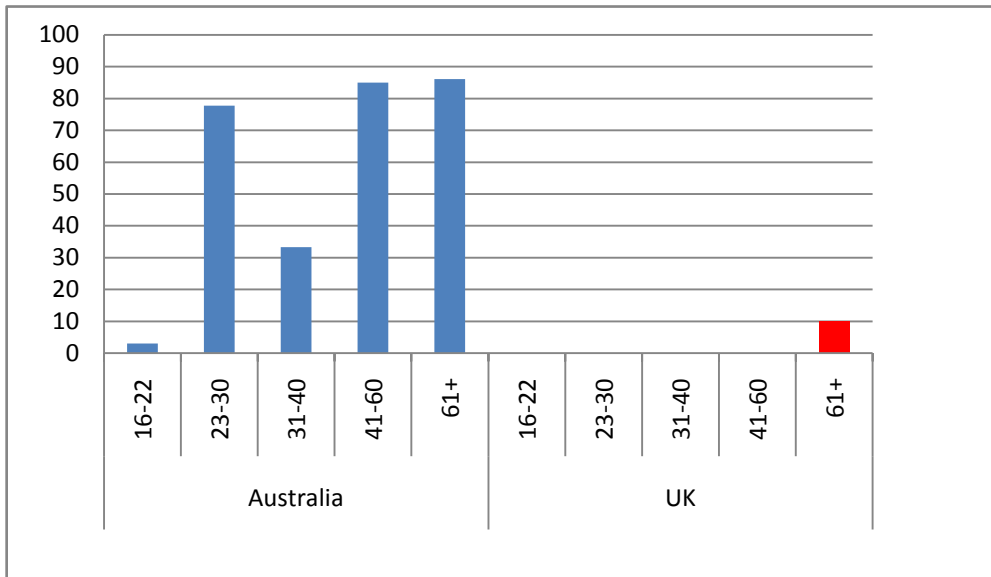
Figure 38.1: Familiarity with the phraseme *to come a gutser* as a percentage of each age group's responses

38.2 Interpretation

Although the phraseme was almost totally unknown in the UK, most people were able to guess its meaning (see Figure 38.2), perhaps prompted by the picture of someone falling over.
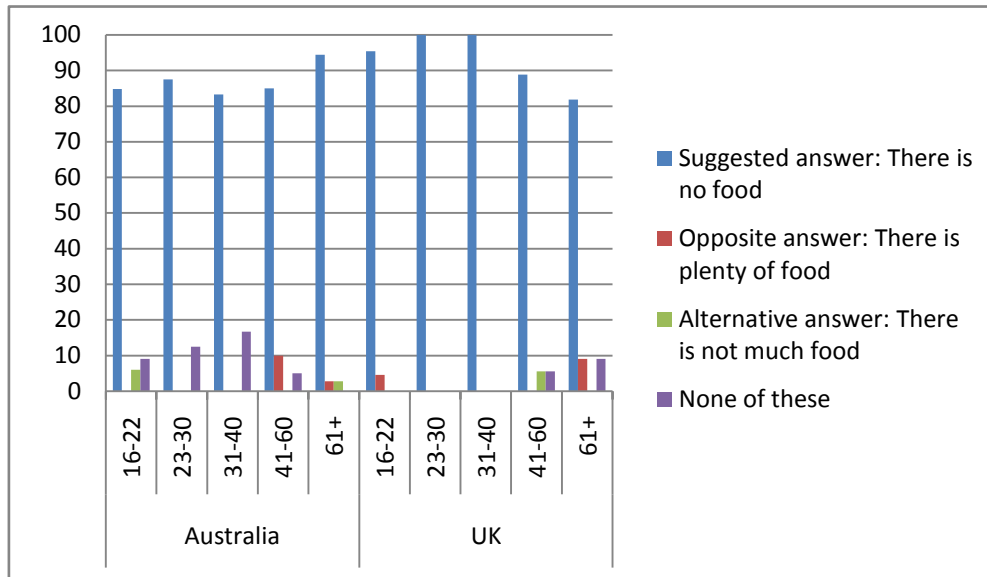

Figure 38.2: Interpretation of the phraseme *to come a gutser* as a percentage of each age group's responses

38.3 Frequency of use

This phraseme is not used at all in the UK, and is mainly used by participants aged over 41 in Australia (see Table 38.2). It is thus unlikely to be heard by the target group, especially among their peers.

Table 38.2: Frequency of use of the phraseme *to come a gutser* as a percentage

Location	Age group	Never	Almost never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
Australia	16-22	94	6	0	0	0
	23-30	78	11	0	11	0
	31-40	83	8	8	0	0
	41-60	45	30	18	8	0
	61+	44	28	25	3	0
UK	16-22	100	0	0	0	0
	23-30	100	0	0	0	0
	31-40	100	0	0	0	0
	41-60	100	0	0	0	0
	61+	100	0	0	0	0

38.4 Phrasemes most frequently elicited

The only phraseme commonly elicited was *to come a cropper*, meaning 'fall' or 'fail', with 14 Australian and 10 UK tokens, from all age groups except the youngest.

38.5 Dictionary coverage

To come a gutser is listed only in *OALD*, where it is marked as Australian English. Given that it is little used by most age groups in Australia, it probably does not need to be included in a MELD for this country.

To come a cropper appears in all the Big 5, and is marked as British English in *LDOCE, MEDAL* and *OALD*.

39. Survey 3, Phraseme 11: *Done like a dinner*

Total Australian participants: 131
Total UK participants: 65
Suggested interpretation: Someone is defeated
Dictionary inclusion: *OALD*

Table 39.1: Participant numbers for the phraseme *done like a dinner*

Australia	16-22	33
	23-30	9
	31-40	12
	41-60	41
	61+	36
	Total	**131**
UK	16-22	23
	23-30	4
	31-40	9
	41-60	18
	61+	11
	Total	**65**

39.1 Familiarity

This phraseme was more familiar than *to come a gutser*, with a minimum of 30% in the Australian group having heard it before and some familiarity among the UK group (see Figure 39.1). The average familiarity rate was 46%.

Figure 39.1: Familiarity with the phraseme *done like a dinner* as a percentage of each age group's responses

39.2 Interpretation

Agreement with the suggested answer was high among Australian participants, of whom many were already familiar with the phraseme (see Figure 39.2). Consensus was much lower among the UK participants, indicating that the meaning of the phraseme is hard to guess without prior knowledge.

Figure 39.2: Interpretation of the phraseme *done like a dinner* as a percentage of each age group's responses

39.3 Frequency of use

This phraseme is virtually never used in the UK, but is used by all age groups in Australia, particularly by those aged over 41 (see Table 39.2). Twenty-six per cent of Australian participants said they would use it 'sometimes'. This frequency of use, combined with the phraseme's opacity, means that it could usefully be included in a MELD for the target group.

Table 39.2: Frequency of use of the phraseme *done like a dinner* as a percentage of each age group's responses

Location	Age group	Never	Almost never	Sometimes	Often	Very often	Total
Australia	16-22	76	18	3	3	0	100
	23-30	67	22	11	0	0	100
	31-40	50	8	42	0	0	100
	41-60	31	36	31	3	0	100
	61+	31	25	42	3	0	100
UK	16-22	96	0	4	0	0	100
	23-30	100	0	0	0	0	100
	31-40	100	0	0	0	0	100
	41-60	94	0	6	0	0	100
	61+	100	0	0	0	0	100

39.4 Phrasemes most frequently elicited

The most frequent phraseme suggested was *dog's dinner*, meaning that something is chaotic or very untidy. This produced 5 Australian and 18 UK tokens, from all age groups. Variations on this were *done like a dog's dinner*, with 9 UK tokens, *dressed up like a dog's dinner* (4 Australian and 3 UK tokens), and *dog's breakfast* (2 Australian tokens).

39.5 Dictionary coverage

Done like a dinner appears only in *OALD*, and is marked there as Australian English. It is a phraseme that could be included in any MELD used in Australia, since it is used 'sometimes' by all groups in Australia.

Done up like a dog's dinner appears in *CALD,* while *dressed up like a dog's dinner* appears in *CALD* and *LDOCE,* and *dog's dinner* appears in all the Big 5. *Dog's breakfast* also appears in all the Big 5. Both *dog's dinner* and *dog's breakfast* are marked in all the dictionaries as British usage.

40. Survey 3, Phraseme 12: *It's not cricket*

Total Australian participants: 132
Total UK participants: 63
Suggested interpretation: It's not fair
Dictionary inclusion: *OALD*

Table 40.1: Participant numbers for the phraseme *it's not cricket*

Australia	16-22	33
	23-30	9
	31-40	12
	41-60	42
	61+	36
	Total	**132**
UK	16-22	21
	23-30	4
	31-40	9
	41-60	18
	61+	11
	Total	**63**

40.1 Familiarity

Familiarity with this phraseme was high (average 83%) in all but the youngest age group in each location (see Figure 40.1).
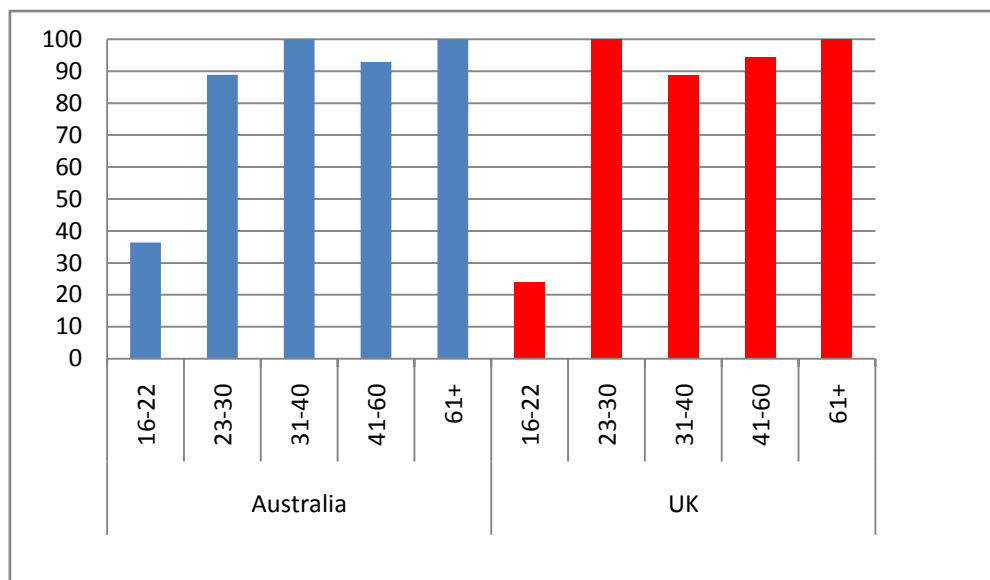
Figure 40.1: Familiarity with the phraseme *it's not cricket* as a percentage of each age group's responses

40.2 Interpretation

While most people agreed with the suggested answer, the youngest group, who were less familiar with the phraseme, seemed to find it harder to guess (see Figure 40.2). Several in the UK 16-22 group chose the alternative answer, 'it's fun', leading to the unthinkable implication that cricket might *not* be enjoyable.
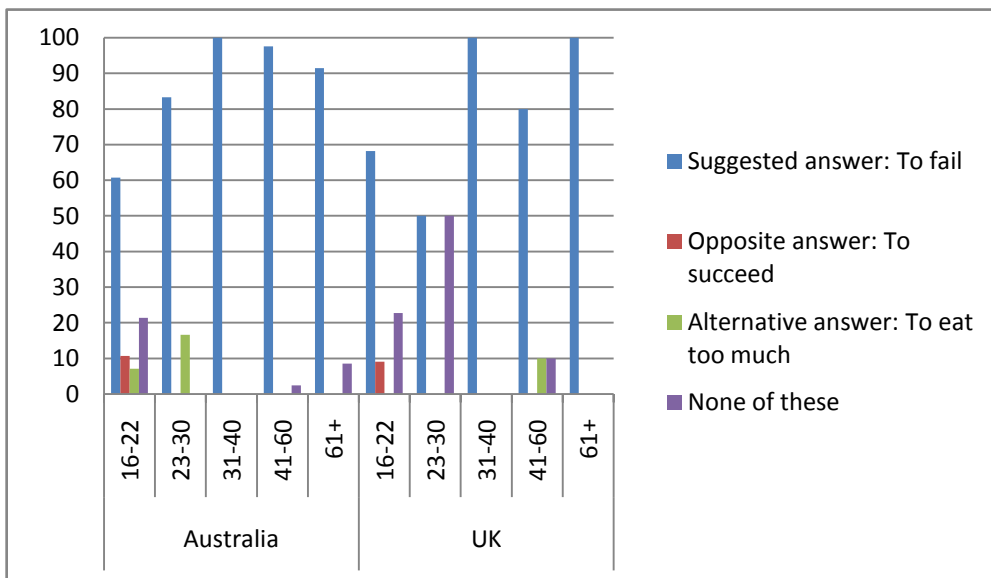

Figure 40.2: Interpretation of the phraseme *it's not cricket* as a percentage of each age group's responses

40.3 Frequency of use

This phraseme is used by all age groups in both locations (see Table 40.2), and could usefully be included in an Australian MELD. An average 23% said they would use it 'sometimes'.

Table 40.2: Frequency of use of the phraseme *it's not cricket* as a percentage of each age group's responses

Location	Age group	Never	Almost never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
Australia	16-22	78	16	3	3	0
	23-30	33	11	44	11	0
	31-40	33	67	0	0	0
	41-60	23	30	40	5	3
	61+	14	33	42	11	0
UK	16-22	81	10	10	0	0
	23-30	25	50	25	0	0
	31-40	63	25	0	13	0
	41-60	22	44	28	6	0
	61+	18	45	36	0	0

40.4 Phrasemes most frequently elicited

The only phraseme commonly suggested was *not the done thing*, meaning something is not acceptable, with 8 Australian and 3 UK tokens, all from those aged 31 and over.

40.5 Dictionary coverage

It's not cricket is listed in *CALD*, *MEDAL* and *OALD*. This is a phraseme which could usefully be included in a MELD in Australia.

Not the done thing appears in *CALD* and *LDOCE*, while the positive form *the done thing* appears in *COBUILD, MEDAL* and *OALD*.

41. Survey 3, Phraseme 13: *Inch by inch*

Total Australian participants: 130
Total UK participants: 63
Suggested interpretation: To move gradually
Dictionary inclusion: *CALD, COBUILD, LDOCE, MEDAL* and *OALD*

Table 41.1: Participant numbers for the phraseme *inch by inch*

Australia	16-22	33
	23-30	9
	31-40	12
	41-60	41
	61+	35
	Total	**130**
UK	16-22	21
	23-30	4
	31-40	9
	41-60	18
	61+	11
	Total	**63**

41.1 Familiarity

This phraseme was very familiar to all age groups and in both locations, with an average familiarity rating of 92%.
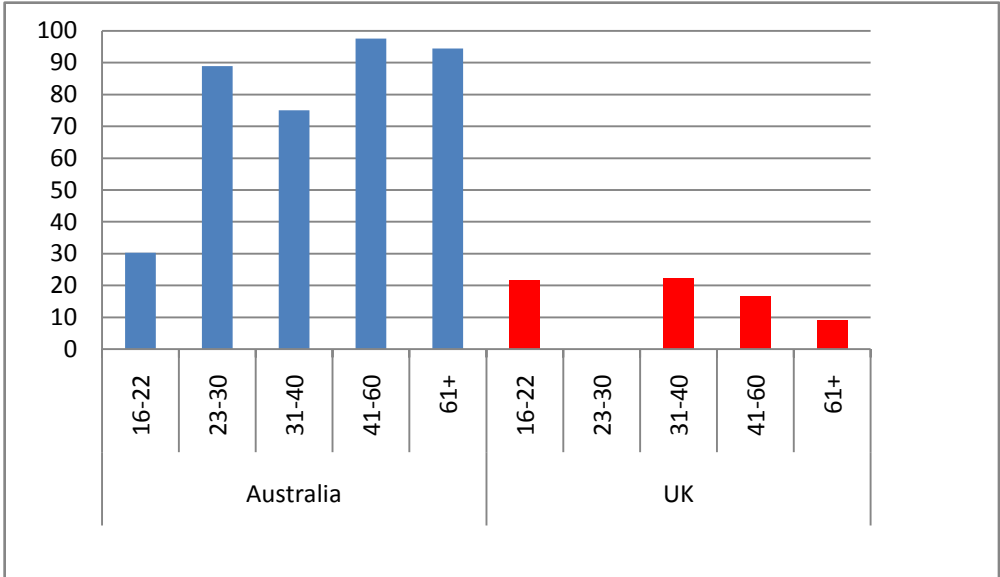

Figure 41.1: Familiarity with the phraseme *inch by inch* as a percentage of each age group's responses

41.2 Interpretation

Agreement with the suggested answer was high (see Figure 41.2), indicating that this phraseme is probably well known in both locations and by all age groups. The older measurement *inch*, however, may not be known by the target group, making this phraseme more opaque for them.
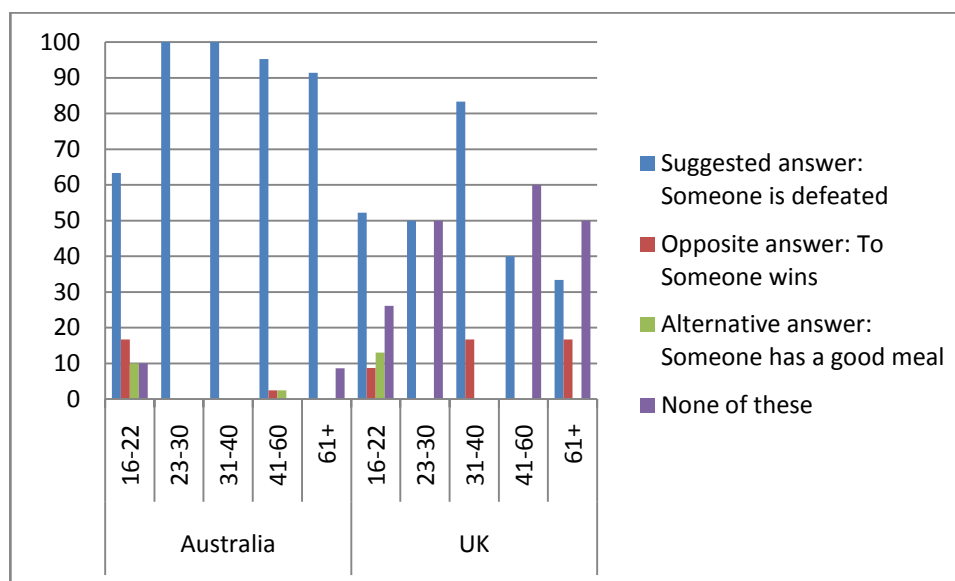
Figure 41.2: Interpretation of the phraseme *inch by inch* as a percentage of each age group's responses

41.3 Frequency of use

This phraseme had a relatively high frequency of use, with an average 32%, including many from the Australian 16-22 group, saying they would use it 'sometimes'.

Table 41.2: Frequency of use of the phraseme *inch by inch* as a percentage of each age group's responses

Location	Age group	Never	Almost never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
Australia	16-22	36	36	24	3	0
	23-30	44	44	0	11	0
	31-40	17	42	42	0	0
	41-60	33	33	35	0	0
	61+	15	38	47	0	0
UK	16-22	52	24	24	0	0
	23-30	25	50	25	0	0
	31-40	25	38	38	0	0
	41-60	22	44	22	6	6
	61+	18	27	55	0	0

41.4 Phrasemes most frequently elicited

The only phraseme commonly elicited here was *give an inch, take a mile*, meaning that people will take unfair advantage of any concession, with 48 Australian and 27 UK tokens from all age groups.

41.5 Dictionary coverage

Inch by inch appears in all the Big 5. This excellent coverage is important for the target group, who are likely to encounter the phrasemes among all age groups in Australia.

Give an inch take a mile appears in all except *COBUILD*.

42. Survey 3, Phraseme 14: *To let off steam*

Total Australian participants: 130
Total UK participants: 62
Suggested interpretation: To release frustration
Dictionary inclusion: *CALD, COBUILD, LDOCE, MEDAL* and *OALD*

Table 42.1: Participant numbers for the phraseme *to let off steam*

Australia	16-22	33
	23-30	9
	31-40	12
	41-60	41
	61+	35
	Total	**130**
UK	16-22	20
	23-30	4
	31-40	9
	41-60	18
	61+	11
	Total	**62**

42.1 Familiarity

This phraseme was familiar to nearly all the participants, with the exception of 3 people in the 16-22 group in Australia (see Figure 42.1), making it the most

familiar phraseme in the questionnaire. An average of 99% of participants said they had heard it before.
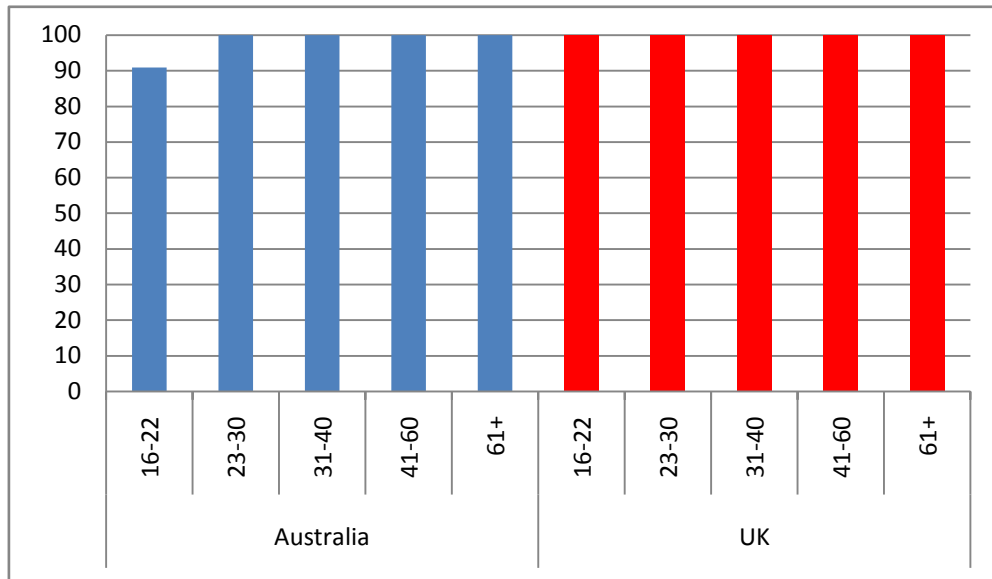
Figure 42.1: Familiarity with the phraseme *to let off steam* as a percentage of each age group's responses

42.2 Interpretation

Agreement with the suggested answer was correspondingly high (see Figure 42.2), probably because of the high familiarity rate.
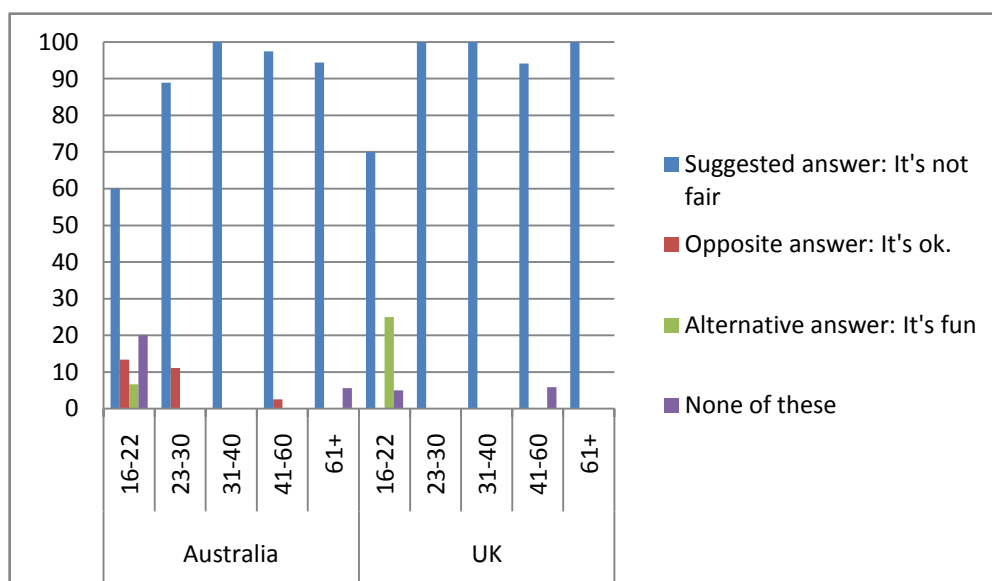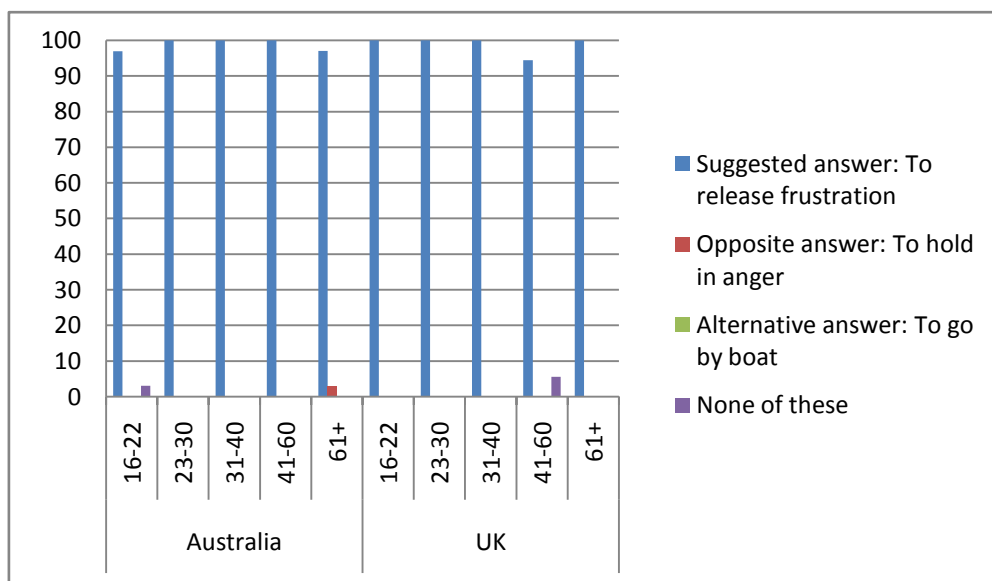

Figure 42.2: Interpretation of the phraseme *to let off steam* as a percentage of each age group's responses

42.3 Frequency of use

This phraseme was in common use by all age groups surveyed, with high figures in the 'sometimes' column (average 55%) even from the youngest group. Many participants (12 %) said they would use it 'often' (see Table 42.2). In fact, it was the most used phraseme in the questionnaire.

Table 42.2: Frequency of use of the phraseme *to let off steam* as a percentage of each age group's responses

Location	Age group	Never	Almost never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
Australia	16-22	33	12	33	18	3
	23-30	0	0	67	33	0
	31-40	33	58	8	0	0
	41-60	7	22	66	5	0
	61+	6	18	56	18	3
UK	16-22	20	30	30	15	5
	23-30	0	25	75	0	0
	31-40	0	11	67	22	0
	41-60	0	17	72	6	6
	61+	0	27	73	0	0

42.4 Phrasemes most frequently elicited

The only phraseme commonly elicited was *full steam ahead*, indicating that something is progressing or about to progress quickly and with energy. There were 12 Australian and 19 UK tokens for this phraseme, which also appears in Survey 1, Phraseme 13.

42.5 Dictionary coverage

To let off steam appears in all the Big 5, reflecting its popularity with users of all age groups in both locations. *Full steam ahead* also appears in all the Big 5.

43. Survey 4, Phraseme 1: *Out of the ark*

Total Australian participants: 121
Total UK participants: 72
Suggested interpretation: Something is old fashioned
Dictionary inclusion: *CALD, MEDAL* and *OALD*

Table 43.1: Participant numbers for the phraseme *out of the ark*

Australia	16-22	32
	23-30	5
	31-40	7
	41-60	34
	61+	43
	Total	**121**
UK	16-22	33
	23-30	3
	31-40	9
	41-60	16
	61+	11
	Total	**72**

43.1 Familiarity

This phraseme was not very familiar to those aged under 31. Above this age it appeared to be more familiar to the UK participants (see Figure 43.1). Average familiarity was 62% in the UK and 70% in Australia.
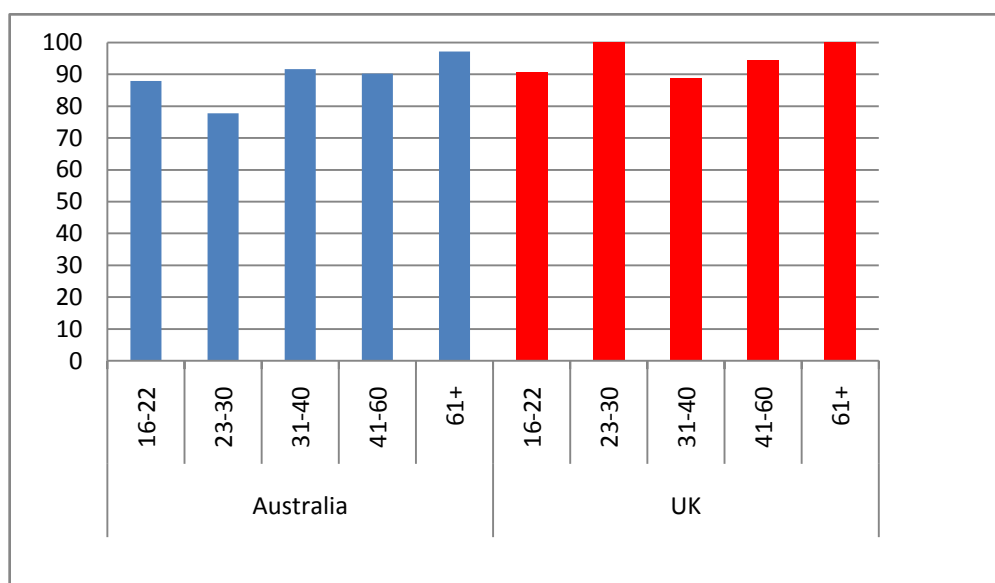

Figure 43.1: Familiarity with the phraseme *out of the ark* as a percentage of each age group's responses

43.2 Interpretation

Agreement with the suggested answer was very high, even among those who had not heard the phraseme before (see Figure 43.2), indicating that perhaps either the drawing and context, or the connotations of the word 'ark', made it easy to guess.

The concept of the ark may not, however, be familiar to the target group, making the phraseme more opaque. (In fact, they may be more familiar with the concept of the Old Testament ark of the Covenant, from the popular movie *Raiders of the lost ark*, rather than with Noah's ark.)
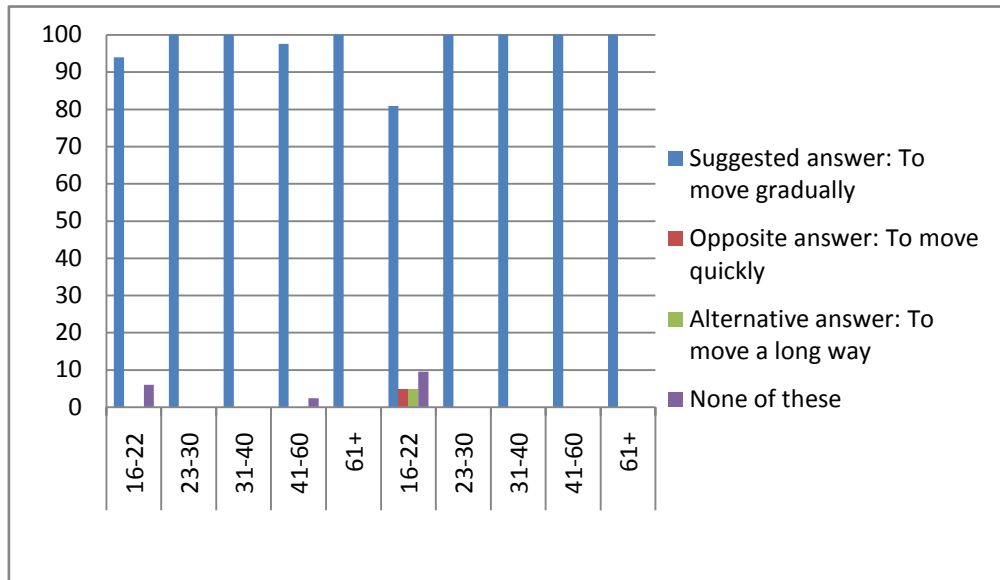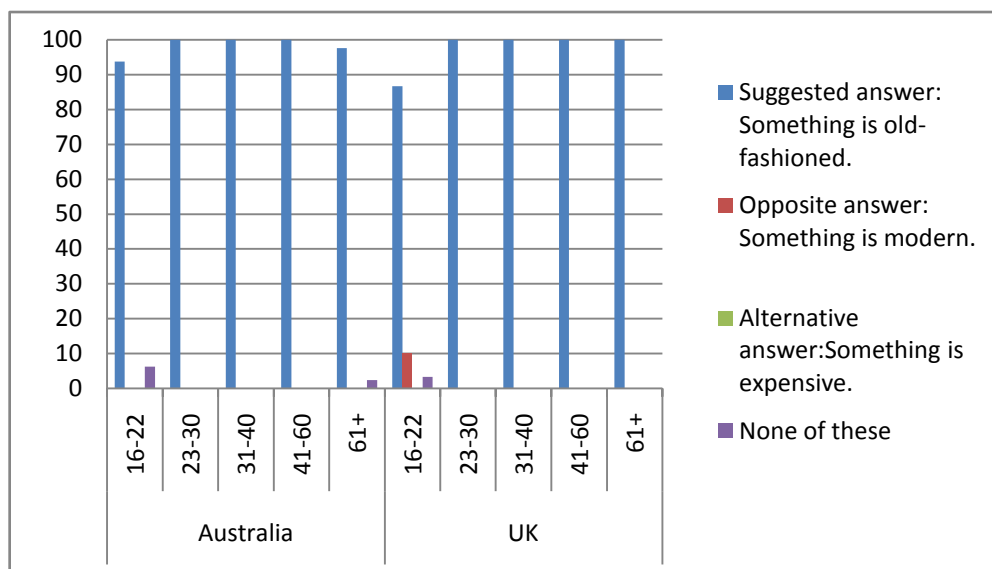

Figure 43.2: Interpretation of the phraseme *out of the ark* as a percentage of each age group's responses

43.3 Frequency of use

This phraseme has a relatively high frequency of use among the older participants in the UK and is used especially by the 61+ group in Australia (see Table 43.2). Overall, 27% of participants said they would use it 'sometimes'.

Table 43.2: Frequency of use of the phraseme *out of the ark* as a percentage of each age group's responses

Location	Age group	Never	Almost never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
Australia	16-22	75	22	3	0	0
	23-30	100	0	0	0	0
	31-40	71	0	29	0	0
	41-60	26	47	21	3	0
	61+	12	26	55	7	0
UK	16-22	88	6	6	0	0
	23-30	67	33	0	0	0
	31-40	11	44	44	0	0
	41-60	0	38	63	0	0
	61+	10	40	50	0	0

43.4 Phrasemes most frequently elicited

As old as Methuselah, which appears in Survey 1, had 12 Australian and 6 UK tokens, from a variety of age groups. *As old as the ark* had 6 Australian and 6 UK tokens, from participants aged over 30, and *as old as the hills* had 6 Australian and 3 UK tokens from those aged over 30. All these phrasemes mean that someone or something is very old.

43.5 Dictionary coverage

Out of the ark appears in *CALD, MEDAL* and *OALD*. However, coverage by any MELD used in Australia would be appropriate.

As old as Methuselah is listed in *CALD, LDOCE* and *MEDAL. As old as the hills* appears in *CALD, MEDAL* and *OALD*. *As old as the ark* does not appear in any of the Big 5. Its elicitation from 12 people suggests it is a phraseme that is in use, although it is possible that the participants were combining two other phrasemes, such as *out of the ark* and *as old as the hills*. *LDOCE* does not list *as old as the hills*, but includes the Americanism *it doesn't amount to a hill of beans*. This phraseme is also in *MEDAL* and *OALD*. I have not encountered this phraseme

outside the movie *Casablanca*, and think it is unlikely to be heard in the UK or

Australia. In fact, a search on WebCorp (Research and Development Unit for

English Studies 1999-2010) resulted in no concordances at all.

44. Survey 4, Phraseme 2: *To quote something chapter and verse*

Total Australian participants: 119
Total UK participants: 70
Suggested interpretation: Someone knows something very well
Dictionary inclusion: *CALD, LDOCE, MEDAL* and *OALD*

Table 44.1: Participant numbers for the phraseme *to quote something chapter and verse*

Australia	16-22	31
	23-30	5
	31-40	7
	41-60	34
	61+	42
	Total	**119**
UK	16-22	32
	23-30	3
	31-40	9
	41-60	16
	61+	10
	Total	**70**

44.1 Familiarity

This phraseme appeared to be more familiar to the UK participants (average 86%

compared to Australian 66%) and to the older age groups (see Figure 44.1).
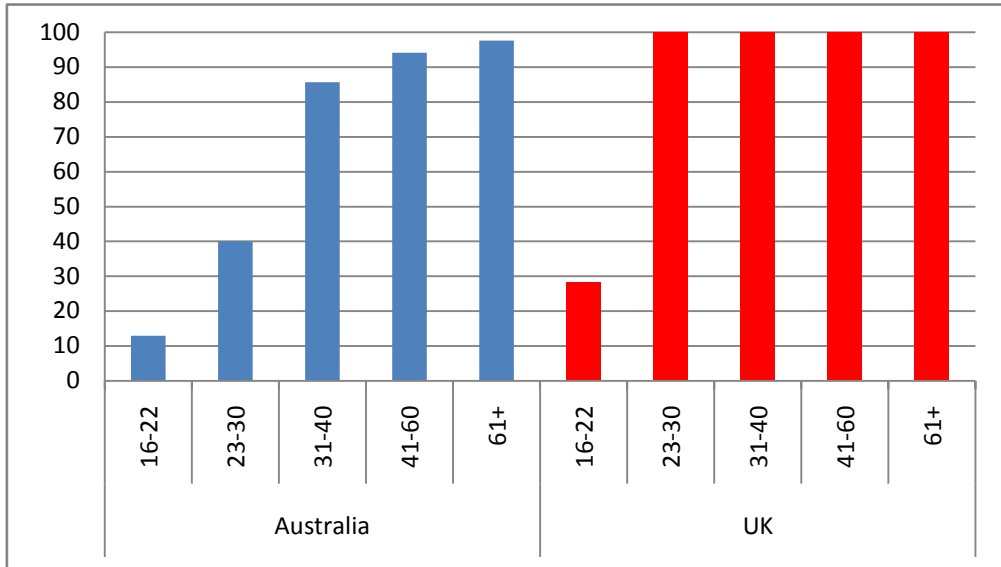
Figure 44.1: Familiarity with the phraseme *to quote something chapter and verse* as a percentage of each age group's responses

44.2 Interpretation

Despite the lack of familiarity in some groups, agreement with the suggested answer was high (see Figure 44.2), perhaps because the verb *quote* indicates a detailed representation of something.
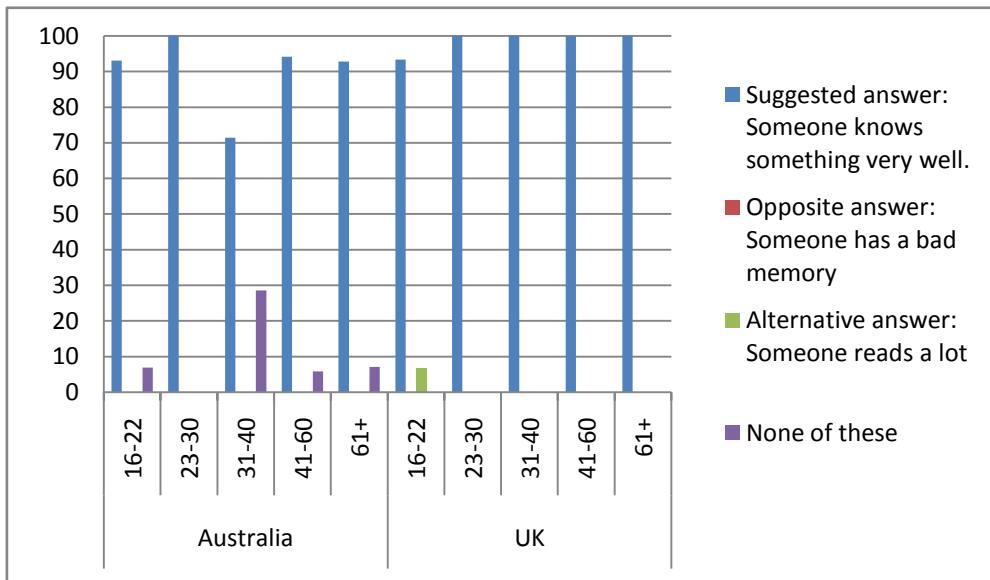
Figure 44.2: Interpretation of the phraseme *to quote something chapter and verse* as a percentage of each age group's responses

44.3 Frequency of use

This phraseme appears to be in use among those aged 31 and over (see Table 44.3) in Australia, indicating that the target group might encounter it in various situations, though probably not among their peers. The average 'sometimes' use rate was 21%.

Table 44.2: Frequency of use of the phraseme *to quote something chapter and verse* as a percentage of each age group's responses

Location	Age group	Never	Almost never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
Australia	16-22	90	7	3	0	0
	23-30	80	20	0	0	0
	31-40	57	14	29	0	0
	41-60	50	32	15	3	0
	61+	15	44	41	0	0
UK	16-22	96	28	0	0	0
	23-30	100	0	0	0	0
	31-40	22	56	22	0	0
	41-60	13	38	38	13	0
	61+	10	30	60	0	0

44.4 Phrasemes most frequently elicited

No phrasemes were commonly elicited here.

44.5 Dictionary coverage

To quote something chapter and verse is listed in *CALD, LDOCE, MEDAL* and *OALD*. Dictionary coverage is therefore good for this phraseme. It is usually listed without the verb *quote*.

45. Survey 4, Phraseme 3: *To reap what you sow*

Total Australian participants: 115
Total UK participants: 71
Suggested interpretation: You get what you deserve
Dictionary inclusion: *CALD, LDOCE, MEDAL* and *OALD*

Table 45.1: Participant numbers for the phraseme *to reap what you sow*

Australia	16-22	29
	23-30	5
	31-40	7
	41-60	32
	61+	42
	Total	**115**
UK	16-22	33
	23-30	3
	31-40	9
	41-60	16
	61+	10
	Total	**71**

45.1 Familiarity

This phraseme was very familiar to all except the 23-30 group in Australia and the 16-22 group in the UK (see Figure 45.1). The average familiarity rate was a high 91%.
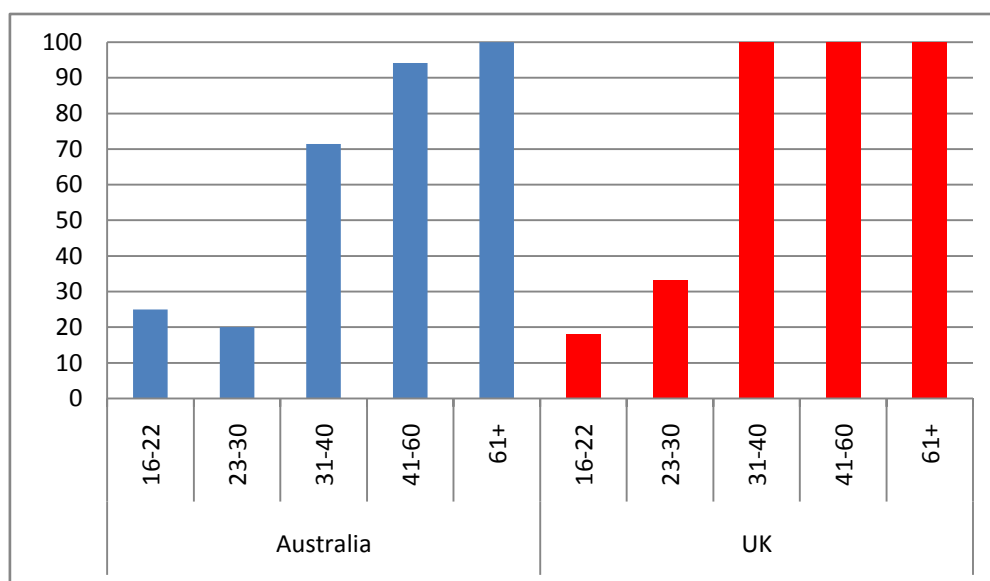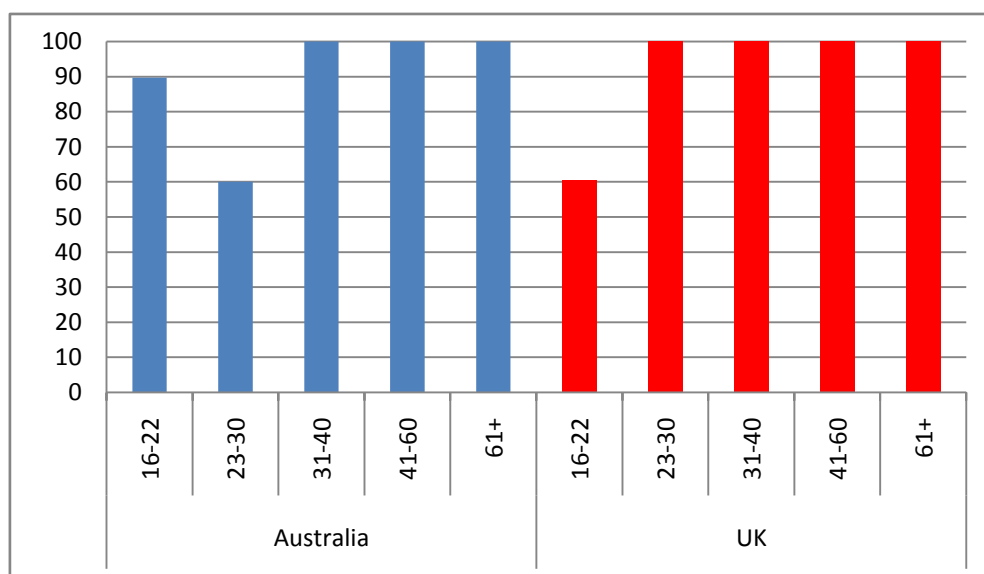

Figure 45.1: Familiarity with the phraseme *to reap what you sow* as a percentage of each age group's responses

45.2 Interpretation

Agreement with the suggested answer was virtually 100% (see Figure 45.2), indicating that as long as the words *sow* and *reap* are understood then the target group would have little difficulty understanding the phraseme. Since these are

agricultural words, however, and many students come from urban settings, it is debatable whether they would know such vocabulary.
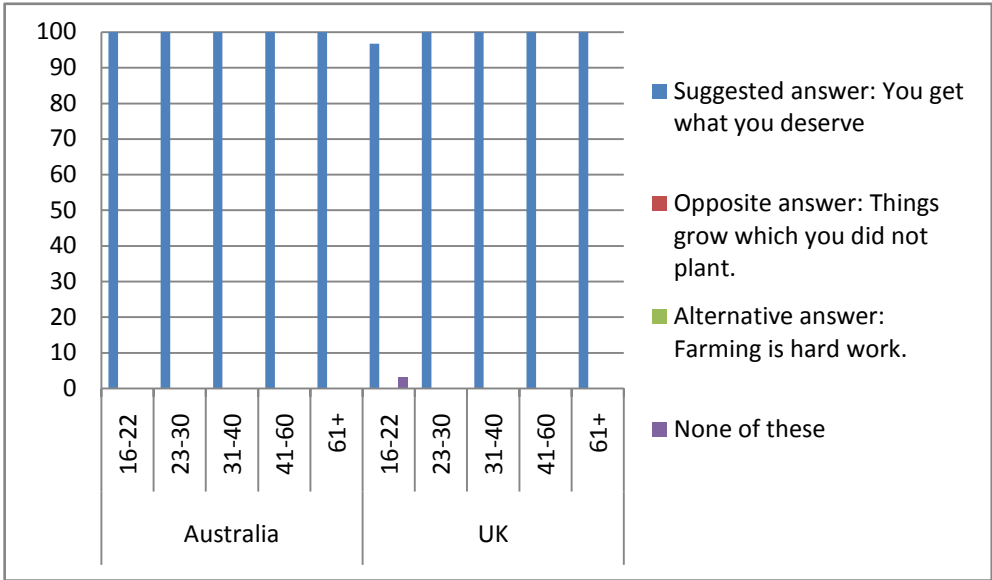
Figure 45.2: Interpretation of the phraseme *to reap what you sow* as a percentage of each age group's responses

45.3 Frequency of use

On average, 34% of Australian and 49% of UK participants said that they would use the phraseme 'sometimes', indicating that it is in common use (see Table 45.2) and therefore likely to be encountered by the target group, even among their peers.

Table 45.2: Frequency of use of the phraseme *to reap what you sow* as a percentage of each age group's responses

Location	Age group	Never	Almost never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
Australia	16-22	33	23	37	3	3
	23-30	40	60	0	0	0
	31-40	14	29	43	14	0
	41-60	25	25	41	6	3
	61+	7	33	50	5	5
UK	16-22	58	9	30	3	0
	23-30	0	33	67	0	0
	31-40	11	11	44	33	0
	41-60	20	27	53	0	0
	61+	10	40	50	0	0

45.4 Phrasemes most frequently elicited

The most common elicitation was one which captures the same meaning, *what goes around comes around,* with10 Australian and 4 UK tokens.

Variations of *(sow the wind,) reap the whirlwind*, another Biblical phraseme (from *Hosea* 8:7), meaning that those who cause trouble will have it returned to them in a magnified form, had 7 Australian and 6 UK tokens.

The grim reaper, personifying death, had 7 Australian and 3 UK tokens.

45.5 Dictionary coverage

To reap what you sow appears in *CALD, LDOCE, MEDAL* and *OALD*, providing good coverage.

(Sow the wind,) reap the whirlwind does not appear in any of the Big 5, but *the grim reaper* is listed in all of them.

46. Survey 4, Phraseme 4: *To rob Peter to pay Paul*

Total Australian participants: 112
Total UK participants: 70
Suggested interpretation: This is unfair
Dictionary inclusion: *CALD, COBUILD, LDOCE, MEDAL* and *OALD*

Table 46.1: Participant numbers for the phraseme *to rob Peter to pay Paul*

Australia	16-22	28
	23-30	5
	31-40	7
	41-60	30
	61+	42
	Total	**112**
UK	16-22	33
	23-30	3
	31-40	9
	41-60	16
	61+	9
	Total	**70**

46.1 Familiarity

This phraseme was not well known to the youngest age group, but familiar to 100% of the other participants in the UK and to most of those in Australia (see Figure 46.1). An average 82% of participants said they had heard it before.
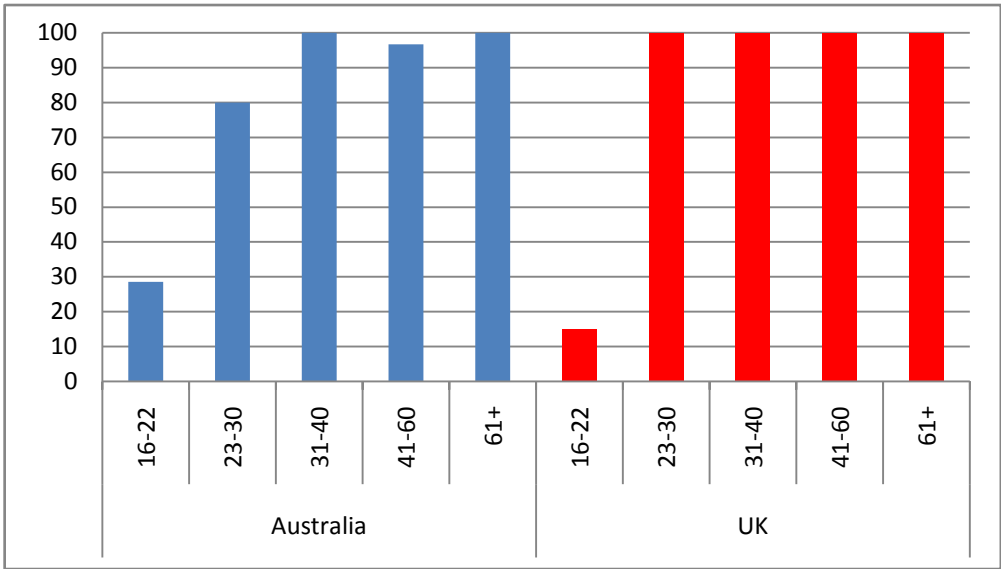
Figure 46.1: Familiarity with the phraseme *to rob Peter to pay Paul* as a percentage of each age group's responses

46.2 Interpretation

Many of those who indicated a previous knowledge of the phraseme chose the option 'none of these', rather than the suggested interpretation 'this is unfair' (see Figure 46.2). The Big 5 include the idea of money in all their definitions, but I had left the general concept more undefined in my interpretation, perhaps leading to greater disagreement with the suggested answer.
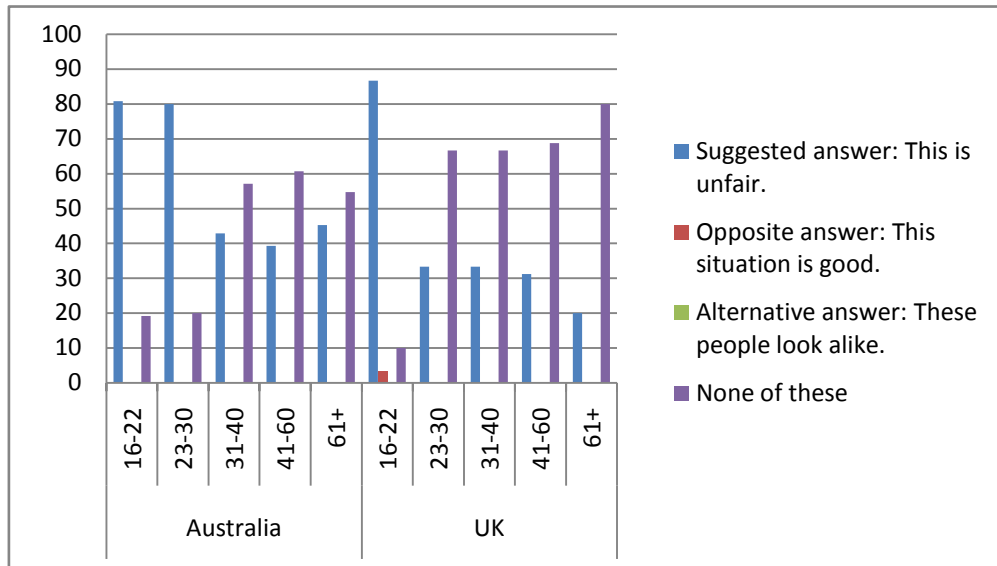
Figure 46.2: Interpretation of the phraseme *to rob Peter to pay Paul* as a percentage of each age group's responses

46.3 Frequency of use

Although not frequently used by the youngest group, many of whom were not familiar with the phraseme, an average 34% of participants said they would use it 'sometimes' (see Table 46.2). This indicates that the target group may encounter the phraseme in Australia.

Table 46.2: Frequency of use of the phraseme *to rob Peter to pay Paul* as a percentage of each age group's responses

Location	Age group	Never	Almost never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
Australia	16-22	78	7	15	0	0
	23-30	40	20	40	0	0
	31-40	43	57	0	0	0
	41-60	27	23	43	7	0
	61+	19	24	50	5	2
UK	16-22	91	3	6	0	0
	23-30	33	0	67	0	0
	31-40	11	56	33	0	0
	41-60	6	56	31	6	0
	61+	10	40	50	0	0

46.4 Phrasemes most frequently elicited

No phrasemes were commonly elicited here, although *the Peter principle*, meaning that someone is promoted until they are incapable of performing their job, had 5 Australian tokens from the oldest group. *To tickle the peter*, meaning that someone receives something for nothing, according to one participant (although the *OED* says that it means 'to rob the till'), had 5 Australian tokens from the two oldest groups.

46.5 Dictionary coverage

To rob Peter to pay Paul appears in all the Big 5. This is excellent coverage for this relatively opaque phraseme.

The Peter principle appears only in *MEDAL*, while *to tickle the peter* does not appear in any of the Big 5.

47. Survey 4, Phraseme 5: *To separate the sheep from the goats*

Total Australian participants: 109
Total UK participants: 67
Suggested interpretation: Things may look the same, but they can be separated.
Dictionary inclusion: *CALD, LDOCE, MEDAL* and *OALD*

Table 47.1: Participant numbers for the phraseme *to separate the sheep from the goats*

Australia	16-22	26
	23-30	5
	31-40	7
	41-60	30
	61+	41
	Total	**109**
UK	16-22	29
	23-30	3
	31-40	9
	41-60	16
	61+	10
	Total	**67**

47.1 Familiarity

This phraseme appeared to be more familiar in Australia than the UK, and least familiar to the two youngest age groups (see Figure 47.1). An average of 64% of participants said they had heard it before.
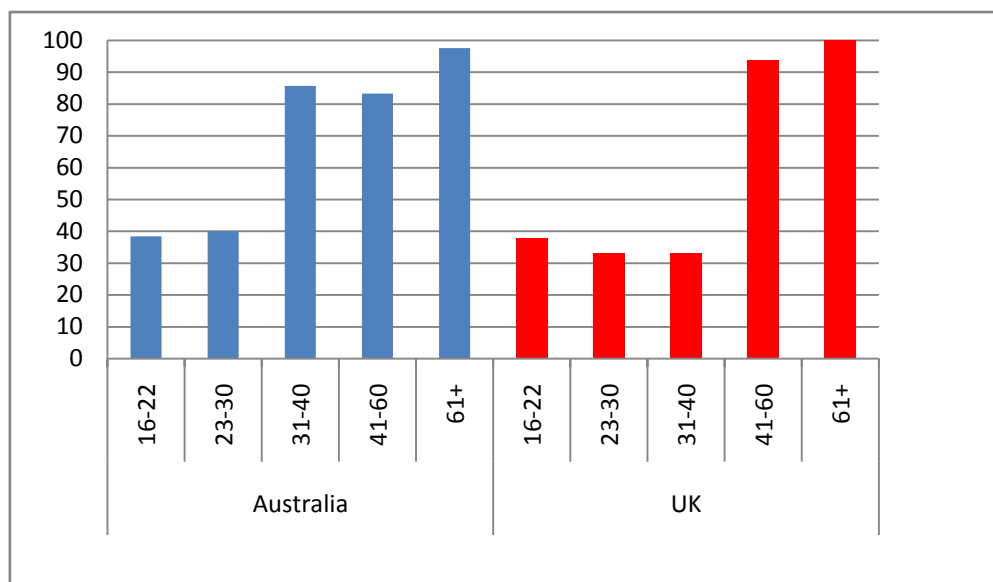
Figure 47.1: Familiarity with the phraseme *to separate the sheep from the goats* as a percentage of each age group's responses

47.2 Interpretation

Agreement with the suggested answer, 'things may look the same, but they can be separated', did not rise above 75% (see Figure 47.2). This could be because the suggested meaning was based on the Biblical original, in which sheep and goats are portrayed as hard to distinguish, as indeed they are in many countries. Breeds of sheep and goats in the UK, however, look quite different, which may be why more UK participants chose the alternative answer, 'things may look different and they can be separated'. The definitions in *CALD*, *MEDAL* and *OALD* are all based on the separating of people in terms of ability, and do not include the idea of similarity of appearance. My suggested answer and the dictionary definitions did

not address the separation of good and bad, which may have been what some participants understood by the phraseme.
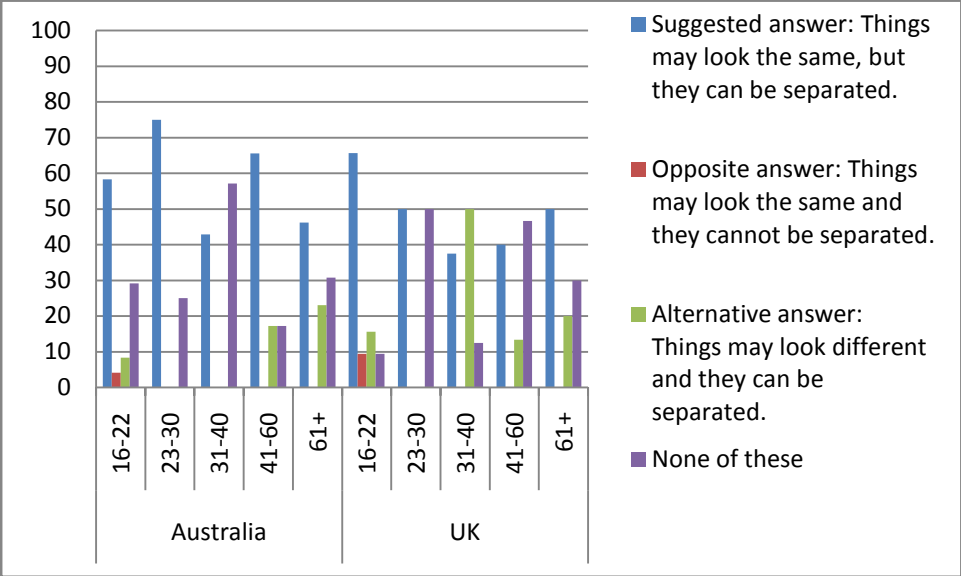
Figure 47.2: Interpretation of the phraseme *to separate the sheep from the goats* as a percentage of each age group's responses

47.3 Frequency of use

While the Australian participants gave a varied pattern of use, there was even greater diversity in the UK, ranging from 100% 'never' in the 23-30 group to 100% 'sometimes' in the 61+ group (see Table 47.2). An average of 26% of all participants said they would use it 'sometimes', so the target group may well encounter the phraseme, though probably not among their peers.

Table 47.2: Frequency of use of the phraseme *to separate the sheep from the goats* as a percentage of each age group's responses

Location	Age group	Never	Almost never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
Australia	16-22	77	15	8	0	0
	23-30	80	0	20	0	0
	31-40	43	43	14	0	0
	41-60	40	30	27	3	0
	61+	18	28	49	5	0
UK	16-22	90	6	3	0	0
	23-30	100	0	0	0	0
	31-40	89	0	11	0	0
	41-60	31	31	31	6	0
	61+	0	0	100	0	0

47.4 Phrasemes most frequently elicited

The two phrasemes most elicited appeared in other surveys in the questionnaire: *to sort/separate the wheat from the chaff* (19 Aus tokens, 12 UK tokens) has the same meaning and is in Survey 5, while *wolf in sheep's clothing* (23 Australian and 7 UK tokens) is in Survey 1.

Black sheep of the family (15 Australian and 10 UK tokens) and the shorter *black sheep* (12 Australian and 4 UK tokens), referring to someone who has acted badly and brought shame to their family, were suggested by a variety of age groups.

To follow like (a mob/herd/flock of) sheep, meaning 'to follow the group', had 10 Australian and 6 UK tokens from a variety of age groups. This phraseme depends on the cultural knowledge that sheep often follow the herd and do not appear to think for themselves.

47.5 Dictionary coverage

To separate the sheep from the goats appears in *CALD, LDOCE, MEDAL* and *OALD*, providing good coverage.

To sort/separate the wheat from the chaff and *black sheep* appear in all the Big 5, while *wolf in sheep's clothing* appears in all except *COBUILD*.

To follow like (a mob/herd/flock of) sheep does not appear as a whole phrase, but the shorter *like sheep* is in all the Big 5.

48. Survey 4, Phraseme 6: *A dog in the manger*

Total Australian participants: 109
Total UK participants: 61
Suggested interpretation: Someone is selfish
Dictionary inclusion: *CALD, MEDAL* and *OALD*

Table 48.1: Participant numbers for the phraseme *a dog in the manger*

Australia	16-22	26
	23-30	5
	31-40	7
	41-60	30
	61+	41
	Total	**109**
UK	16-22	33
	23-30	3
	31-40	9
	41-60	16
	61+	9
	Total	**61**

48.1 Familiarity

This phraseme was almost unknown by the youngest groups, and by the 23-30 group in Australia, but was familiar to most of the other participants (see Figure 48.1). Average familiarity was 67%.
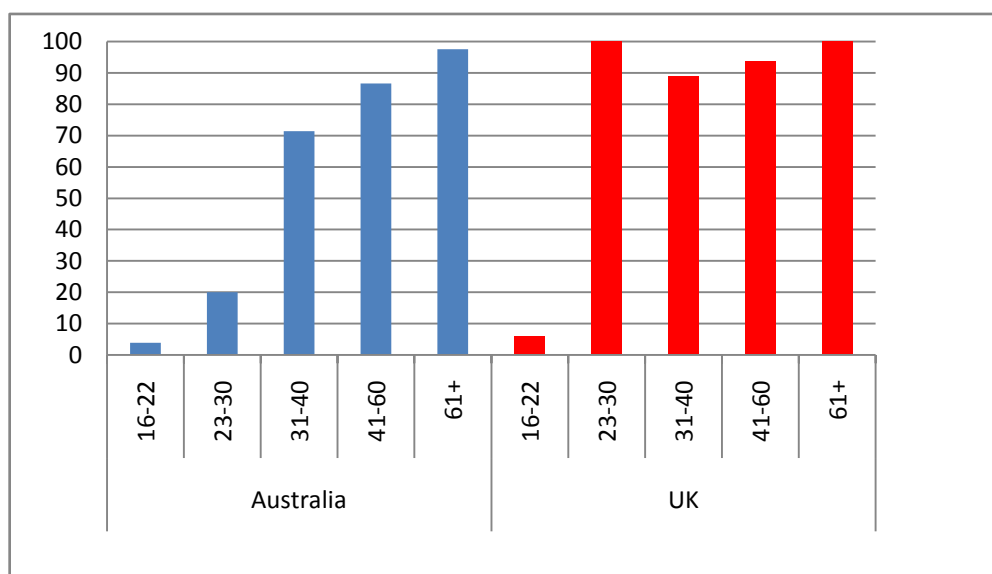
Figure 48.1: Familiarity with the phraseme *a dog in the manger* as a percentage of each age group's responses

48.2 Interpretation

Although many people expressed familiarity with the phraseme, there was much disagreement with the suggested answer (see Figure 48.2), indicating that the phraseme is quite opaque, even to those who have heard it before. The suggested

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interpretation, that someone is selfish, may have been felt to be too simplistic by some participants.

Figure 48.2: Interpretation of the phraseme *a dog in the manger* as a percentage of each age group's responses

48.3 Frequency of use

This phraseme appears to be used most by the 61+ group in both locations (see Table 48.2), and by UK more than Australian participants. Seventy-three per cent of participants, however, said they would never use it.

Table 48.2: Frequency of use of the phraseme *a dog in the manger* as a percentage of each age group's responses

Location	Age group	Never	Almost never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
Australia	16-22	96	4	0	0	0
	23-30	100	0	0	0	0
	31-40	100	0	0	0	0
	41-60	67	19	11	4	0
	61+	44	20	32	5	0
UK	16-22	97	3	0	0	0
	23-30	33	67	0	0	0
	31-40	89	11	0	0	0
	41-60	40	33	27	0	0
	61+	22	33	44	0	0

48.4 Phrasemes most frequently elicited

A dog's dinner, meaning that something is a mess, had 6 Australian and 7 UK tokens, from a variety of age groups. The variation *a dog's breakfast* had 4 Australian and 3 UK tokens, from those aged 31 and over.

Every dog has its day, meaning that everyone eventually has an opportunity in life, had 6 Australian and 5 UK tokens, from those aged 31 and over.

You can't teach an old dog new tricks, meaning that older people find it hard to change their ways, had 8 Australian and 3 UK tokens, from a variety of age groups.

48.5 Dictionary coverage

A dog in the manger appears in *CALD*, *MEDAL* and *OALD*. This coverage is probably unnecessarily high, given that although the phraseme is opaque it appears not to be used often in Australia and is therefore not likely to be encountered regularly by the target group.

A dog's dinner and *a dog's breakfast* appear in all the Big 5, where they are all listed as British English, although they appear to be used equally in Australia. *Every dog has its day* and *you can't teach an old dog new tricks* appear in *CALD, LDOCE, MEDAL* and *OALD*.

49. Survey 4, Phraseme 7: *Fools rush in where angels fear to tread*

Total Australian participants: 109
Total UK participants: 70
Suggested interpretation: People do not think carefully
Dictionary inclusion: *LDOCE, MEDAL* and *OALD*

Table 49.1: Participant numbers for the phraseme *fools rush in where angels fear to tread*

Australia	16-22	27
	23-30	5
	31-40	6
	41-60	30
	61+	41
	Total	**109**
UK	16-22	33
	23-30	3
	31-40	9
	41-60	16
	61+	9
	Total	**70**

49.1 Familiarity

This phraseme appeared to be more familiar in the UK than Australia, except in the case of the youngest group (see Figure 49.1). Seventy-nine per cent of participants said they had heard it before.
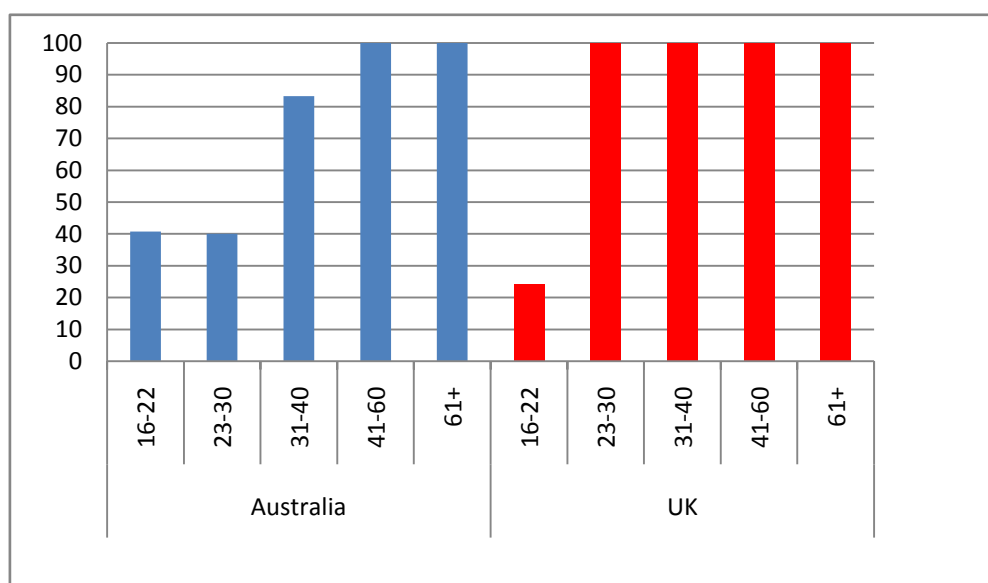
Figure 49.1: Familiarity with the phraseme *fools rush in where angels fear to tread* as a percentage of each age group's responses

49.2 Interpretation

Agreement with the suggested answer was high (over 83% in all groups) (see Figure 49.2), perhaps because of the words *fools* and *rush*, which make this phraseme relatively transparent.
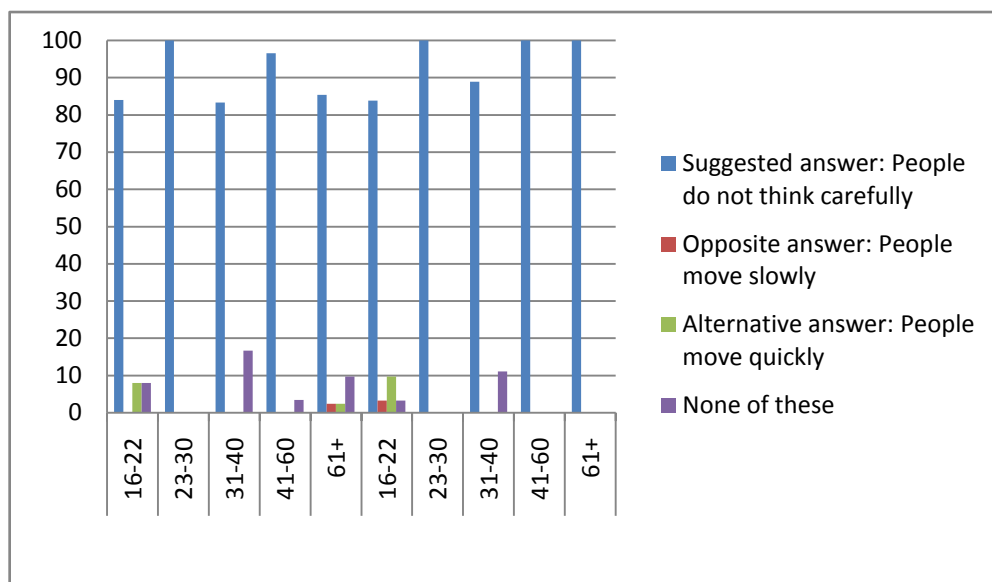
Figure 49.2: Interpretation of the phraseme *fools rush in where angels fear to tread* as a percentage of each age group's responses

49.3 Frequency of use

This phraseme appears to be used 'sometimes' by participants aged over 41, especially those in the UK (see Table 49.2). Thirty-one per cent of participants said they would use it 'sometimes'. It is therefore likely to be heard by the target group, possibly even among their peers.

Table 49.2: Frequency of use of the phraseme *fools rush in where angels fear to tread* as a percentage of each age group's responses

Location	Age group	Never	Almost never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
Australia	16-22	69	19	12	0	0
	23-30	60	40	0	0	0
	31-40	50	33	17	0	0
	41-60	21	38	38	3	0
	61+	5	35	53	8	0
UK	16-22	82	15	3	0	0
	23-30	33	33	33	0	0
	31-40	38	38	25	0	0
	41-60	19	19	63	0	0
	61+	22	11	67	0	0

49.4 Phrasemes most frequently elicited

The most common phraseme elicited was *a fool and his money are soon parted*, meaning that foolish people do not use their money thoughtfully. This had 22 Australian tokens, mainly from the 61+ group, and 5 UK tokens.

Look before you leap, advising someone to think before acting, which also appears in Survey 5, had 8 Australian and 5 UK tokens.

There's no fool like an old fool had 9 Australian and 2 UK tokens, all from participants aged over 31. The phraseme means that an older person who behaves foolishly is especially ridiculous.

49.5 Dictionary coverage

Fools rush in where angels fear to tread appears in *LDOCE, MEDAL*, and *OALD*. This is a phraseme that could appear in any MELD in Australia, since it may well be encountered by the target group.

A fool and his money are soon parted and *look before you leap* appear in *LDOCE, MEDAL* and *OALD. There's no fool like an old fool* appears only in *OALD*.

50. Survey 4, Phraseme 8: *To gild the lily*

Total Australian participants: 106
Total UK participants: 69
Suggested interpretation: Something is not worth doing
Dictionary inclusion: *CALD, LDOCE, MEDAL* and *OALD*

Table 50.1: Participant numbers for the phraseme *to gild the lily*

Australia	16-22	25
	23-30	5
	31-40	6
	41-60	29
	61+	41
	Total	**106**
UK	16-22	32
	23-30	3
	31-40	9
	41-60	16
	61+	9
	Total	**69**

50.1 Familiarity

This phraseme was unfamiliar to the youngest group, but very familiar to those aged over 31 (see Figure 50.1). Sixty-seven per cent of all participants had heard it before.
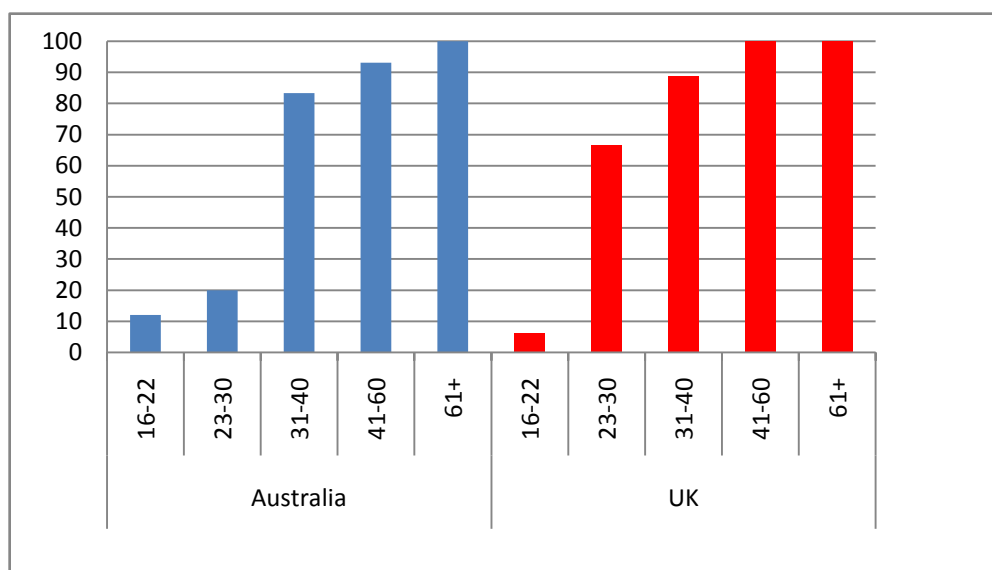
Figure 50.1: Familiarity with the phraseme *to gild the lily* as a percentage of each age group's responses

50.2 Interpretation

Agreement with the suggested answer varied greatly here (see Figure 50.2). I had deliberately given the choice 'something is not worth doing' rather than 'something is superfluous', as I did not think the word 'superfluous' would be familiar to many in the 16-22 group. Interestingly, in the UK everyone felt that either the suggested answer or the alternative 'something is difficult' was appropriate, whereas many Australians felt that none of the answers was adequate. All the UK 16-22 group concurred with the suggested answer, while there was a range of responses from the 16-22 and 23-30 Australian groups, who had been similarly unfamiliar with the phraseme. I can think of no reason why one group should guess more accurately than another.
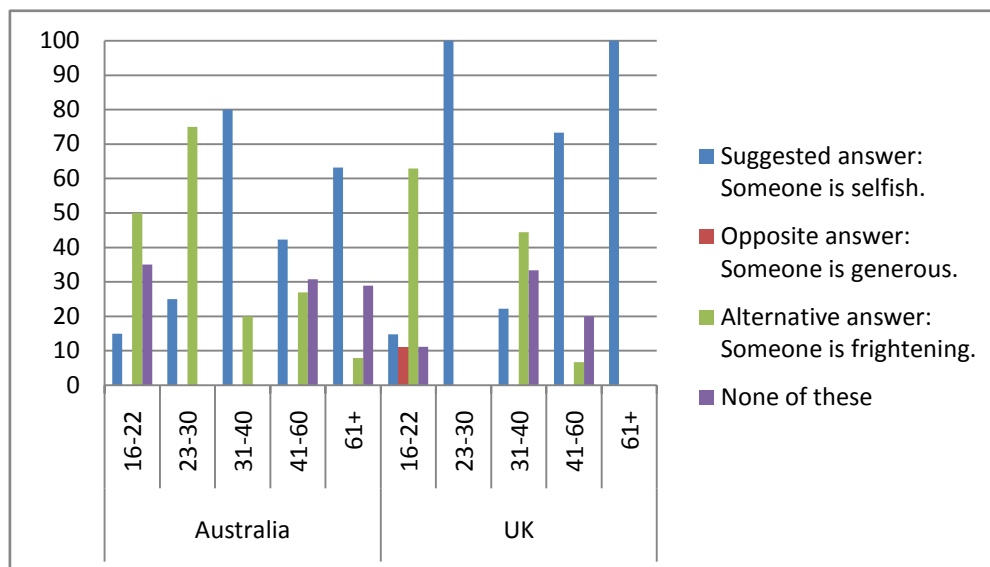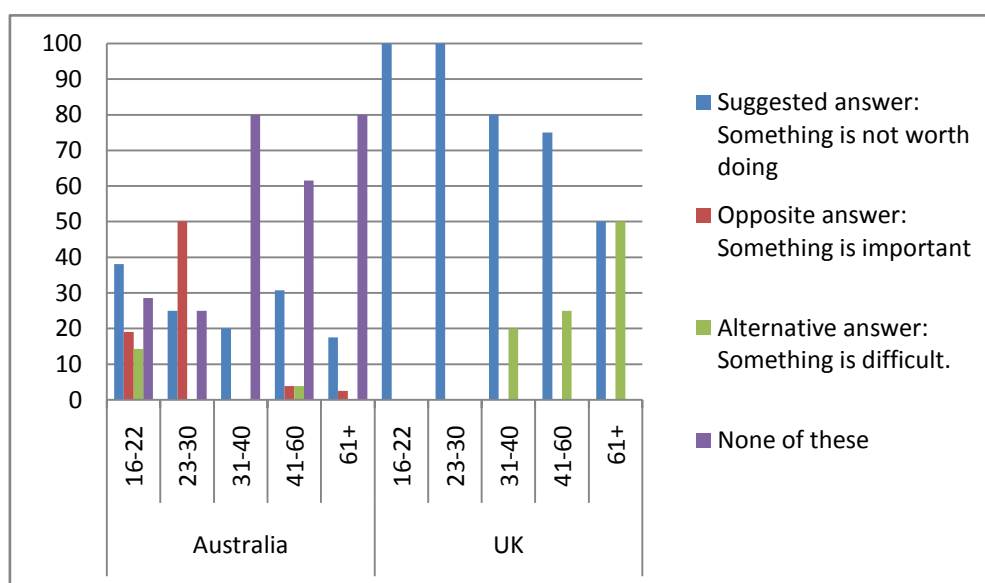

Figure 50.2: Interpretation of the phraseme *to gild the lily* as a percentage of each age group's responses

50.3 Frequency of use

This phraseme is seldom used by those under 41 in Australia (see Table 50.2), and 72% of Australian participants said they would never use it. It is therefore unlikely to be heard by the target group.

Table 50.2: Frequency of use of the phraseme *to gild the lily* as a percentage of each age group's responses

Location	Age group	Never	Almost never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
Australia	16-22	96	0	4	0	0
	23-30	100	0	0	0	0
	31-40	83	0	17	0	0
	41-60	47	30	17	7	0
	61+	34	24	39	2	0
UK	16-22	47	21	26	6	0
	23-30	50	0	0	50	0
	31-40	57	29	0	14	0
	41-60	36	21	36	7	0
	61+	40	20	30	10	0

50.4 Phrasemes most frequently elicited

No phrasemes were commonly elicited here.

50.5 Dictionary coverage

To gild the lily appears in *CALD, LDOCE, MEDAL* and *OALD*, giving high

coverage for a phraseme that is not used frequently in Australia.

51. Survey 4, Phraseme 9: *Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned*

Total Australian participants: 105
Total UK participants: 69
Suggested interpretation: Anger
Dictionary inclusion: *MEDAL* and *OALD*

Table 51.1: Participant numbers for the phraseme *hell hath no fury like a woman scorned*

Australia	16-22	24
	23-30	5
	31-40	6
	41-60	30
	61+	40
	Total	**105**
UK	16-22	32
	23-30	3
	31-40	9
	41-60	16
	61+	9
	Total	**69**

51.1 Familiarity

This phraseme was very familiar to all those aged 23 or over in the UK, and to those aged 31 or over in Australia. At least 41% of the youngest UK group and 67% of the youngest Australian group had also heard it before (see Figure 51.1). Overall familiarity was 87%.

Figure 51.1: Familiarity with the phraseme *hell hath no fury like a woman scorned* as a percentage of each age group's responses

51.2 Interpretation

Agreement with the suggested answer varied, with some participants preferring the answer 'none of these' and others choosing 'madness' (see Figure 51.2). This suggests that the phraseme may be reasonably opaque to the target group.
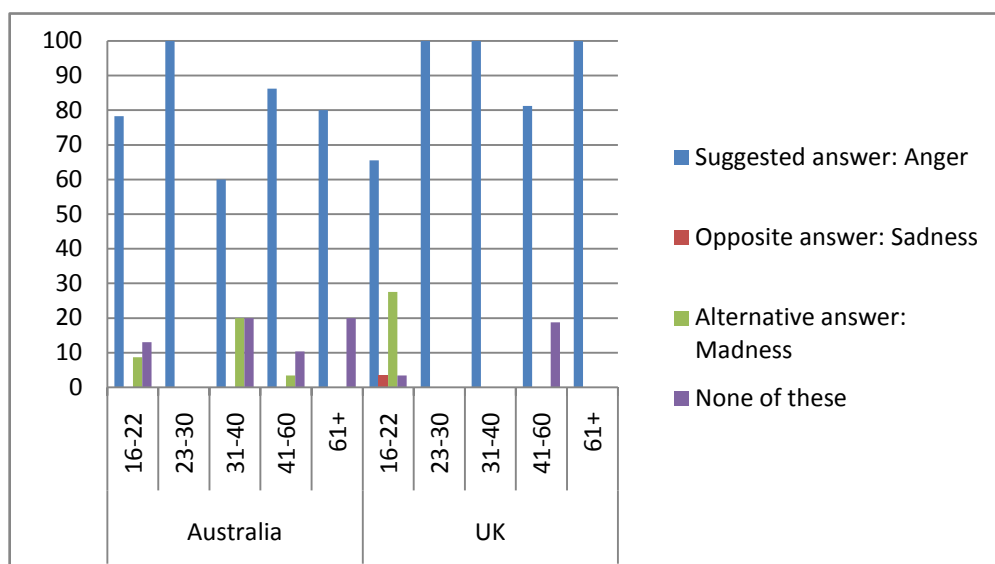
Figure 51.2: Interpretation of the phraseme *hell hath no fury like a woman scorned* as a percentage of each age group's responses

51.3 Frequency of use

Many age groups, including the 16-22 year olds in Australia, indicated that they would use this phraseme 'sometimes' (see Table 51.2). This suggests that the target group may hear the phraseme, possibly among their peers.

Table 51.2: Frequency of use of the phraseme *hell hath no fury like a woman scorned* as a percentage of each age group's responses

Location	Age group	Never	Almost never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
Australia	16-22	54	21	21	0	4
	23-30	40	60	0	0	0
	31-40	83	17	0	0	0
	41-60	34	34	24	7	0
	61+	18	48	30	3	3
UK	16-22	77	6	10	6	0
	23-30	33	33	33	0	0
	31-40	11	56	22	11	0
	41-60	25	25	44	0	6
	61+	11	56	33	0	0

51.4 Phrasemes most frequently elicited

To go to hell and back, meaning that someone has an extremely difficult time, had 10 Australian and 5 UK tokens from different age groups.

Until/when hell freezes over, meaning that something will never happen, prompted 14 Australian and 4 UK tokens, from a variety of age groups.

To go to hell in a handbasket, meaning that a situation is going badly, had 8 Australian and 3 UK tokens from all but the youngest group.

The road to hell is paved with good intentions, indicating that good intentions alone are not enough, had 4 Australian and 6 UK tokens, from the two oldest age groups.

51.5 Dictionary coverage

Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned appears in only two of the Big 5, in *MEDAL* and *OALD*. The fact that it is used by many age groups in Australia and may not necessarily be transparent indicates that it could usefully be included in a dictionary for the target group.

To go to hell and back appears in *CALD, LDOCE, MEDAL* and *OALD*. *Until/when hell freezes over* is in *CALD, LDOCE* and *MEDAL*, while *the road to hell is paved with good intentions* is listed in *CALD, MEDAL, OALD*. *To go to hell in a handbasket* appears only in *LDOCE* and *OALD*.

52. Survey 4, Phraseme 10: *Don't come the raw prawn with me*

Total Australian participants: 104
Total UK participants: 68
Suggested interpretation: Don't deceive me
Dictionary inclusion: *CALD*

Table 52.1: Participant numbers for the phraseme *don't come the raw prawn with me*

Australia	16-22	24
	23-30	5
	31-40	5
	41-60	30
	61+	40
	Total	**104**
UK	16-22	32
	23-30	3
	31-40	9
	41-60	15
	61+	9
	Total	**68**

52.1 Familiarity

This phraseme had a range of familiarity, with almost all the Australian participants aged over 31 indicating that they had heard the phraseme before but only the 31-40 and 61+ groups in the UK showing familiarity (see Figure 52.1). This suggests that the phraseme was particularly well known at a certain time, perhaps through the media, but has since lapsed in popularity. I cannot account for why the phraseme should have been heard before by 16% of the youngest UK group but only 8% of the youngest Australian group. Average familiarity was 54%.
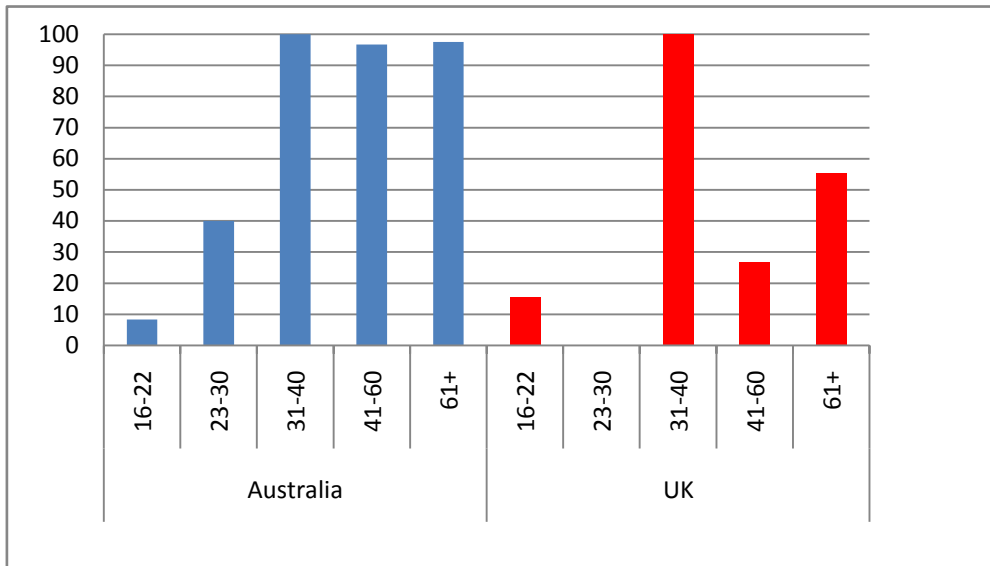
Figure 52.1: Familiarity with the phraseme *don't come the raw prawn with me* as a percentage of each age group's responses

52.2 Interpretation

Most participants agreed with the suggested answer, but several who were unfamiliar with the phraseme felt that none of the interpretations was adequate (see Figure 52.2).
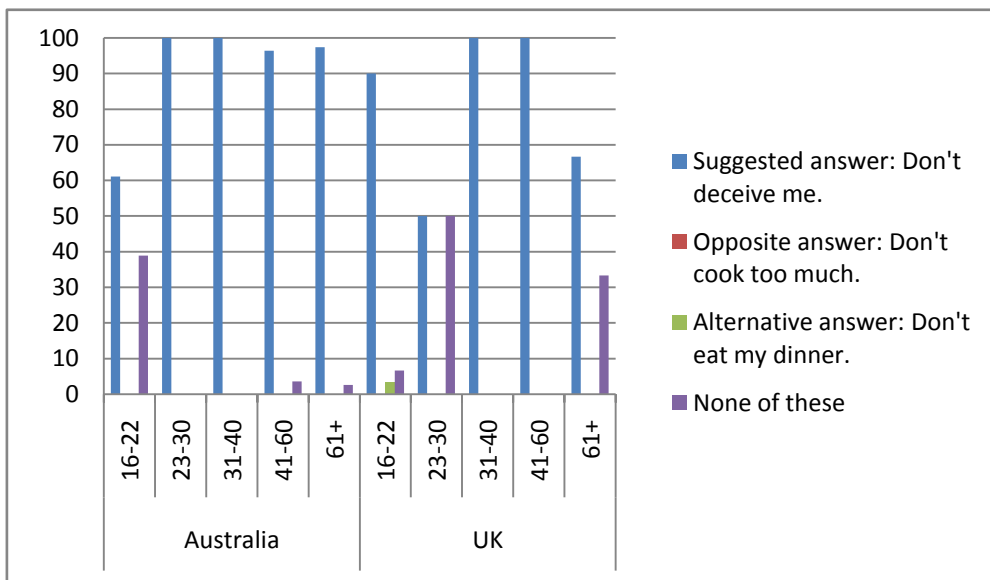
Figure 52.2: Interpretation of the phraseme *don't come the raw prawn with me* as a percentage of each age group's responses

52.3 Frequency of use

This phraseme is really only used by those over 31 in Australia, and particularly by those aged over 41 (see Table 52.2). It is the seventh least used phraseme in the questionnaire.

Table 52.2: Frequency of use of the phraseme *don't come the raw prawn with me* as a percentage of each age group's responses

Location	Age group	Never	Almost never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
Australia	16-22	95	5	0	0	0
	23-30	100	0	0	0	0
	31-40	80	20	0	0	0
	41-60	43	27	23	7	0
	61+	35	25	30	5	5
UK	16-22	84	13	3	0	0
	23-30	100	0	0	0	0
	31-40	100	0	0	0	0
	41-60	88	6	6	0	0
	61+	100	0	0	0	0

52.4 Phrasemes most frequently elicited

The only phraseme commonly elicited was *throw/chuck another prawn/shrimp on the barbie* (barbecue), which is not figurative but in some ways encapsulates one facet of Australian culture, namely the relaxed backyard barbecue. There were 18 Australian and 5 UKtokens, from all ages.

To pull the wool over someone's eyes, also meaning *to deceive someone*, had 5 tokens from the oldest Australian group and 2 tokens from the UK.

Off like a bucket of prawns in the sun, meaning that food has spoiled, had 5 Australian tokens from participants aged over 23.

52.5 Dictionary coverage

Don't come the raw prawn with me appears only in *CALD*, and is marked as an Australianism. Since it is little used by those under 41 in Australia, this lack of coverage appears to be appropriate.

Throw/chuck another prawn/shrimp on the barbie is not a phraseme, and so does not appear in the Big 5.

To pull the wool over someone's eyes is in all the Big 5, but the highly evocative *off like a bucket of prawns in the sun* is in none.

53. Survey 4, Phraseme 11: *To get a guernsey*

Total Australian participants: 103
Total UK participants: 69
Suggested interpretation: Success
Dictionary inclusion: *MEDAL* and *OALD*

Table 53.1: Participant numbers for the phraseme *to get a guernsey*

Australia	16-22	24
	23-30	5
	31-40	5
	41-60	30
	61+	39
	Total	**103**
UK	16-22	32
	23-30	3
	31-40	9
	41-60	16
	61+	9
	Total	**69**

53.1 Familiarity

This phraseme was entirely unknown to the UK participants, but well known by those over 31 in Australia (see Figure 53.1). Overall, 70% of Australians had heard it before.
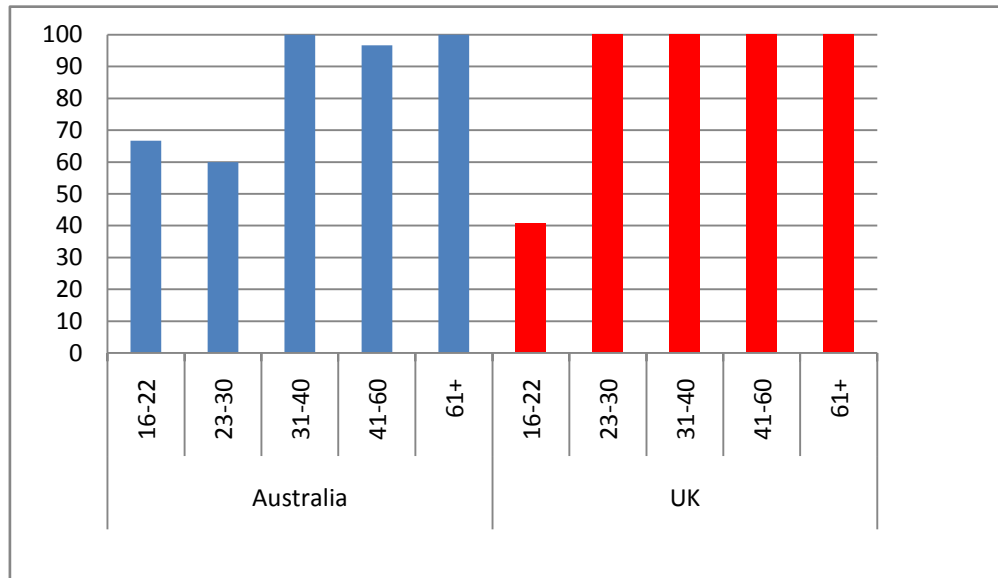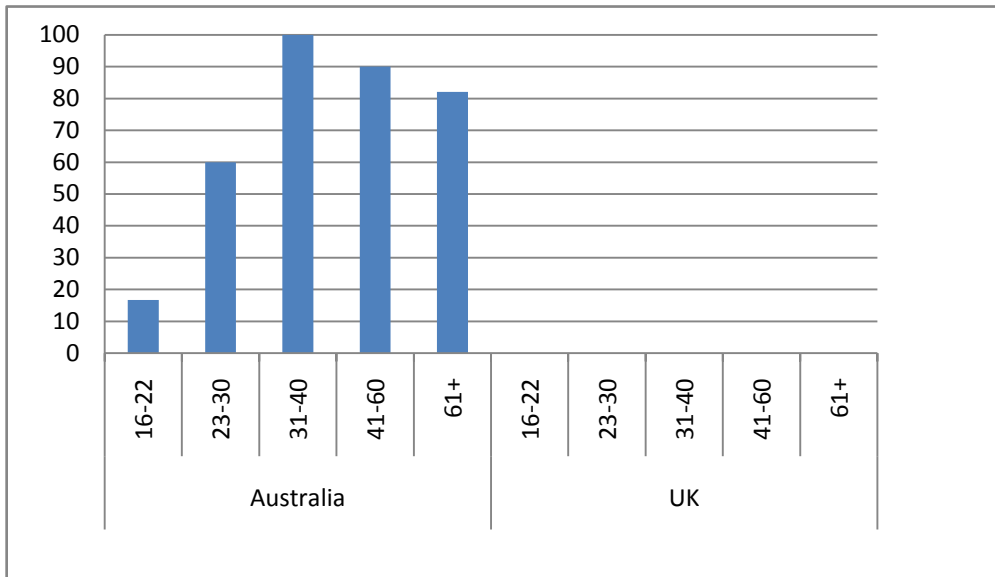
Figure 53.1: Familiarity with the phraseme *to get a guernsey* as a percentage of each age group's responses

53.2 Interpretation

Although the majority of Australian participants agreed with the suggested answer, UK participants, all of whom were unfamiliar with the phraseme, gave varied answers, suggesting that this phraseme is very opaque (see Figure 53.2).

Figure 53.2: Interpretation of the phraseme *to get a guernsey* as a percentage of each age group's responses

53.3 Frequency of use

This phraseme is understandably unused in the UK, but Table 53.2 indicates that it is in use in Australia, although it is almost unused by the youngest age group. The 3% 'often' figure from a younger UK participant may be discounted as anomalous, since the person did not know the phraseme, although it might be taken to mean that they would use the phraseme in the future.

Table 53.2: Frequency of use of the phraseme *to get a guernsey* as a percentage of each age group's responses

Location	Age group	Never	Almost never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
Australia	16-22	96	0	4	0	0
	23-30	40	40	20	0	0
	31-40	80	0	20	0	0
	41-60	54	32	11	4	0
	61+	39	37	21	0	3
UK	16-22	97	0	0	3	0
	23-30	100	0	0	0	0
	31-40	100	0	0	0	0
	41-60	100	0	0	0	0
	61+	100	0	0	0	0

53.4 Phrasemes most frequently elicited

The only phraseme commonly elicited was *to give someone/to give that a guernsey,* meaning *to praise someone/something for their achievements*, with 10 Australian tokens from participants aged 23 and over.

53.5 Dictionary coverage

To get a guernsey appears under *guernsey* in *MEDAL* and *OALD.* In each case it is marked as Australian English. Since this appears to be a fairly popular phraseme in Australia, wider dictionary coverage would be helpful.

To be given a guernsey appears only in *MEDAL.*

54. Survey 4, Phraseme 12: *The man/woman on the Clapham omnibus*

Total Australian participants: 104
Total UK participants: 66
Suggested interpretation: This person represents ordinary people
Dictionary inclusion: *CALD, LDOCE* and *OALD*

Table 54.1: Participant numbers for the phraseme *the man/woman on the Clapham omnibus*

Australia	16-22	24
	23-30	5
	31-40	5
	41-60	30
	61+	40
	Total	**104**
UK	16-22	30
	23-30	3
	31-40	8
	41-60	16
	61+	9
	Total	**66**

54.1 Familiarity

With the exception of the 41-60 group, few participants in Australia had heard this phraseme before; it was more familiar in the UK, especially to those over 41 (see Figure 54.1). Average familiarity was 30%, putting it in 81st position out of the 84 phrasemes in the questionnaire.

Figure 54.1: Familiarity with the phraseme *the man/woman on the Clapham omnibus* as a percentage of each age group's responses

54.2 Interpretation

Agreement with the suggested answer was high in those age groups who were more familiar with this phraseme, and even among some who were less familiar (see Figure 54.2). Other groups, however, found it harder to guess, and many chose the opposite answer, 'This person represents loneliness', perhaps based on the accompanying picture, which portrayed a person sitting alone on a bus. This phraseme is therefore reasonably opaque.

Figure 54.2: Interpretation of the phraseme *the man/woman on the Clapham omnibus* as a percentage of each age group's responses

54.3 Frequency of use

This phraseme is not frequently used, although it is used occasionally in the UK by those aged 31 and over (see Table 54.2). An average of 87% of participants said they would never use it, making it the third least-used phraseme in the questionnaire.

Table 54.2: Frequency of use of the phraseme *the man/woman on the Clapham omnibus* as a percentage of each age group's responses

Location	Age group	Never	Almost never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
Australia	16-22	96	4	0	0	0
	23-30	100	0	0	0	0
	31-40	100	0	0	0	0
	41-60	77	15	8	0	0
	61+	100	0	0	0	0
UK	16-22	90	3	7	0	0
	23-30	100	0	0	0	0
	31-40	75	13	13	0	0
	41-60	56	25	19	0	0
	61+	75	13	13	0	0

54.4 Phrasemes most frequently elicited

The man in the street, also referring to an average, representative person, received 10 Australian and 11 UK tokens from participants aged 31 and over, while the variation *the man on the street* had 7 UK tokens from a variety of age groups.

54.5 Dictionary coverage

The man/woman on the Clapham omnibus appears in *CALD*, *LDOCE* and *OALD*. This is unnecessarily good coverage for a little-used phraseme.

The man/woman in the street appears in all the Big 5, with the variation *on* appearing in *CALD*, *LDOCE* and *MEDAL*.

55. Survey 4, Phraseme 13: *To be/look every inch*

Total Australian participants: 104
Total UK participants: 60
Suggested interpretation: To be or look like something else
Dictionary inclusion: *CALD, COBUILD, LDOCE, MEDAL* and *OALD*

Table 55.1: Participant numbers for the phraseme *to be/look every inch*

Australia	16-22	24
	23-30	5
	31-40	5
	41-60	30
	61+	40
	Total	**104**
UK	16-22	23
	23-30	9
	31-40	3
	41-60	16
	61+	9
	Total	**60**

55.1 Familiarity

This phraseme showed a more even spread of familiarity in Australia, ranging from 42% to 80%, and wider differences in the UK, from 24% to 89% (see Figure 55.1). Overall familiarity was 60%.
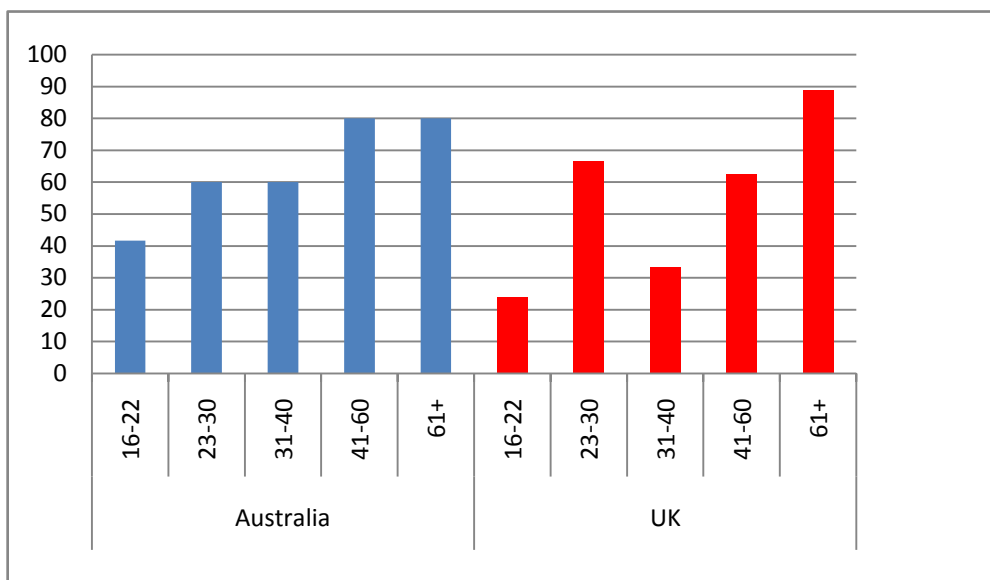
Figure 55.1: Familiarity with the phraseme *to be/look every inch* as a percentage of each age group's responses

55.2 Interpretation

Agreement with the suggested answer did not rise above 50%, with many people feeling that 'none of these' was more appropriate (see Figure 55.2). Perhaps the words 'something else' in the suggested answer confused people. They were intended to encapsulate the idea that someone bears a close resemblance to another person or identity in every way (as in the *CALD* example, 'She looked every inch a vampire in her costume').
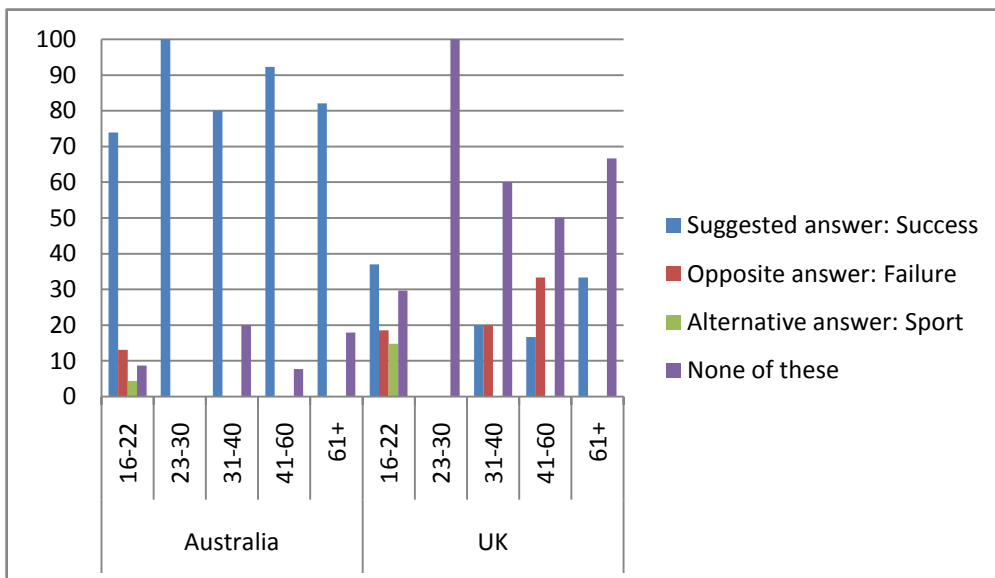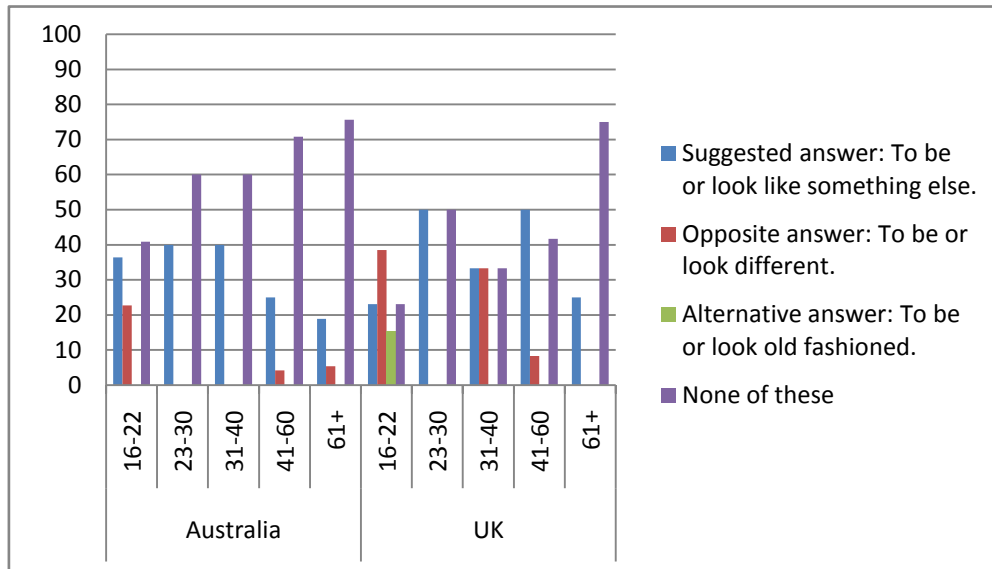
Figure 55.2: Interpretation of the phraseme *to be/look every inch* as a percentage of each age group's responses

55.3 Frequency of use

This phraseme appears not to be in frequent use except by two participants (29%) in the Australian 31-40 group (see Table 55.2). Seventy-one per cent of people said they would never use it, and only the oldest UK group gave a high 'sometimes' rating.

Table 55.2: Frequency of use of the phraseme *to be/look every inch* as a percentage of each age group's responses

Location	Age group	Never	Almost never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
Australia	16-22	87	4	9	0	0
	23-30	100	0	0	0	0
	31-40	57	14	0	0	29
	41-60	73	20	7	0	0
	61+	50	33	15	3	0
UK	16-22	79	17	3	0	0
	23-30	67	33	0	0	0
	31-40	100	0	0	0	0
	41-60	56	31	13	0	0
	61+	38	13	50	0	0

55.4 Phrasemes most frequently elicited

The phrasemes most commonly elicited here were those found or suggested in the other surveys: *give an inch take a mile* (48 Australian and 27 UK tokens), *give an inch take a yard* (6 Australian and 3 UK tokens), and *inch by inch* (12 Australian and 5 UK tokens).

55.5 Dictionary coverage

To be/look every inch is found in all the Big 5. This is perhaps unnecessarily high coverage for a phraseme that is little used except by the older UK groups.

Give an inch take a mile/yard is found in all except *COBUILD* while *inch by inch* appears in all the Big 5.

56. Survey 4, Phraseme 14: *Two a penny*

Total Australian participants: 103
Total UK participants: 66
Suggested interpretation: Things are cheap
Dictionary inclusion: *CALD, COBUILD, LDOCE, MEDAL* and *OALD*

Table 56.1: Participant numbers for the phraseme *two a penny*

Australia	16-22	24
	23-30	5
	31-40	5
	41-60	30
	61+	39
	Total	**103**
UK	16-22	30
	23-30	3
	31-40	8
	41-60	16
	61+	9
	Total	**66**

56.1 Familiarity

The majority of UK participants (91%) had heard this phraseme before, but it was slightly less well known in Australia (67%) (see Figure 56.1).
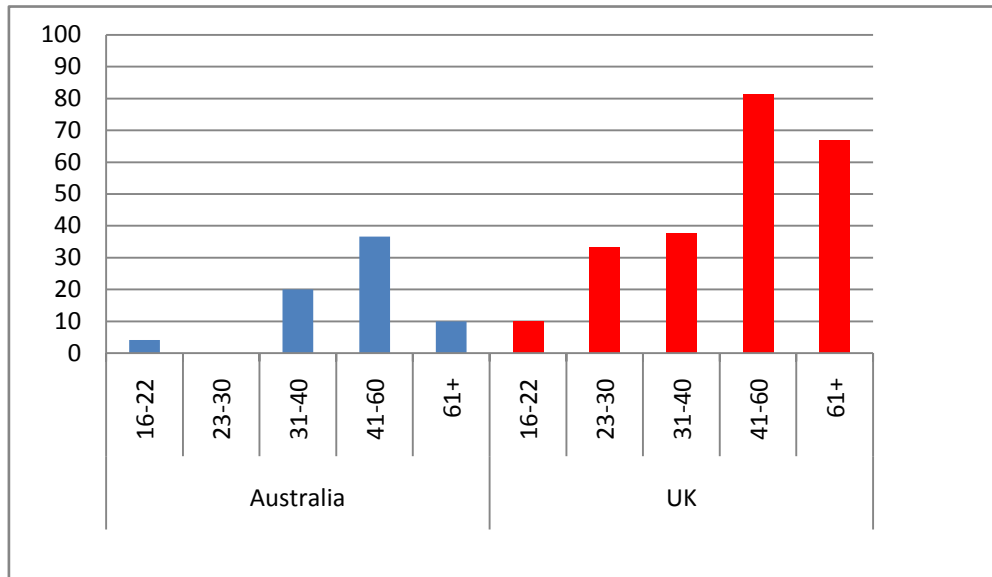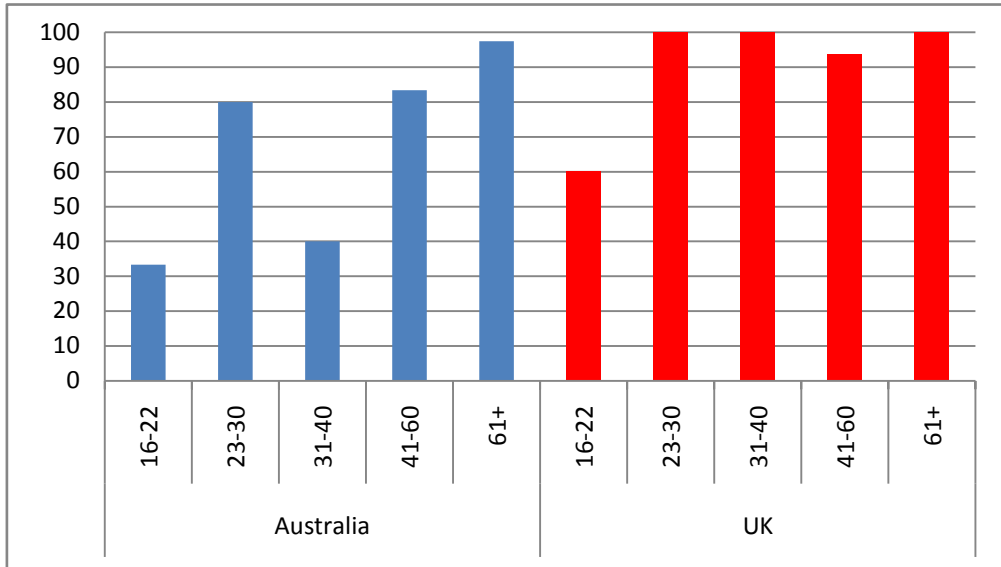
Figure 56.1: Familiarity with the phraseme *two a penny* as a percentage of each age group's responses

56.2 Interpretation

Agreement with the suggested answer was higher in those groups where participants were already more familiar with the phraseme (see Figure 56.2), indicating that it may not be easy to guess.
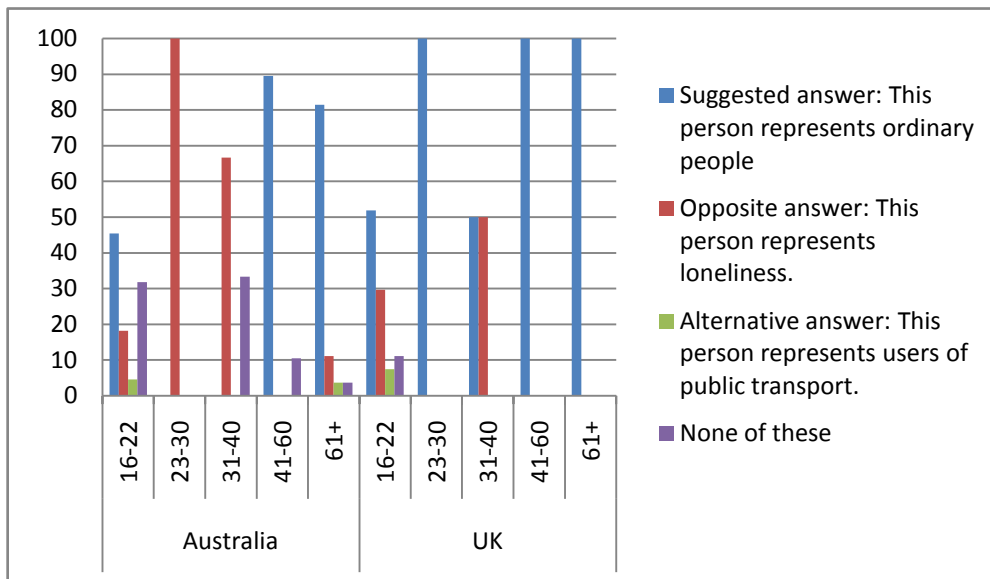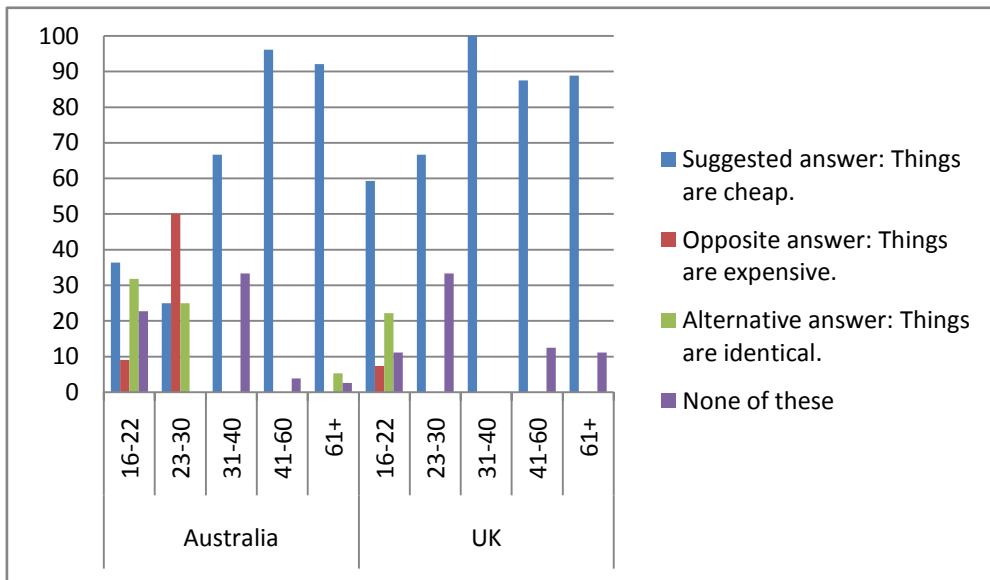

Figure 56.2: Interpretation of the phraseme *two a penny* as a percentage of each age group's responses

56.3 Frequency of use

This phraseme is used much more in the UK (see Table 56.2) than Australia, where 77% of participants said they would never use it. This indicates that the target group might not encounter it often.

Table 56.2: Frequency of use of the phraseme *two a penny* as a percentage of each age group's responses

Location	Age group	Never	Almost never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
Australia	16-22	88	8	4	0	0
	23-30	100	0	0	0	0
	31-40	100	0	0	0	0
	41-60	71	18	7	4	0
	61+	26	29	39	5	0
UK	16-22	66	14	21	0	0
	23-30	33	33	33	0	0
	31-40	50	13	38	0	0
	41-60	13	25	56	6	0
	61+	0	33	67	0	0

56.4 Phrasemes most frequently elicited

There were many suggestions based on the word *penny*, indicating that in spite of decimal currency in the UK, and dollars and cents in Australia the word *penny* is still very familiar. *In for a penny in for a pound*, meaning that once someone is committed to an action there is no going back, attracted 27 Australian and 13 UK tokens. *Spend a penny*, which also appears in Survey 6, had 18 Australian and 15 UK tokens. *A penny for your thoughts*, indicating that someone is interested in what another person is thinking, had 20 Australian and 10 UK tokens, from a variety of age groups. *Penny wise pound foolish*, meaning that someone is not careful with their money, had 18 Australian and 8 UK tokens. *Look after/take care of the pennies and the pounds will look after themselves*, advocating thriftiness, had 8 Australian and 12 UK tokens, across the age groups. *The penny*

drops, which also appears in Survey 5, had 10 Australian and 4 UK tokens, again across the age groups.

Cheap as chips, meaning that something is very cheap, had 9 Australian and 3 UK tokens, all from those aged 41 and over. I had expected to see this phraseme across a wider range in Australia, since there is a popular discount store there of the same name.

56.5 Dictionary coverage

Two a penny is in all the Big 5 except *MEDAL*, which gives only *ten a penny*. The other dictionaries also include *ten a penny*, which was suggested by only 3 of the participants, all in the UK. Since the phraseme is not frequently used in Australia, the coverage is unnecessarily high for the target group, although it matches UK usage.

In for a penny in for a pound; *spend a penny; a penny for your thoughts*; and *the penny drops* appear in all the Big 5 except *COBUILD*. *Penny wise pound foolish* appears only in *CALD* and *MEDAL. Look after/take care of the pennies and the pounds will look after themselves* and c*heap as chips* are not in any of the Big 5.

57. Survey 5, Phraseme 1: *To separate the wheat from the chaff*

Total Australian participants: 116
Total UK participants: 75
Suggested interpretation: Things may look the same, but they can be separated
Dictionary inclusion: *CALD, COBUILD, LDOCE, MEDAL* and *OALD*

Table 57.1: Participant numbers for the phraseme *to separate the wheat from the chaff*

Australia	16-22	32
	23-30	5
	31-40	8
	41-60	32
	61+	39
	Total	**116**
UK	16-22	39
	23-30	5
	31-40	7
	41-60	16
	61+	8
	Total	**75**

57.1 Familiarity

This phraseme was very familiar to all except the youngest group in the UK, and to all except those aged below 31 in Australia (see Figure 57.1). Average familiarity was 82%.
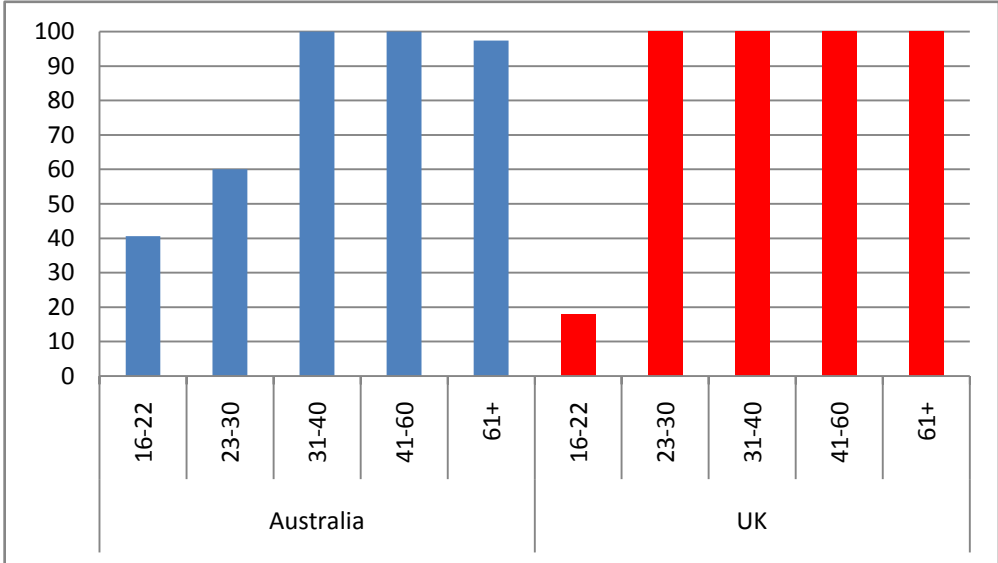
Figure 57.1: Familiarity with the phraseme *to separate the wheat from the chaff* as a percentage of each age group's responses

57.2 Interpretation

As with the earlier *to separate the sheep from the goats* (Survey 4, Phraseme 5), many people did not feel that the suggested answer was adequate, preferring the

response 'none of these' (see Figure 57.2). Again, they may have preferred the idea of separating the good from the bad.
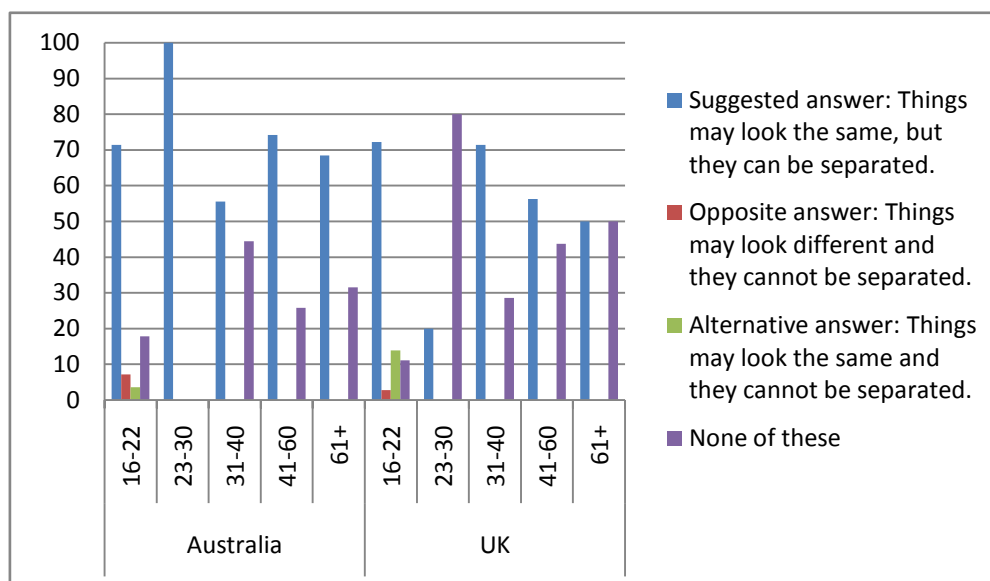
Figure 57.2: Interpretation of the phraseme *to separate the wheat from the chaff* as a percentage of each age group's responses

57.3 Frequency of use

This phraseme appears to be used relatively frequently, especially in the UK and among those aged 31 and over (see Table 57.2).

Table 57.2: Frequency of use of the phraseme *to separate the wheat from the chaff* as a percentage of each age group's responses

Location	Age group	Never	Almost never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
Australia	16-22	75	19	6	0	0
	23-30	40	60	0	0	0
	31-40	33	33	33	0	0
	41-60	30	30	36	3	0
	61+	15	41	41	3	0
UK	16-22	81	17	3	0	0
	23-30	20	60	0	20	0
	31-40	14	29	57	0	0
	41-60	13	25	56	6	0
	61+	0	63	38	0	0

57.4 Phrasemes most frequently elicited

To separate the sheep from the goats, which appeared in Survey 4, had 22 Australian and 15 UK tokens, indicating that it is a fairly popular phraseme. *To separate the men from the boys*, meaning that the strongest or most experienced are separated from the weakest or most inexperienced, had 9 Australian and 15 UK tokens, from all age groups.

57.5 Dictionary coverage

To separate the wheat from the chaff appears in all the Big 5. This coverage is excellent.

To separate the sheep from the goats is found in all the Big 5 except *COBUILD*, while *to separate the men from the boys* appears only in *MEDAL* and *LDOCE*.

58. Survey 5, Phraseme 2: *(It is like) the blind leading the blind*

Total Australian participants: 116
Total UK participants: 70
Suggested interpretation: No one here knows what they are doing.
Dictionary inclusion: *CALD, LDOCE, MEDAL* and *OALD*

Table 58.1: Participant numbers for the phraseme *the blind leading the blind*

Australia	16-22	32
	23-30	5
	31-40	8
	41-60	32
	61+	39
	Total	**116**
UK	16-22	33
	23-30	6
	31-40	7
	41-60	16
	61+	8
	Total	**70**

58.1 Familiarity

This phraseme was familiar to almost everyone in the survey, though less so to the youngest UK group (see Figure 58.1). Average familiarity was 93%.
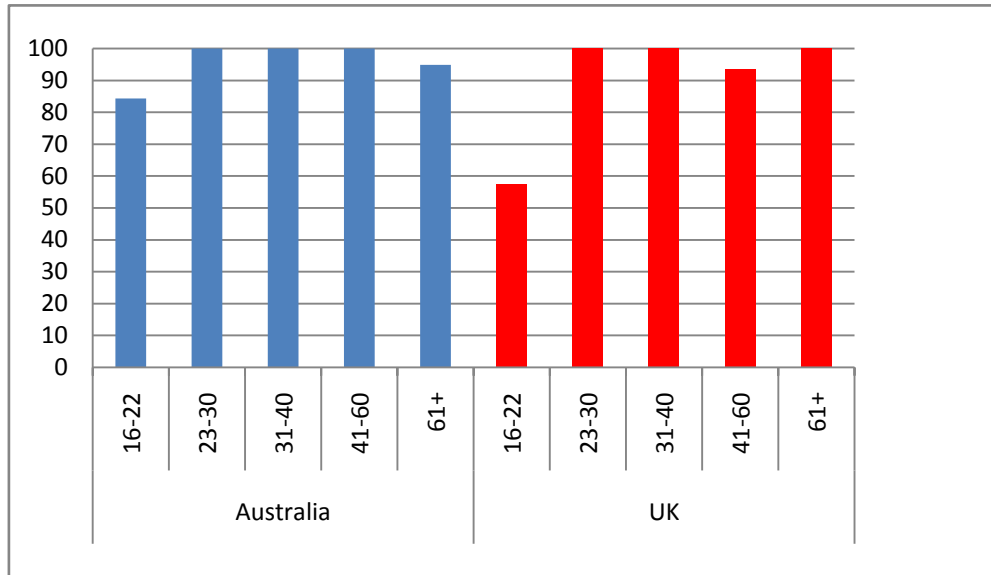
Figure 58.1: Familiarity with the phraseme the blind leading the blind as a percentage of each age group's responses

58.2 Interpretation

Almost everyone agreed with the suggested answer (see Figure 58.2), indicating that the phraseme is very transparent.
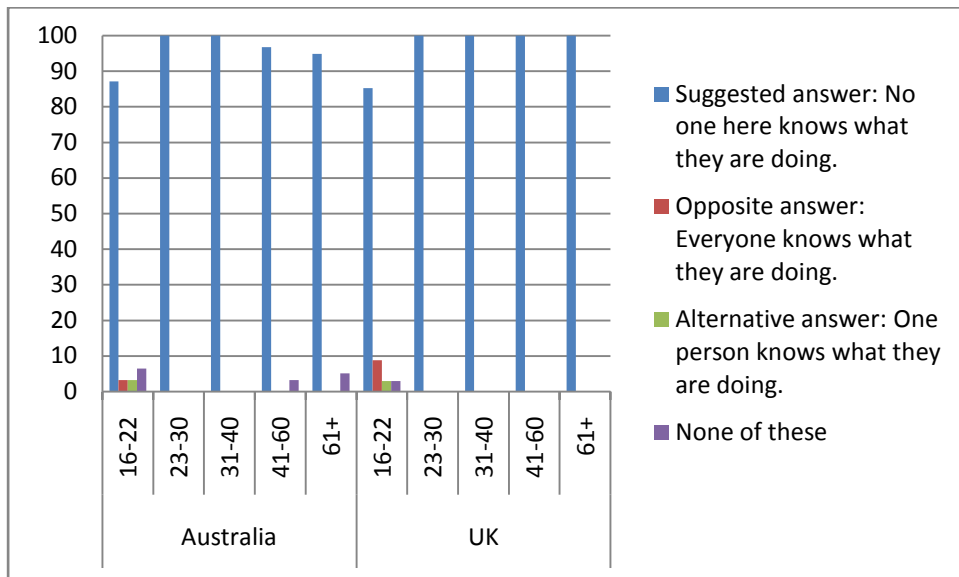
Figure 58.2: Interpretation of the phraseme *the blind leading the blind* as a percentage of each age group's responses

58.3 Frequency of use

This phraseme has a high frequency of use, with 50% of participants saying they would use it 'sometimes' and many indicating they would use it 'often'. This was the third highest rate in the questionnaire. Even the youngest Australian group gave it a 28% rating of 'sometimes' and a 19% rating of 'often' (see Table 58.2), indicating that the target group are quite likely to hear the phraseme.

Table 58.2: Frequency of use of the phraseme *the blind leading the blind* as a percentage of each age group's responses

Location	Age group	Never	Almost never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
Australia	16-22	25	19	28	19	9
	23-30	20	0	60	20	0
	31-40	0	25	50	25	0
	41-60	0	16	58	26	0
	61+	3	18	56	21	3
UK	16-22	50	21	24	6	0
	23-30	0	25	75	0	0
	31-40	0	14	43	43	0
	41-60	13	6	56	19	6
	61+	0	0	63	38	0

58.4 Phrasemes most frequently elicited

The most common phraseme elicited here was the phraseme *as blind as a bat*, meaning that someone hardly sees or notices anything, with 18 Australian and 14 UK tokens, from all age groups. The phraseme *in the country/land/kingdom of the blind the one-eyed man is king* had 9 Australian and 9 UK tokens, from all except the youngest group.

58.9 Dictionary coverage

The blind leading the blind appears in *CALD, LDOCE, MEDAL* and *OALD*, giving good coverage for a well-known and frequently used phraseme.

As blind as a bat appears in *CALD, LDOCE* and *OALD*. *In the country of the blind the one-eyed man is king* appears only in *CALD*.

59. Survey 5, Phraseme 3: *A land of milk and honey*

Total Australian participants: 116
Total UK participants: 70
Suggested interpretation: This place offers lots of good things.
Dictionary inclusion: *CALD, LDOCE, MEDAL* and *OALD*

Table 59.1: Participant numbers for the phraseme *a land of milk and honey*

Australia	16-22	32
	23-30	5
	31-40	8
	41-60	32
	61+	39
	Total	**116**
UK	16-22	35
	23-30	4
	31-40	6
	41-60	17
	61+	8
	Total	**70**

59.1 Familiarity

This phraseme was generally more familiar in the UK, except among the youngest

group (see Figure 59.1). The average rate of familiarity was 87%.

Figure 59.1: Familiarity with the phraseme *a land of milk and honey* as a
percentage of each age group's responses

59.2 Interpretation

Agreement with the suggested answer was almost 100%, except among the

youngest UK group, who were less familiar with the phraseme (see Figure 59.2).

This could indicate that the phraseme is not altogether transparent.
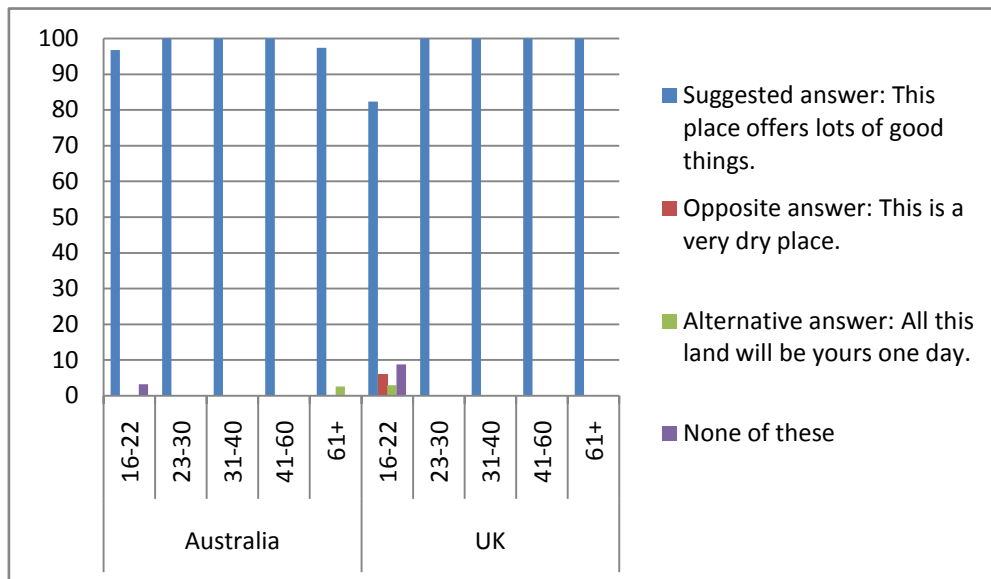
Figure 59.2: Interpretation of the phraseme *a land of milk and honey* as a percentage of each age group's responses

59.3 Frequency of use

This phraseme appears to be in use by all age groups, including 50% of the youngest Australians (see Table 59.2). The target group may therefore encounter it among their peers.

Table 59.2: Frequency of use of the phraseme *a land of milk and honey* as a percentage of each age group's responses

Location	Age group	Never	Almost never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
Australia	16-22	50	19	25	3	3
	23-30	40	40	20	0	0
	31-40	43	57	0	0	0
	41-60	31	44	25	0	0
	61+	10	46	38	5	0
UK	16-22	72	16	6	0	6
	23-30	25	50	25	0	0
	31-40	43	43	14	0	0
	41-60	13	56	25	6	0
	61+	25	38	38	0	0

59.4 Phrasemes most frequently elicited

The only phraseme commonly suggested here was *the promised land*, meaning a place which has plenty to offer, with 6 Australian and 5 UK tokens, all from participants aged 23 and over.

59.5 Dictionary coverage

A land of milk and honey is listed in *CALD, LDOCE, MEDAL* and *OALD*. This is good coverage for a familiar and well-used phraseme which the target group might encounter.

The Promised Land appears with capitalisation in *CALD, LDOCE* and *MEDAL*, and without capitalisation in *COBUILD*.

60. Survey 5, Phraseme 4: *The road to Damascus*

Total Australian participants: 116
Total UK participants: 67
Suggested interpretation: It was a life-changing experience
Dictionary inclusion: *CALD, LDOCE, MEDAL* and *OALD*

Table 60.1: Participant numbers for the phraseme *the road to Damascus*

Australia	16-22	32
	23-30	5
	31-40	8
	41-60	32
	61+	39
	Total	**116**
UK	16-22	33
	23-30	3
	31-40	7
	41-60	16
	61+	8
	Total	**67**

60.1 Familiarity

This phraseme showed an interesting pattern of being almost unknown to those aged 16-22, but well known by all the other groups, with no gradual transition in

familiarity as age progressed (see Figure 60.1). It was familiar to an average 76% of participants.
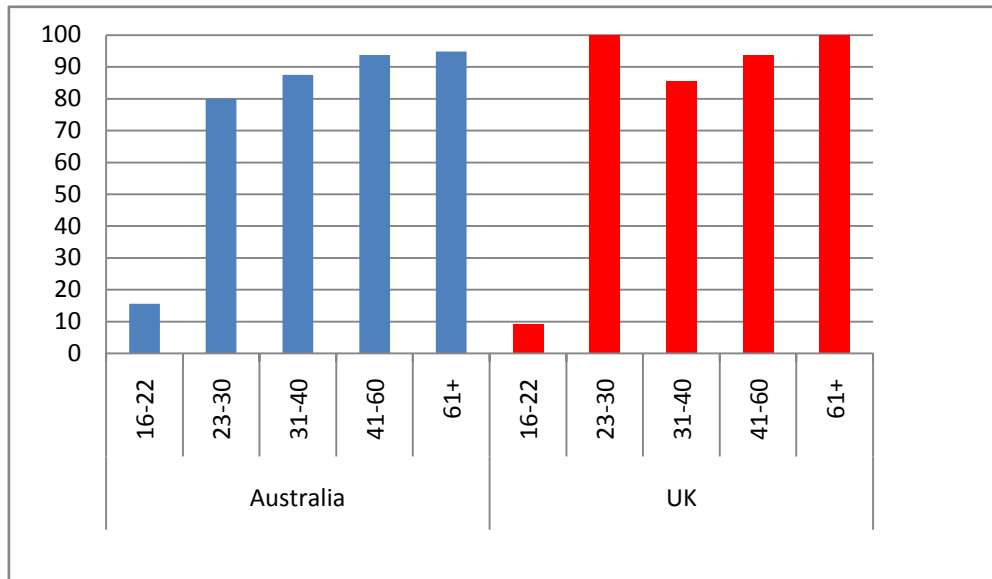
Figure 60.1: Familiarity with the phraseme *the road to Damascus* as a percentage of each age group's responses

60.2 Interpretation

Agreement with the suggested answer was very high, except among the youngest group, many of whom found it hard to guess the meaning (see Figure 60.2).
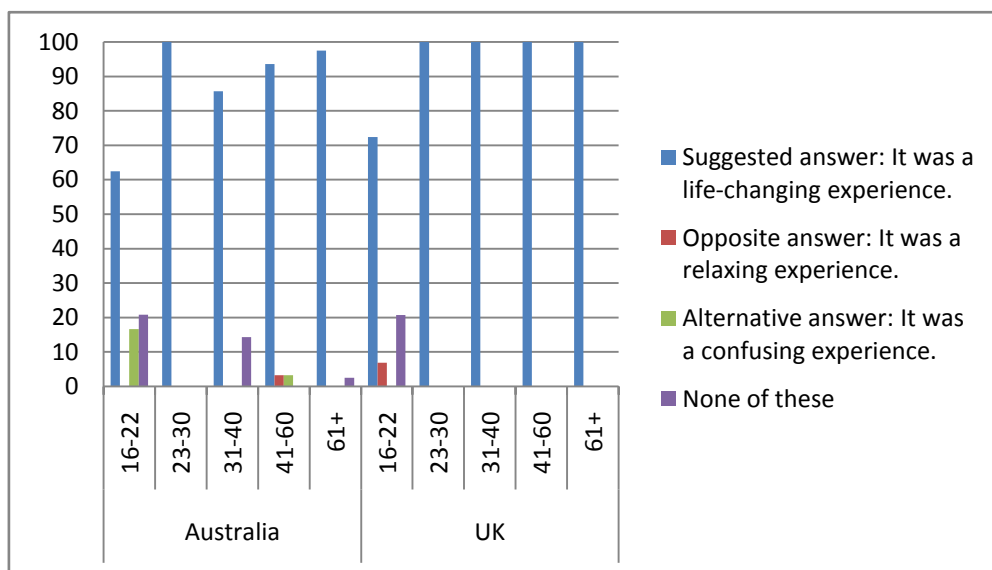
Figure 60.2: Interpretation of the phraseme *the road to Damascus* as a percentage of each age group's responses

60.3 Frequency of use

An average 69% of participants said they would never use this phraseme. It may therefore not be encountered by the target group, except among older speakers (see Table 60.2).

Table 60.2: Frequency of use of the phraseme *the road to Damascus* as a percentage of each age group's responses

Location	Age group	Never	Almost never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
Australia	16-22	88	13	0	0	0
	23-30	80	20	0	0	0
	31-40	63	13	25	0	0
	41-60	72	13	16	0	0
	61+	45	39	16	0	0
UK	16-22	100	0	0	0	0
	23-30	67	33	0	0	0
	31-40	71	29	0	0	0
	41-60	44	31	19	6	0
	61+	63	13	25	0	0

60.4 Phrasemes most frequently elicited

It's a long road that has no turning had 6 Australian and 4 UK tokens, all from those aged 41 or over. This does not appear in any of the Big 5, but a Google search revealed 1620 hits, with meanings varying from 'this is a boring path to take' to 'take encouragement on a difficult path'. *The long and winding road* had 7 Australian and 8 UK tokens, from a variety of age groups. Again, it does not appear in the Big 5, but it is the title of a song by Paul McCartney. *All roads lead to Rome*, meaning there are many ways to reach the same goal, had 8 Australian and 4 UK tokens, from a mixture of ages. *On the road to nowhere*, meaning that someone has bad prospects, had 18 Australian and 9 UK tokens, especially from the youngest group. *The road to hell is paved with good intentions* had 10 Australian and 7 UK tokens, again from a variety of groups.

60.5 Dictionary coverage

The road to Damascus is listed in *CALD, LDOCE, MEDAL* and *OALD*. This is good coverage in relation to the target group, who might hear the phraseme from older speakers.

The road to hell is paved with good intentions appears in all except *COBUILD*, and *all roads lead to Rome* appears only in *CALD*. The other phrasemes do not appear in the Big 5, although *on the road to something* appears in *CALD, LDOCE* and *MEDAL*. While *the long and winding road* and *on the road to nowhere* may be fairly self-explanatory, *all roads lead to Rome* might be worthy of future inclusion in more MELDs, given the large number of tokens it elicited from all age groups.

61. Survey 5, Phraseme 5: *The salt of the earth.*

Total Australian participants: 116
Total UK participants: 67
Suggested interpretation: Certain people are important
Dictionary inclusion: *CALD, LDOCE, MEDAL* and *OALD*

Table 61.1: Participant numbers for the phraseme *the salt of the earth*

Australia	16-22	32
	23-30	5
	31-40	8
	41-60	32
	61+	39
	Total	**116**
UK	16-22	33
	23-30	3
	31-40	7
	41-60	16
	61+	8
	Total	**67**

61.1 Familiarity

This phraseme was very familiar to all the older participants and recognised by 39% of the youngest group in the UK and 59% of the youngest group in Australia (see Figure 61.1). Overall familiarity was 89%.
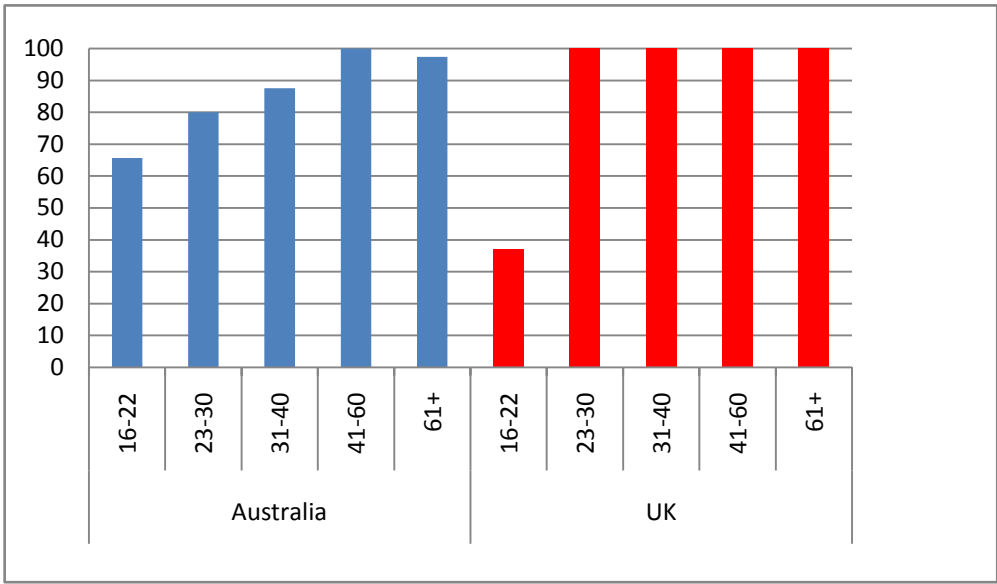

Figure 61.1: Familiarity with the phraseme *the salt of the earth* as a percentage of each age group's responses

61.2 Interpretation

Agreement with the suggested answer was not high, except in the youngest two age groups in the UK (see Figure 61.2). Many people preferred the choice 'none of these', perhaps because the suggested answer did not carry the common implications of honesty combined with ordinariness. Nevertheless, many participants did feel that the suggested answer was adequate, indicating that the phraseme has more than one connotation, perhaps depending on theological knowledge.
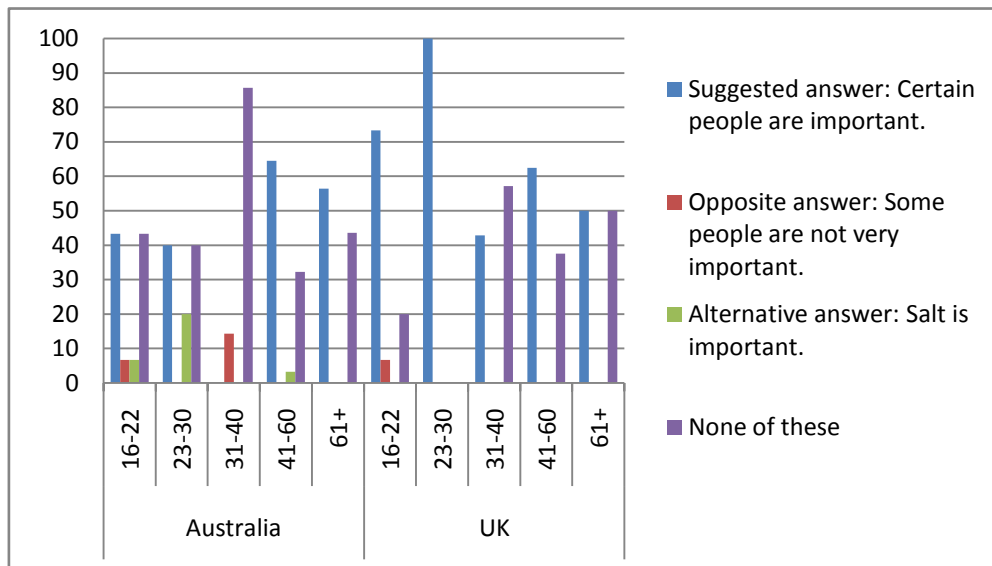
Figure 61.2: Interpretation of the phraseme *the salt of the earth* as a percentage of each age group's responses

61.3 Frequency of use

Almost every group indicated that they would use this phraseme 'sometimes' (average 28%), and some said that they would use it 'often' (see Table 61.2). This means that the target group are likely to encounter it, although this would be more likely in their interactions with older people than with their peers.

Table 61.2: Frequency of use of the phraseme *the salt of the earth* as a percentage of each age group's responses

Location	Age group	Never	Almost never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
Australia	16-22	67	20	10	3	0
	23-30	60	20	20	0	0
	31-40	25	50	13	13	0
	41-60	19	29	52	0	0
	61+	5	35	46	14	0
UK	16-22	79	10	7	3	0
	23-30	33	67	0	0	0
	31-40	14	57	29	0	0
	41-60	13	38	38	13	0
	61+	25	13	63	0	0

61.4 Phrasemes most frequently elicited

The most common suggestion was *to be worth one's salt*, meaning that someone earns respect for doing their job well, with 19 Australian and 9 UK tokens from all except the youngest group. *To take something with a pinch of salt*, meaning that someone does not believe all that someone tells them, had 6 Australian and 8 UK tokens, from all age groups. *To rub salt in the wound*, meaning that a painful situation is made more painful, had 8 Australian and 5 UK tokens, again from all age groups.

61.5 Dictionary coverage

The salt of the earth appears in *CALD, LDOCE, MEDAL* and *OALD*. This coverage is good for this popular phraseme.

To be worth one's salt, to take something with a pinch of salt and *to rub salt in the wound* appear in all the Big 5.

62. Survey 5, Phraseme 6: *An iron fist in a velvet glove*

Total Australian participants: 106
Total UK participants: 67
Suggested interpretation: Someone looks gentle, but they are not.
Dictionary inclusion: *CALD* and *OALD*

Table 62.1: Participant numbers for the phraseme *an iron fist in a velvet glove*

Australia	16-22	23
	23-30	5
	31-40	8
	41-60	32
	61+	38
	Total	**106**
UK	16-22	33
	23-30	3
	31-40	7
	41-60	16
	61+	8
	Total	**67**

62.1 Familiarity

Familiarity ranged widely (see Figure 62.1), with an overall familiarity rate of 61%.
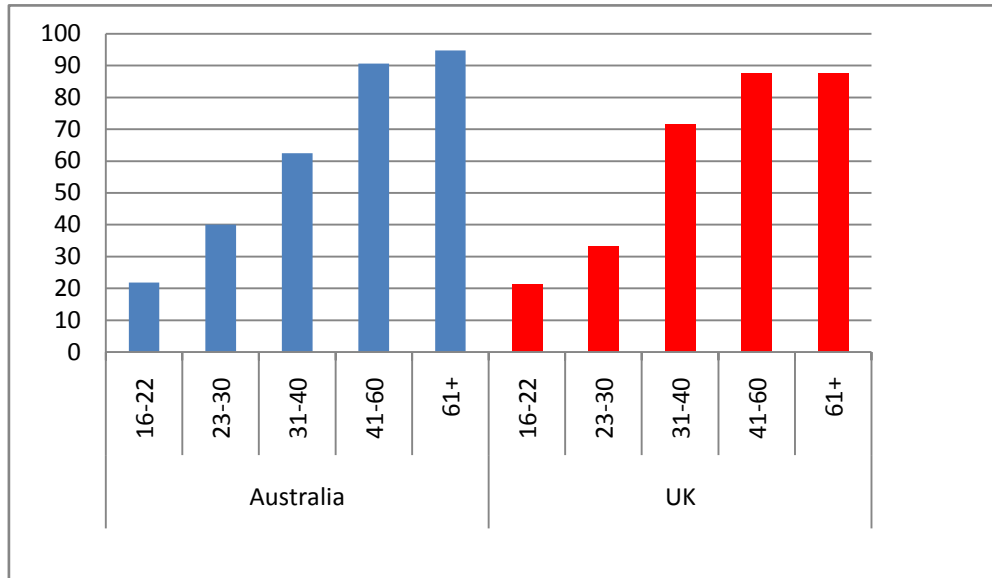
Figure 62.1: Familiarity with the phraseme *an iron fist in a velvet glove* as a percentage of each age group's responses

62.2 Interpretation

Agreement with the suggested answer was high, although 16% of the youngest UK group thought the opposite answer, 'Someone does not look gentle', was more appropriate, indicating that there is some opacity (see Figure 62.2).
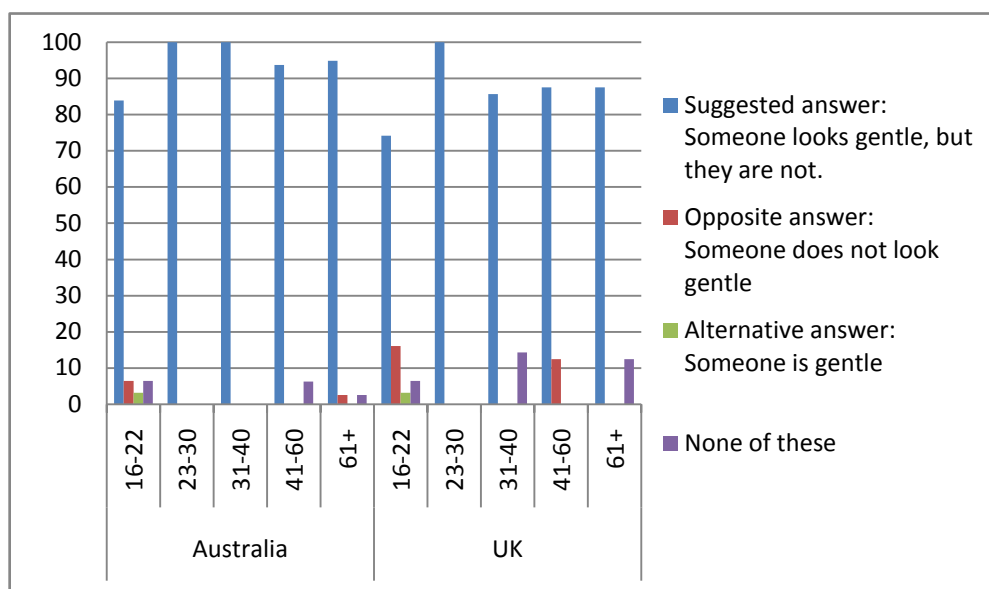
Figure 62.2: Interpretation of the phraseme *an iron fist in a velvet glove* as a percentage of each age group's responses

62.3 Frequency of use

Overall, 66% of participants said they would never use this phraseme. However, usage varied, with slightly higher rates in Australia compared to the UK (see Table 62.2). It may therefore be encountered by the target group.

Table 62.2: Frequency of use of the phraseme *an iron fist in a velvet glove* as a percentage of each age group's responses

Location	Age group	Never	Almost never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
Australia	16-22	84	3	13	0	0
	23-30	80	20	0	0	0
	31-40	50	13	38	0	0
	41-60	59	34	6	0	0
	61+	31	36	33	0	0
UK	16-22	77	13	7	3	0
	23-30	100	0	0	0	0
	31-40	86	0	14	0	0
	41-60	50	44	6	0	0
	61+	38	38	25	0	0

62.4 Phrasemes most frequently elicited

To make a fist of it, meaning 'to do something badly', had 19 Australian and 7 UK tokens, while the variants *to make a good or bad fist of something* had a further 10

Australian and 4 UK tokens. *Hand over fist*, indicating that something is happening quickly, and usually restricted to the field of making money, had 14 Australian tokens and 10 UK tokens, from all age groups. Most of these were from the two oldest groups in Australia. *A wolf in sheep's clothing* had 10 Australian and 6 UK tokens.

62.5 Dictionary coverage

An iron fist in a velvet glove appears only in *CALD* and *OALD*. Coverage could be higher for Australian users, since the survey indicates that this phraseme may be encountered by the target group.

To make a good/bad fist of it appears with a British English label in *LDOCE, MEDAL* and *OALD*, with the latter two labeling it as old-fashioned. The British English label seems inaccurate, given that it was suggested by more Australian than UK participants in the survey. *Hand over fist* appears in *CALD, LDOCE* and *MEDAL*.

63. Survey 5, Phraseme 7: *Jam tomorrow*

Total Australian participants: 114
Total UK participants: 66
Suggested interpretation: Good things never come
Dictionary inclusion: *CALD, LDOCE, MEDAL* and *OALD*

Table 63.1: Participant numbers for the phraseme *jam tomorrow*

Australia	16-22	32
	23-30	4
	31-40	8
	41-60	32
	61+	38
	Total	**114**
UK	16-22	32
	23-30	3
	31-40	7
	41-60	16
	61+	8
	Total	**66**

63.1 Familiarity

This phraseme was much more familiar in the UK, although most of the youngest group there had not encountered it before (see Figure 63.1). The overall familiarity rate in the UK was 66%, compared with only 20% in Australia.
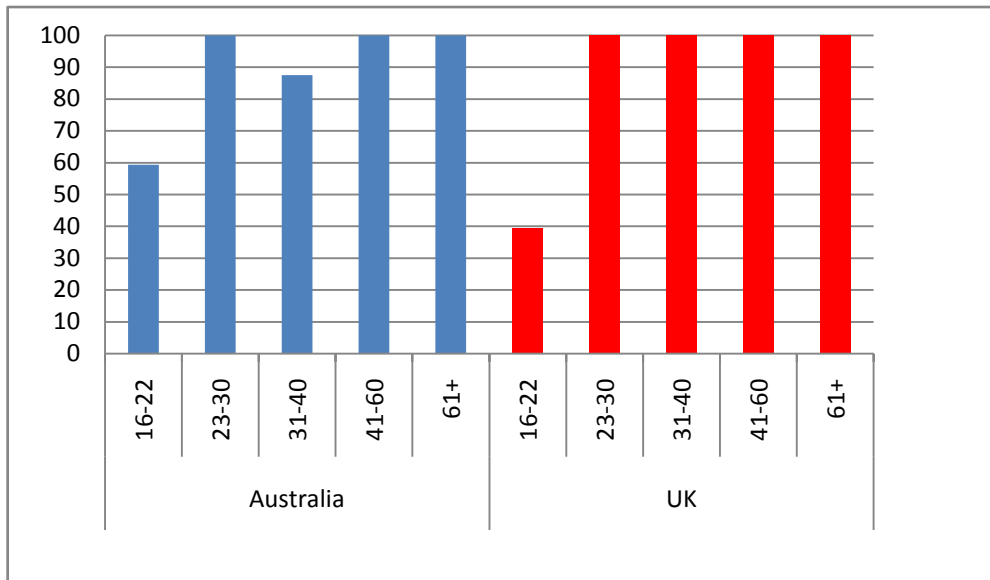

Figure 63.1: Familiarity with the phraseme *jam tomorrow* as a percentage of each age group's responses

63.2 Interpretation

Agreement with the suggested answer was quite high, except among the youngest groups, indicating that it might be hard to guess (see Figure 63.2).
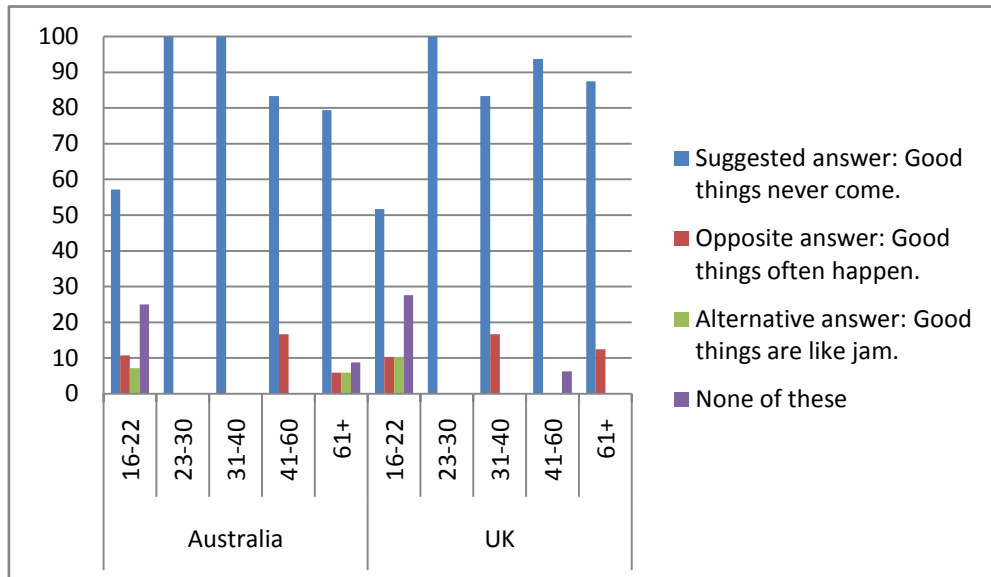
Figure 63.2: Interpretation of the phraseme *jam tomorrow* as a percentage of each age group's responses

63.3 Frequency of use

This phraseme is used 'sometimes' by 36% of the participants in the UK but only 1% in Australia (see Table 63.2). The target group are therefore very unlikely to encounter it in everyday situations.

Table 63.2 Frequency of use of the phraseme *jam tomorrow* as a percentage of each age group's responses

Location	Age group	Never	Almost never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
Australia	16-22	91	9	0	0	0
	23-30	100	0	0	0	0
	31-40	75	25	0	0	0
	41-60	94	3	3	0	0
	61+	86	11	3	0	0
UK	16-22	93	0	7	0	0
	23-30	33	0	67	0	0
	31-40	71	14	14	0	0
	41-60	56	13	31	0	0
	61+	38	0	63	0	0

63.4 Phrasemes most frequently elicited

Money for jam, which means that someone is paid for doing very little work, had 12 Australian and 3 UK tokens.

63.5 Dictionary coverage

Jam tomorrow appears in *CALD, LDOCE, MEDAL* and *OALD*. This coverage appears to be superfluous for a MELD in Australia, where the phraseme is seldom used.

Money for jam appears in only *CALD* and *OALD*.

64. Survey 5, Phraseme 8: *Look before you leap*

Total Australian participants: 114
Total UK participants: 66
Suggested interpretation: Think first
Dictionary inclusion: *LDOCE, MEDAL* and *OALD*

Table 64.1: Participant numbers for the phraseme *look before you leap*

Australia	16-22	32
	23-30	4
	31-40	8
	41-60	32
	61+	38
	Total	**114**
UK	16-22	31
	23-30	4
	31-40	7
	41-60	16
	61+	8
	Total	**66**

64.1 Familiarity

Most people in the investigation, with the exception of some UK participants aged under 31, had heard this phraseme before (see Figure 64.1). Average familiarity was 94%.
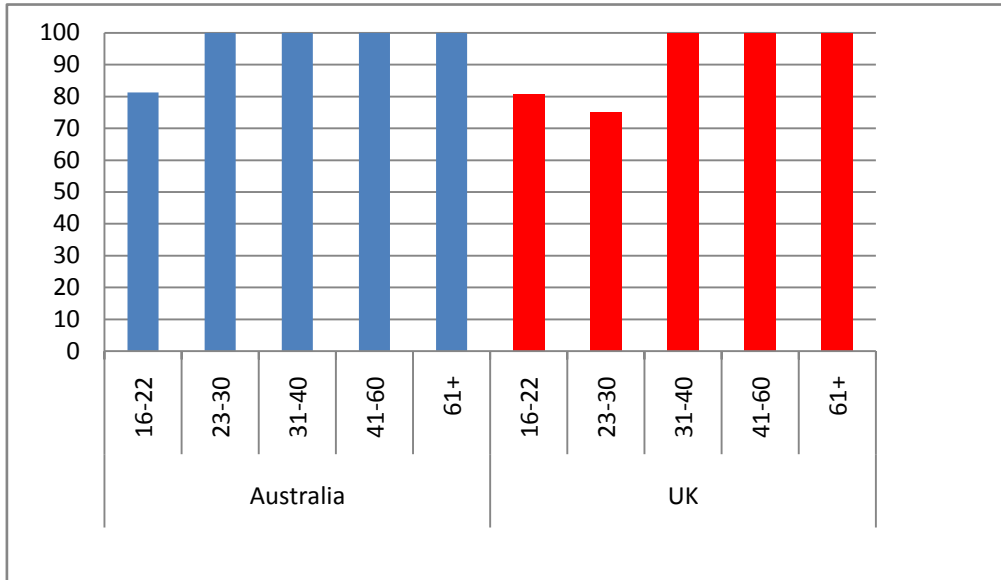
Figure 64.1: Familiarity with the phraseme look before you leap as a percentage of each age group's responses

64.2 Interpretation

Agreement with the suggested answer was virtually 100%, perhaps due to the familiarity and transparency of this phraseme (see Figure 64.2).
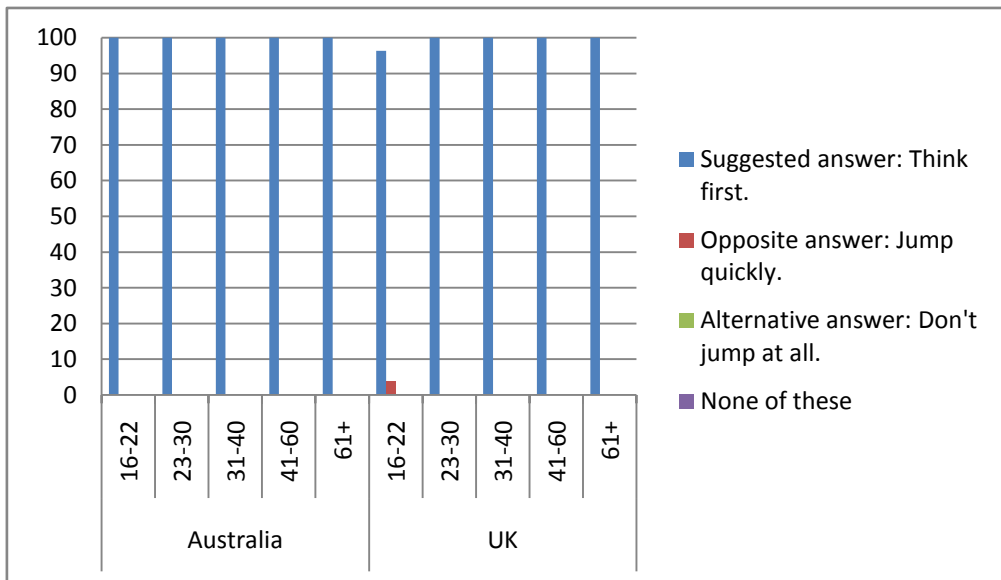
Figure 64.2: Interpretation of the phraseme *look before you leap* as a percentage of each age group's responses

64.3 Frequency of use

This phraseme is used 'sometimes' by 37% of the participants in the survey, and

usage increases with age (see Table 64.2).

Table 64.2: Frequency of use of the phraseme *look before you leap* as a
percentage of each age group's responses

Location	Age group	Never	Almost never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
Australia	16-22	31	13	34	16	6
	23-30	25	50	25	0	0
	31-40	25	63	13	0	0
	41-60	13	19	59	9	0
	61+	0	31	69	0	0
UK	16-22	35	17	39	9	0
	23-30	25	50	25	0	0
	31-40	25	50	25	0	0
	41-60	22	22	44	11	0
	61+	25	25	38	13	0

64.4 Phrasemes most frequently elicited

The only phraseme commonly elicited here was *fools rush in*, which had appeared

in Survey 4, with 2 Australian and 7 UK tokens.

64.5 Dictionary coverage

Look before you leap appears in *LDOCE*, *MEDAL* and *OALD*. Perhaps the

transparency of the phraseme means that it is not included in the other

dictionaries, but the frequency of its use suggests that it should be included in all

MELDs used in Australia.

65. Survey 5, Phraseme 9: *In the box seat*

Total Australian participants: 113
Total UK participants: 64
Suggested interpretation: Success
Dictionary inclusion: *OALD*

Table 65.1: Participant numbers for the phraseme *in the box seat*

Australia	16-22	31
	23-30	4
	31-40	8
	41-60	32
	61+	38
	Total	**113**
UK	16-22	30
	23-30	3
	31-40	7
	41-60	16
	61+	8
	Total	**64**

65.1 Familiarity

This phraseme was little known in the UK but well known in Australia amongst all except the youngest group (see Figure 65.1). The average familiarity rate in the UK was 18%, while in Australia it was 75%. I had not personally heard it before in the UK, but a Google search reveals that it is indeed used there, particularly in sports coverage. The English cricketer Graeme Swann, for example, is quoted as saying 'with two days to play I think we're in the box seat' (365 MediaGroup Ltd 2010).
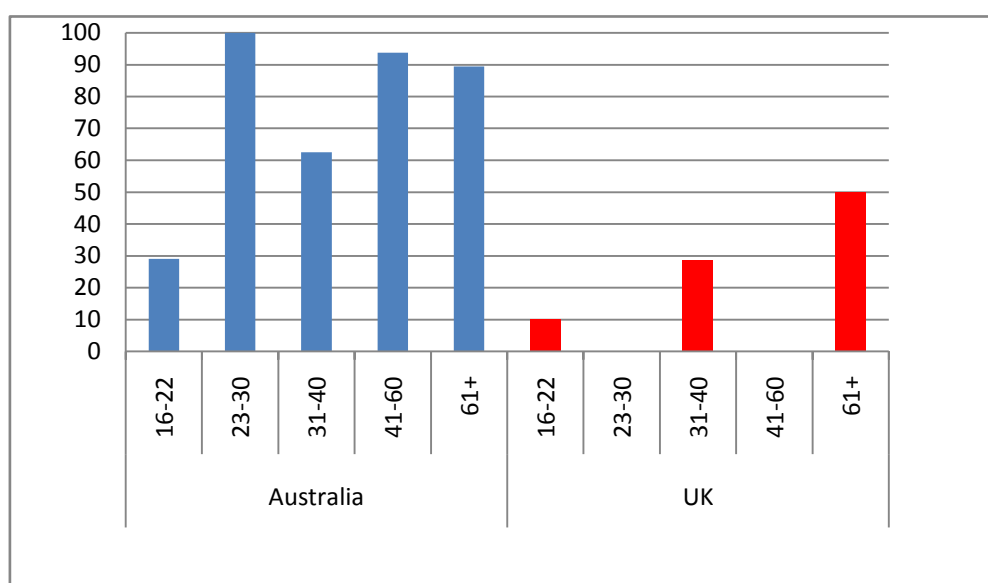
Figure 65.1: Familiarity with the phraseme *in the box seat* as a percentage of each age group's responses

65.2 Interpretation

Although many people in the UK agreed with the suggested answer, many in Australia felt that the idea of 'success' did not encapsulate the idea of 'at an advantage' adequately, and their agreement with the suggested answer was lower (see Figure 65.2).
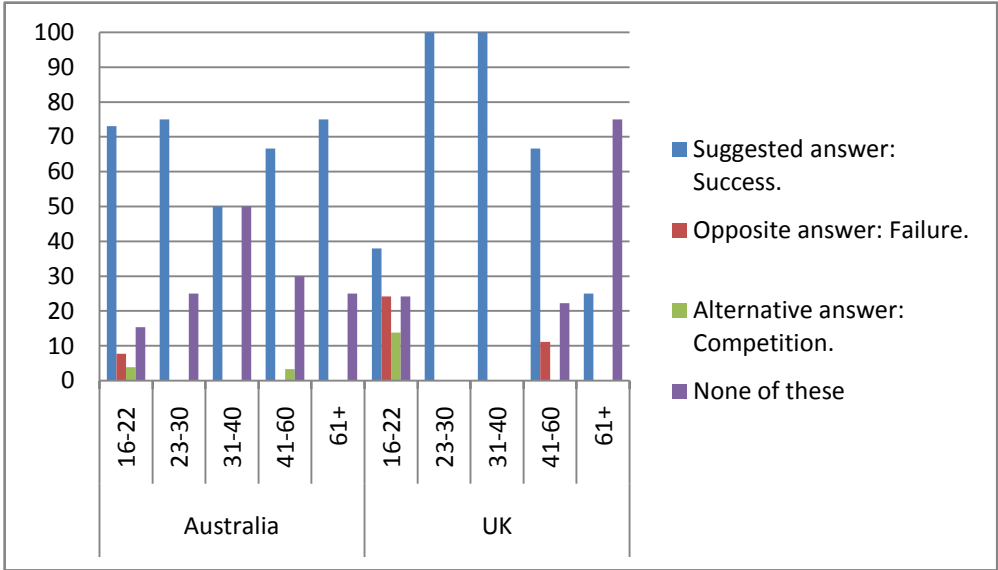
Figure 65.2: Interpretation of the phraseme *in the box seat* as a percentage of each age group's responses

65.3 Frequency of use

Despite this phraseme being little used by the younger groups in Australia, the average rate of those who would use it 'sometimes' was 18%, suggesting that the target group might encounter it at some stage (see Table 65.2).

Table 65.2: Frequency of use of the phraseme *in the box seat* as a percentage of each age group's responses

Location	Age group	Never	Almost never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
Australia	16-22	74	13	10	3	0
	23-30	75	25	0	0	0
	31-40	75	0	25	0	0
	41-60	42	35	19	3	0
	61+	32	22	35	11	0
UK	16-22	86	7	7	0	0
	23-30	100	0	0	0	0
	31-40	86	14	0	0	0
	41-60	100	0	0	0	0
	61+	67	0	33	0	0

65.4 Phrasemes most frequently elicited

No phrasemes were frequently elicited here.

65.5 Dictionary coverage

In the box seat appears only in *OALD*. Given the familiarity and frequency of use of this phraseme in Australia, together with its opacity, this phraseme could usefully be included in a MELD used in Australia.

66. Survey 5, Phraseme 10: *Like a shag on a rock*

Total Australian participants: 112
Total UK participants: 64
Suggested interpretation: They are lonely
Dictionary inclusion: *CALD*

Table 66.1: Participant numbers for the phraseme *like a shag on a rock*

Australia	16-22	31
	23-30	4
	31-40	8
	41-60	31
	61+	38
	Total	**112**
UK	16-22	30
	23-30	3
	31-40	7
	41-60	16
	61+	8
	Total	**64**

66.1 Familiarity

While this phraseme was virtually unknown in the UK, except by 3 people aged over 41, it was familiar to most Australian participants (74%) apart from the youngest group (see Figure 66.1).
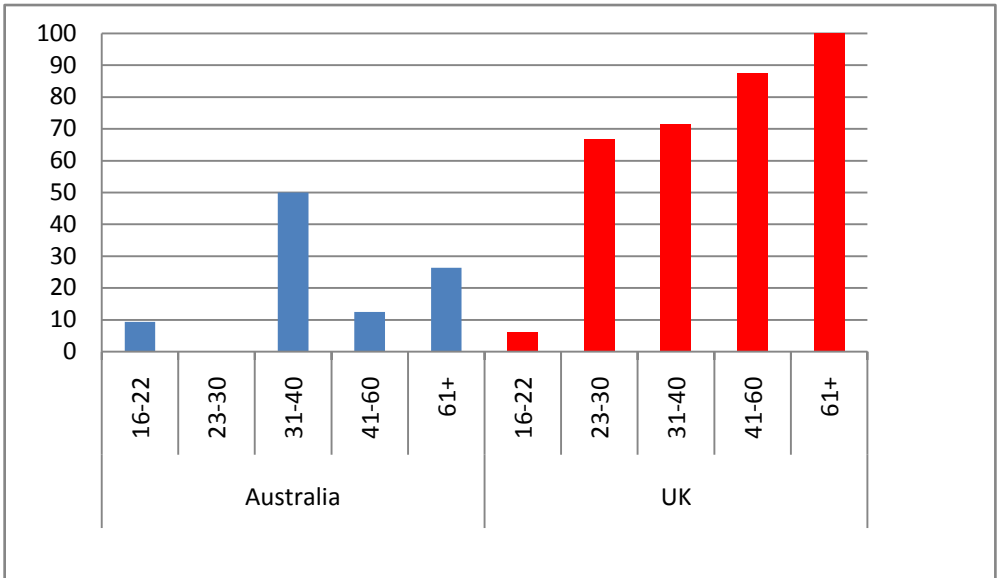

Figure 66.1: Familiarity with the phraseme *like a shag on a rock* as a percentage of each age group's responses

66.2 Interpretation

Agreement with the suggested answer varied, but among the groups who were familiar with the phraseme many felt that 'none of these' was a better alternative (see Figure 66.2). *CALD* gives the definition 'completely alone', while the *Macquarie* defines it as 'alone; deserted; forlorn', both of which are close to the suggested answer. The ornithological connotations of the word *shag* were probably unknown to many participants, especially in the youngest group, making the phraseme opaque, or possibly leading them to regard it as a proposition rather than a phraseme.

Figure 66.2: Interpretation of the phraseme *like a shag on a rock* as a percentage of each age group's responses

66.3 Frequency of use

Although this phraseme is virtually never used by the UK participants, it is used by many in Australia and therefore likely to be encountered by the target group (see Table 66.2). Eighteen per cent of Australian participants said they would use it 'sometimes', although it is clearly used more by the two oldest age groups.

Table 66.2: Frequency of use of the phraseme *like a shag on a rock* as a percentage of each age group's responses

Location	Age group	Never	Almost never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
Australia	16-22	81	16	3	0	0
	23-30	100	0	0	0	0
	31-40	75	13	13	0	0
	41-60	31	19	31	19	0
	61+	14	28	44	14	0
UK	16-22	93	3	3	0	0
	23-30	100	0	0	0	0
	31-40	100	0	0	0	0
	41-60	100	0	0	0	0
	61+	100	0	0	0	0

66.4 Phrasemes most frequently elicited

To stick out like a sore thumb, indicating that something is very noticeable, was suggested by 10 Australian and 2 UK participants, all aged 31 or over.

66.5 Dictionary coverage

Like a shag on a rock appears only in *CALD*. Given that the target group may encounter it among older speakers, and that the meaning is very opaque, this is a phraseme that could be considered for inclusion in a MELD in Australia.

To stick out like a sore thumb appears in all the Big 5 except *OALD*.

67. Survey 5, Phraseme 11: *To send someone to Coventry*

Total Australian participants: 113
Total UK participants: 65
Suggested interpretation: Not to talk to someone
Dictionary inclusion: *CALD, COBUILD, LDOCE, MEDAL* and *OALD*

Table 67.1: Participant numbers for the phraseme *to send someone to Coventry*

Australia	16-22	31
	23-30	4
	31-40	8
	41-60	32
	61+	38
	Total	**113**
UK	16-22	31
	23-30	3
	31-40	7
	41-60	16
	61+	8
	Total	**65**

67.1 Familiarity

This phraseme appeared to be more familiar in the UK (86% familiarity) than Australia (65% familiarity), and was little known by the youngest Australian group (see Figure 67.1).
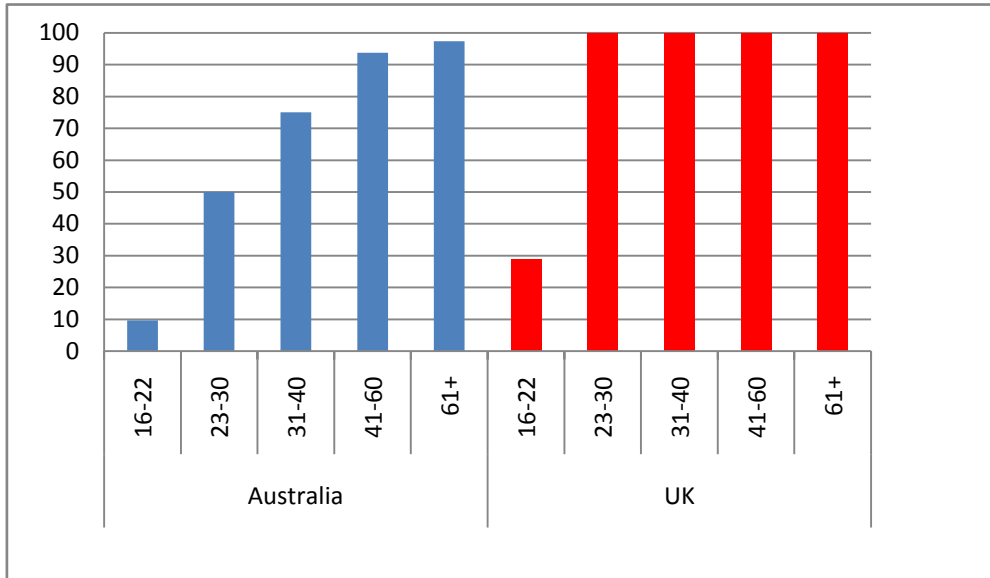
Figure 67.1: Familiarity with the phraseme *to send someone to Coventry* as a percentage of each age group's responses

67.2 Interpretation

Agreement with the suggested answer was high among those who knew the phraseme already, but those who were unfamiliar with it found it much harder to guess (see Figure 67.2).
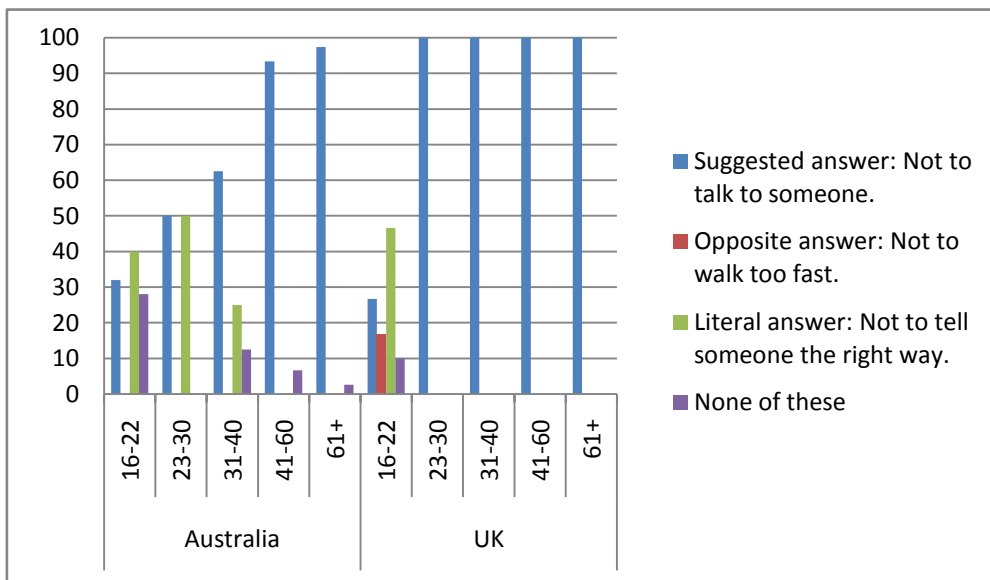
Figure 67.2: Interpretation of the phraseme *to send someone to Coventry* as a percentage of each age group's responses

67.3 Frequency of use

As indicated in Table 67.2, this phraseme is used much more frequently in the UK than in Australia, where 64% of participants said they would never use it. (The figure of 25% in the Australian 23-30 group appears high, but represents only one participant.) It is therefore not likely to be encountered by the target group.

Table 67.2: Frequency of use of the phraseme *to send someone to Coventry* as a percentage of each age group's responses

Location	Age group	Never	Almost never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
Australia	16-22	90	6	3	0	0
	23-30	75	0	25	0	0
	31-40	63	38	0	0	0
	41-60	53	33	10	0	3
	61+	39	37	24	0	0
UK	16-22	79	10	7	3	0
	23-30	67	33	0	0	0
	31-40	29	43	14	14	0
	41-60	13	44	44	0	0
	61+	13	38	50	0	0

67.4 Phrasemes most frequently elicited

The only phraseme commonly elicited here was *to give someone the cold shoulder*, meaning 'to snub someone', with 2 Australian and 5 UK tokens, from all but the youngest group.

67.5 Dictionary coverage

To send someone to Coventry appears in all the Big 5. This is probably unnecessary coverage for Australia.

To give someone the cold shoulder is listed in all the Big 5.

68. Survey 5, Phraseme 12: *The penny drops*

Total Australian participants: 113
Total UK participants: 75
Suggested interpretation: Someone finally understands
Dictionary inclusion: *CALD, COBUILD, LDOCE, MEDAL* and *OALD*

Table 68.1: Participant numbers for the phraseme *the penny drops*

Australia	16-22	31
	23-30	4
	31-40	8
	41-60	32
	61+	38
	Total	**113**
UK	16-22	32
	23-30	12
	31-40	7
	41-60	16
	61+	8
	Total	**75**

68.1 Familiarity

This phraseme was familiar to all except the 23-30 group in the UK (see Figure 68.1). Average familiarity was higher in Australia (96%) than in the UK (81%).
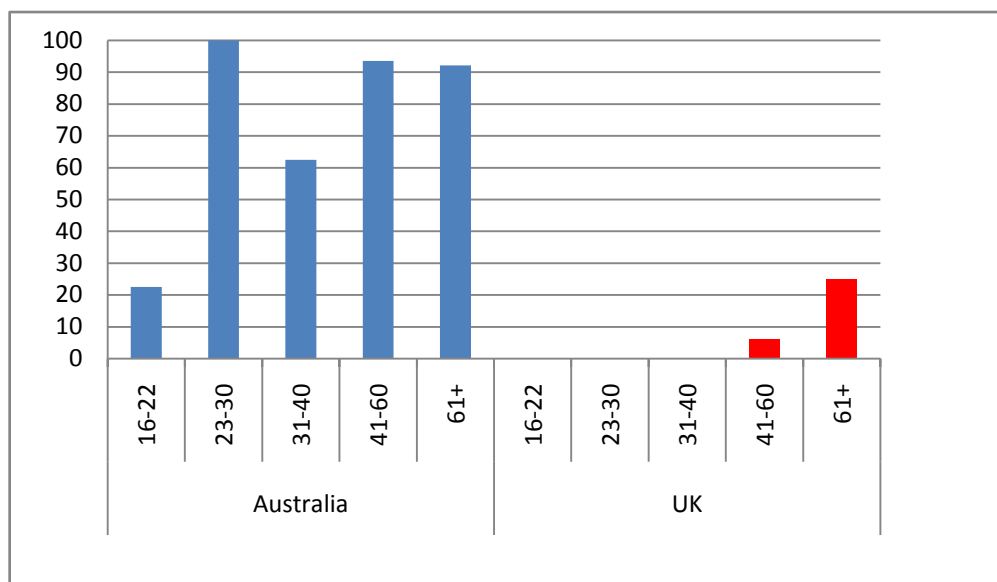

Figure 68.1: Familiarity with the phraseme *the penny drops* as a percentage of each age group's responses

68.2 Interpretation

Agreement with the suggested answer was high, even among those who were less familiar with the phraseme, indicating that this phraseme is easy to understand.
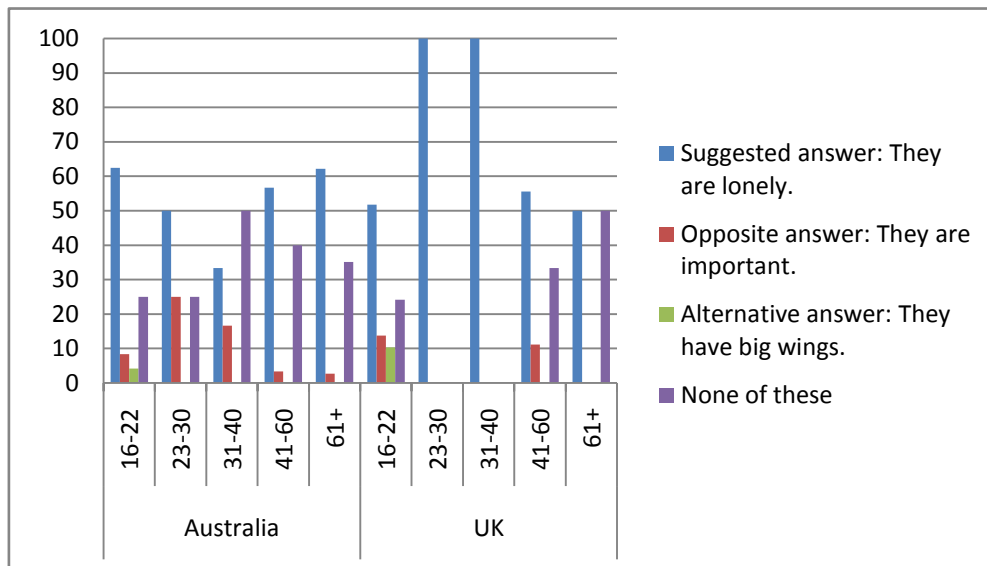

Figure 68.2: Interpretation of the phraseme *the penny drops* as a percentage of each age group's responses

68.3 Frequency of use

This phraseme had one of the highest usage rates in the questionnaire, with an average 56% indicating that they would use it 'sometimes' and 16% saying they would use it 'often' (see Table 68.2). This was the highest indication of 'sometimes' in the whole questionnaire.

Table 68.2: Frequency of use of the phraseme *the penny drops* as a percentage of each age group's responses

Location	Age group	Never	Almost never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
Australia	16-22	28	19	34	13	6
	23-30	0	0	75	25	0
	31-40	13	13	50	25	0
	41-60	13	19	59	6	3
	61+	0	21	58	18	3
UK	16-22	26	13	32	23	6
	23-30	67	0	33	0	0
	31-40	0	14	57	29	0
	41-60	0	6	69	19	6
	61+	0	13	88	0	0

68.4 Phrasemes most frequently elicited

The most common suggestion was *a penny for your thoughts*, with 58 Australian and 23 UK tokens, from all age groups. *To spend a penny* had 19 Australian and 16 UK tokens from all age groups. *Penny wise pound foolish* had 20 Australian and 11 UK tokens. *In for a penny in for a pound* had 18 Australian and 12 UK tokens, again from all age groups. All these phrasemes have been previously addressed in this chapter at 56.4.

68.5 Dictionary coverage

The penny drops appears in all the Big 5, reflecting its popularity with all age groups. This coverage is necessary for a MELD in Australia.

69. Survey 5, Phraseme 13: *To pick up steam*

Total Australian participants: 112
Total UK participants: 65
Suggested interpretation: Progress is being made
Dictionary inclusion: *CALD, LDOCE, MEDAL* and *OALD*

Table 69.1: Participant numbers for the phraseme *to pick up steam*

Australia	16-22	31
	23-30	4
	31-40	8
	41-60	32
	61+	37
	Total	**112**
UK	16-22	31
	23-30	3
	31-40	7
	41-60	16
	61+	8
	Total	**65**

69.1 Familiarity

This phraseme was very familiar in both locations (average 86%), with at least half of the youngest group expressing familiarity (see Figure 69.1).
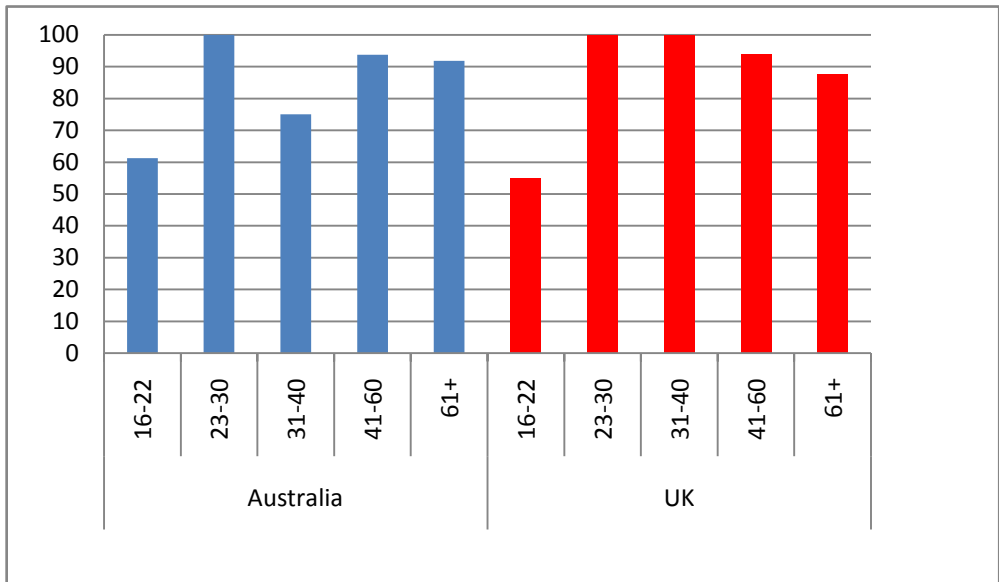
Figure 69.1: Familiarity with the phraseme *to pick up steam* as a percentage of each age group's responses

69.2 Interpretation

Agreement with the suggested answer was reasonably high (see Figure 69.2), perhaps due to the high familiarity rate.
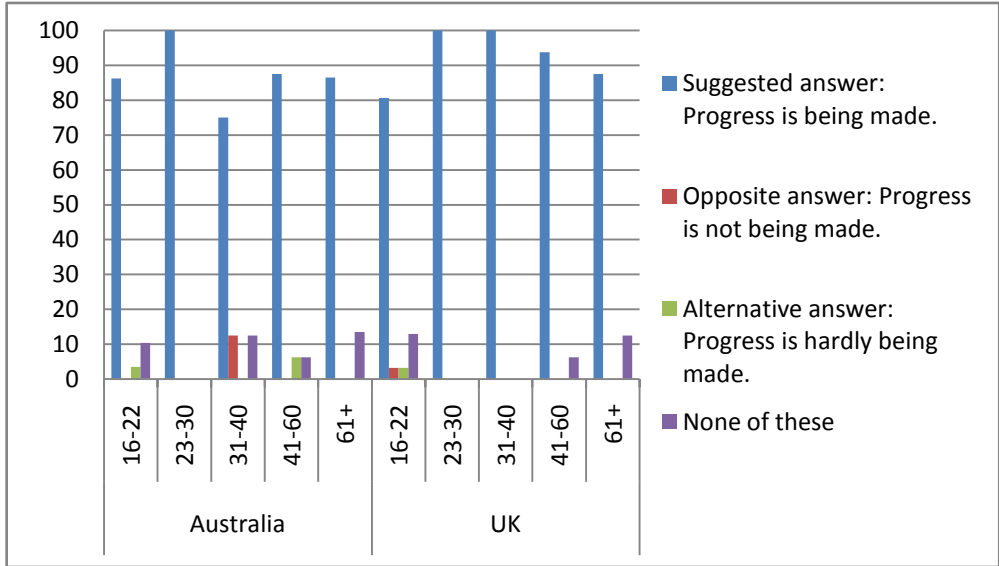
Figure 69.2: Interpretation of the phraseme *to pick up steam* as a percentage of each age group's responses

69.3 Frequency of use

Roughly half the participants said they would use this phraseme at some point, with the exception of three people in the UK 23-30 group who said they would

'never' use it (see Table 69.2). Overall, 23% of participants said they would use it 'sometimes', including 13% from the youngest group.

Table 69.2: Frequency of use of the phraseme *to pick up steam* as a percentage of each age group's responses

Location	Age group	Never	Almost never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
Australia	16-22	50	33	13	0	3
	23-30	50	25	25	0	0
	31-40	50	25	25	0	0
	41-60	53	19	25	3	0
	61+	38	55	0	7	0
UK	16-22	55	29	13	3	0
	23-30	100	0	0	0	0
	31-40	14	29	57	0	0
	41-60	7	60	27	7	0
	61+	38	38	25	0	0

69.4 Phrasemes most frequently elicited

The phrasemes elicited here were the same as those mentioned under other 'steam' phrasemes in this questionnaire (see 13.4 and 27.4 in this chapter). These were *full steam ahead* (26 Australian and 14 UK tokens); *let off steam* (18 Australian and 10 UK tokens); *run out of steam* (14 Australian and 14 UK tokens); *under your own steam* (10 Australian and 5 UK tokens); and *(work up a) head of steam* (9 Australian and 6 UK tokens).

69.5 Dictionary coverage

To pick up steam appears in *CALD, LDOCE, MEDAL* and *OALD*. Given its popularity, this is a phraseme which should appear in any MELD used in Australia.

70. Survey 5, Phraseme 14: *Within an inch*

Total Australian participants: 113
Total UK participants: 64
Suggested interpretation: Something is close
Dictionary inclusion: *CALD, LDOCE, MEDAL* and *OALD*

Table 70.1: Participant numbers for the phraseme *within an inch*

Australia	16-22	31
	23-30	4
	31-40	8
	41-60	32
	61+	38
	Total	**113**
UK	16-22	31
	23-30	3
	31-40	6
	41-60	16
	61+	8
	Total	**64**

70.1 Familiarity

This phraseme was very familiar to all age groups, especially in the UK (see Figure 70.1). The overall familiarity rate was a high 92%.
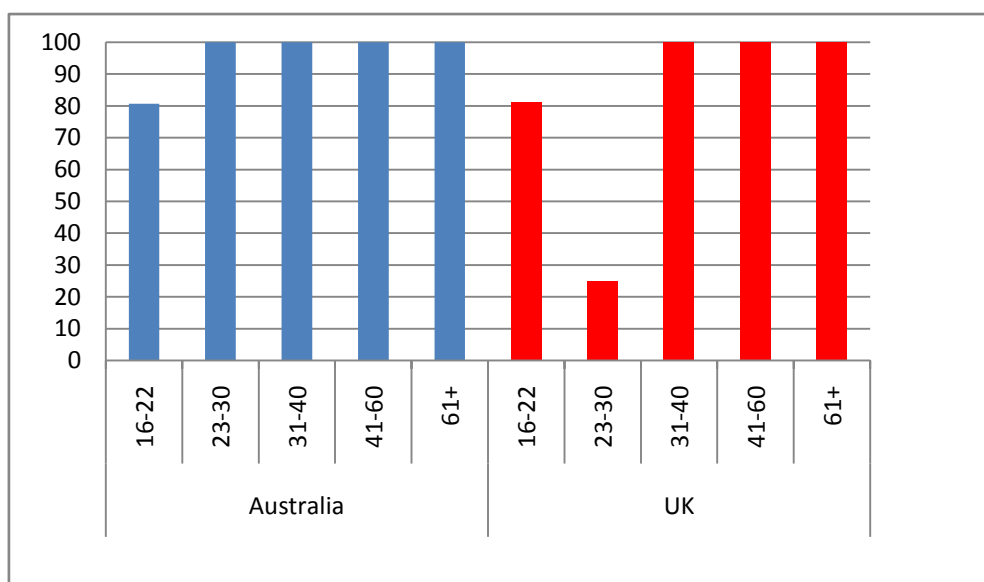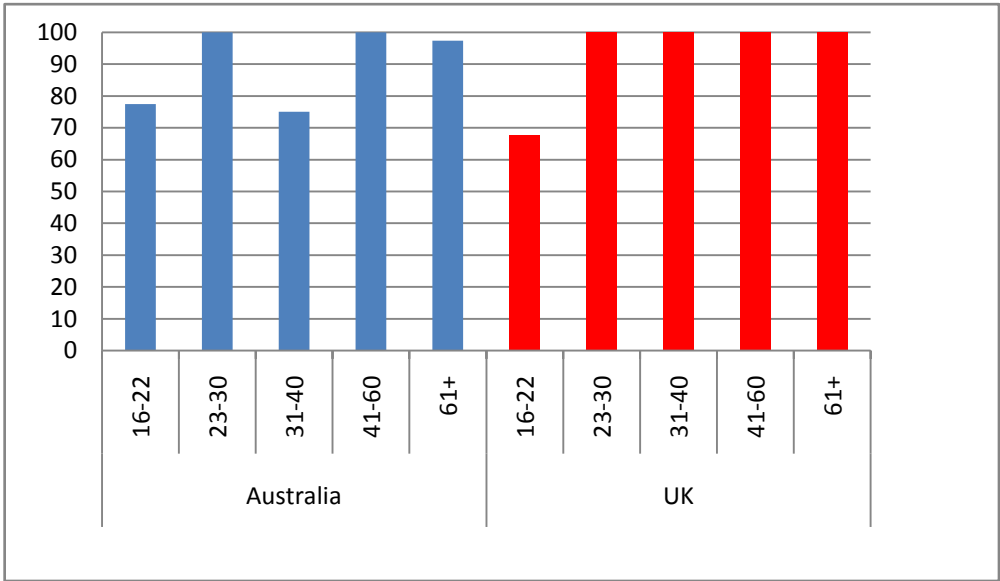

Figure 70.1: Familiarity with the phraseme *within an inch* as a percentage of each age group's responses

70.2 Interpretation

Agreement with the suggested answer was very high (see Figure 70.2), indicating that if someone is familiar with the word *inch* the phraseme will be easy to understand.
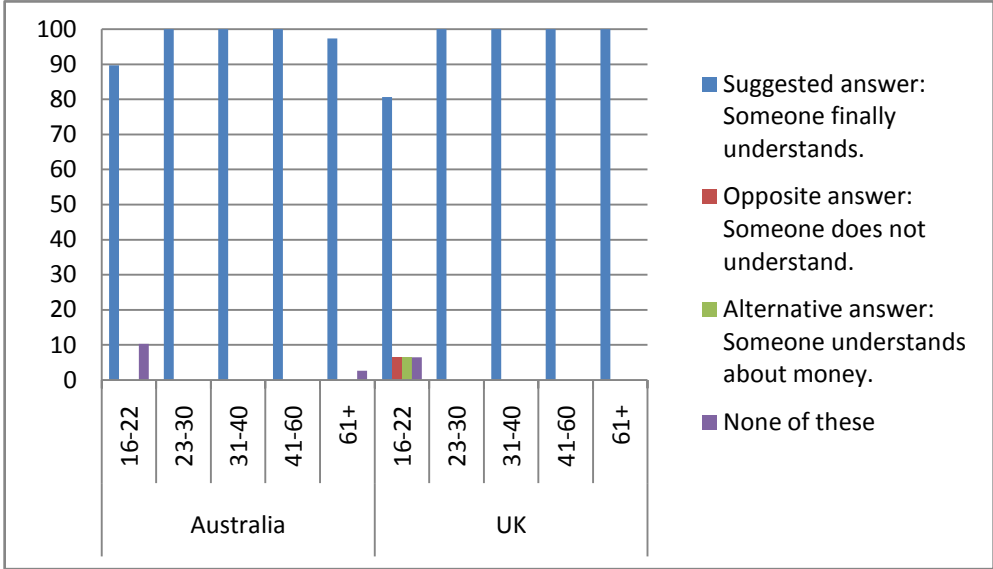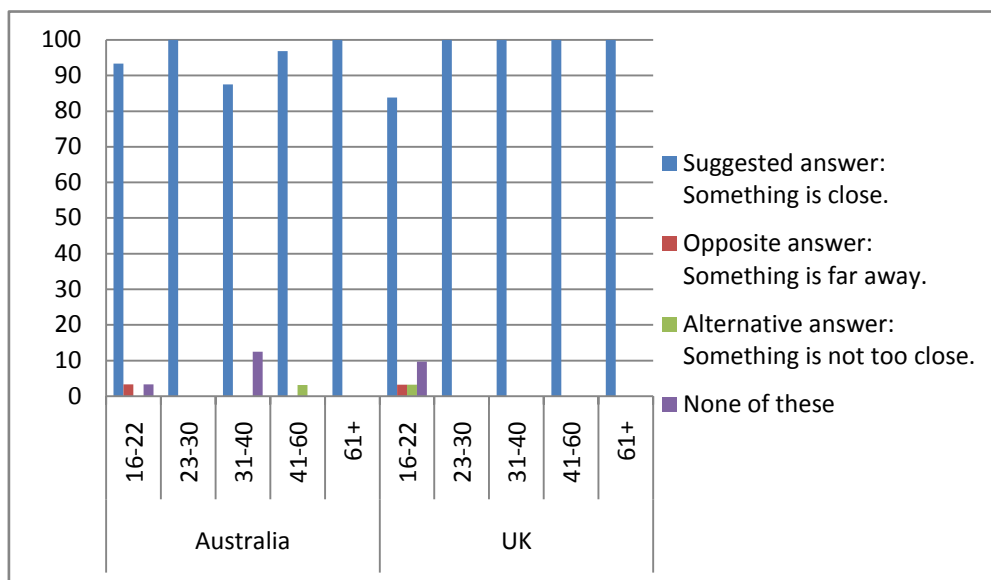
Figure 70.2: Interpretation of the phraseme *within an inch* as a percentage of each age group's responses

70.3 Frequency of use

This phraseme is used by all age groups (see Table 70.2), with a high 38% indicating they would use it 'sometimes'. This suggests that the target group are likely to encounter it.

Table 70.2: Frequency of use of the phraseme *within an inch* as a percentage of each age group's responses

Location	Age group	Never	Almost never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
Australia	16-22	42	23	23	13	0
	23-30	75	25	0	0	0
	31-40	25	25	50	0	0
	41-60	28	41	25	6	0
	61+	11	29	45	16	0
UK	16-22	36	21	32	7	4
	23-30	33	33	33	0	0
	31-40	29	14	57	0	0
	41-60	13	25	44	19	0
	61+	25	0	75	0	0

70.4 Phrasemes most frequently elicited

The most common suggestions here were those given at point 28.4 in this chapter:

give an inch and take a mile (34 Australian, 21 UK tokens); *give an inch and take*

a yard (7 Australian and 2 UK tokens); and *inch by inch* (16 Australian and 9 UK tokens).

70.5 Dictionary coverage

Within an inch appears in *CALD, LDOCE, MEDAL* and *OALD*. It is a phraseme which should be included in any MELD used in Australia.

71. Survey 6, Phraseme 1: *The scales fall from someone's eyes*

Total Australian participants: 116
Total UK participants: 62
Suggested interpretation: Someone can see clearly
Dictionary inclusion: *CALD, LDOCE* and *MEDAL*

Table 71.1: Participant numbers for the phraseme *the scales fall from someone's eyes*

Australia	16-22	26
	23-30	6
	31-40	9
	41-60	36
	61+	39
	Total	**116**
UK	16-22	30
	23-30	2
	31-40	4
	41-60	18
	61+	8
	Total	**62**

71.1 Familiarity

This phraseme was very unfamiliar to the youngest group in both locations and then showed varying degrees of familiarity, with only the 61+ group in the UK indicating that they had all heard it before (see Figure 71.1). An average 57% of all participants were familiar with this phraseme.
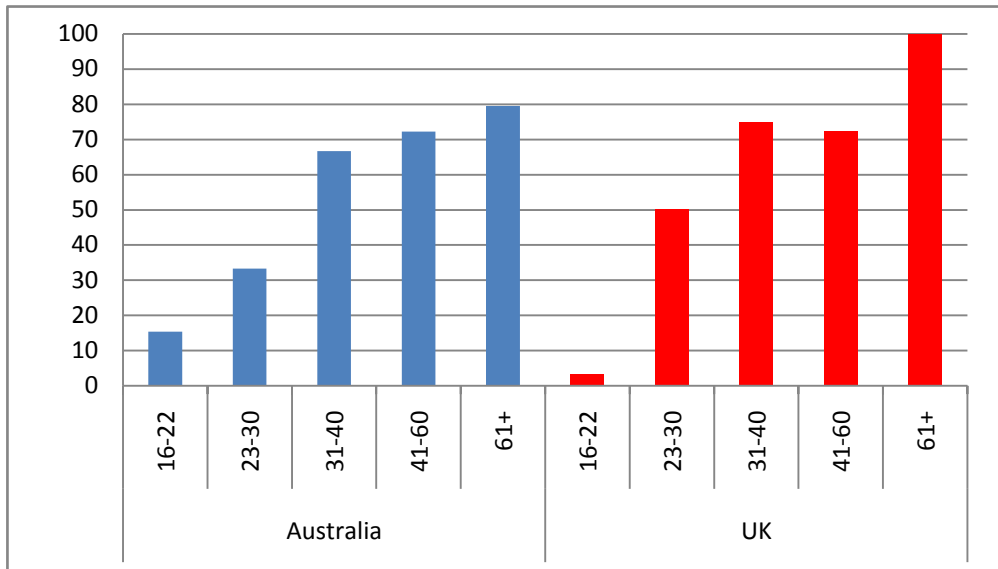
Figure 71.1: Familiarity with the phraseme *the scales fall from someone's eyes* as a percentage of each age group's responses

71.2 Interpretation

Agreement with the suggested answer was high in all except the youngest group and the Australian 23-30 group (see Figure 71.2), indicating that it might be hard to guess the meaning of this phraseme.
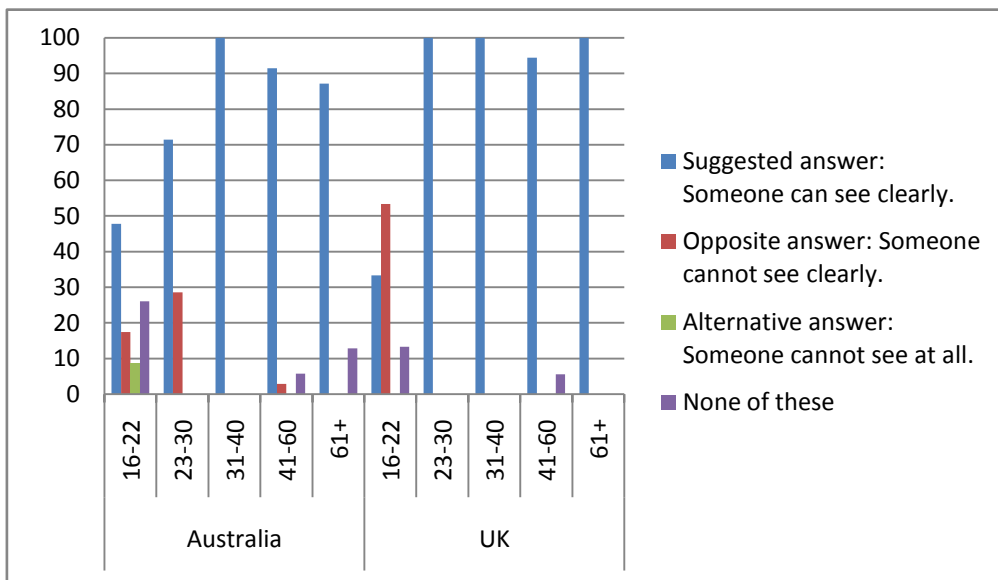
Figure 71.2: Interpretation of the phraseme *the scales fall from someone's eyes* as a percentage of each age group's responses

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71.3 Frequency of use

An average 69% of participants said they would never use this phraseme (see Table 71.2), suggesting that the target group are not likely to encounter it often.

Table 71.2: Frequency of use of the phraseme *the scales fall from someone's eyes* as a percentage of each age group's responses

Location	Age group	Never	Almost never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
Australia	16-22	77	19	4	0	0
	23-30	100	0	0	0	0
	31-40	67	22	11	0	0
	41-60	63	26	11	0	0
	61+	51	36	13	0	0
UK	16-22	83	17	0	0	0
	23-30	100	0	0	0	0
	31-40	75	25	0	0	0
	41-60	28	39	33	0	0
	61+	38	25	38	0	0

71.4 Phrasemes most frequently elicited

The only phraseme frequently elicited was *to tip the scales*, with 7 UK and 4 Australian tokens, from all age groups. This phraseme may be literal, meaning 'weigh', or it may be figurative, implying that one thing influences another.

71.5 Dictionary coverage

The scales fall from someone's eyes appears in *CALD*, *LDOCE* and *MEDAL*. This is probably better coverage than is necessary for a phraseme that may not be encountered by the target group.

Tip the scales with its figurative meaning is found in *CALD, COBUILD, LDOCE* and *OALD*, providing good coverage for what may be a popular phraseme.

72. Survey 6, Phraseme 2: *The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak*

Total Australian participants: 112
Total UK participants: 59
Suggested interpretation: Someone does not want to do something, but they do it
Dictionary inclusion: *CALD, LDOCE, MEDAL* and *OALD*

Table 72.1: Participant numbers for the phraseme *the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak*

Australia	16-22	25
	23-30	6
	31-40	8
	41-60	35
	61+	38
	Total	**112**
UK	16-22	28
	23-30	2
	31-40	4
	41-60	17
	61+	8
	Total	59

72.1 Familiarity

This phraseme was very familiar to all but the youngest group in both the UK and

Australia (see Figure 72.1). Average familiarity was 84%.
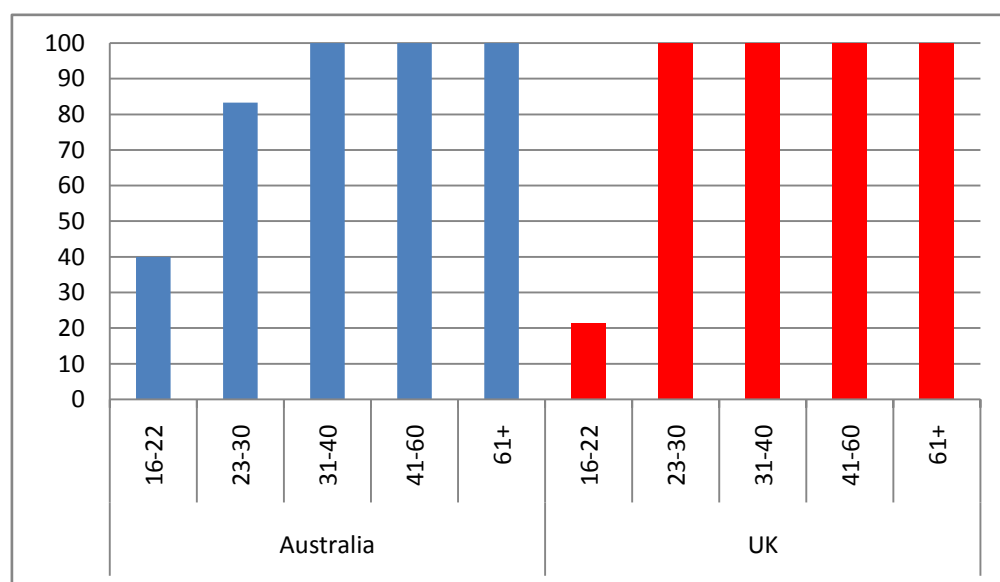
Figure 72.1: Familiarity with the phraseme *the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak* as a percentage of each age group's responses

72.2 Interpretation

Agreement with the suggested answer here varied (see Figure 72.2), perhaps because the phraseme can be taken in two ways. In the original Biblical verse, from the King James Version, the injunction is 'Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak'. This implies that someone may not want to do something, but they do it in the end due to weakness. However, it is easy to apply the converse of this too: someone wants to do something, but they do not do it, due to weakness. It is this second interpretation that is given in four of the Big 5. Responses to the suggested answer therefore varied between agreement and the choice 'none of these', while several of those who were not familiar with the phraseme chose the alternative answer, 'someone wants to do something and they do it', indicating that this phraseme may be hard to understand.
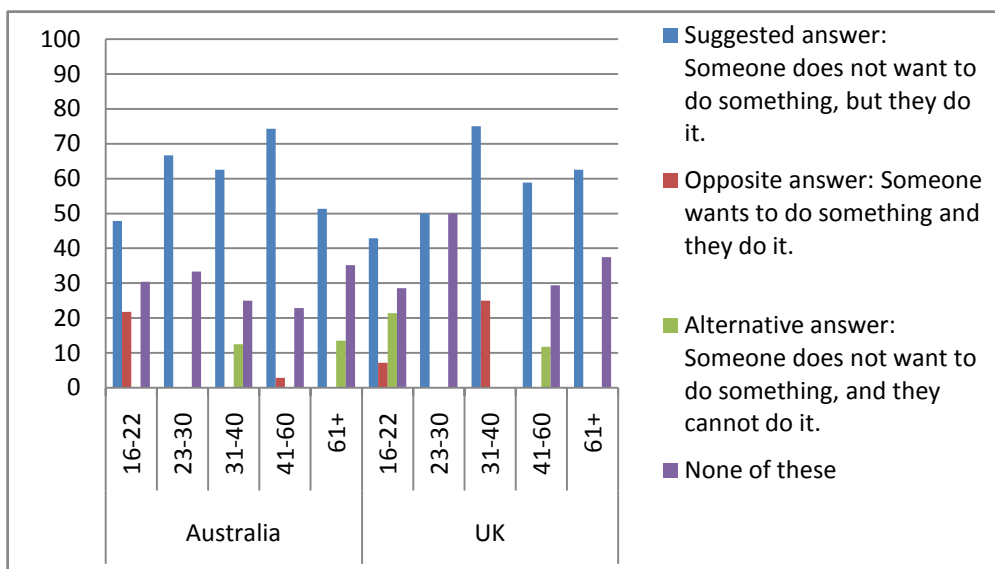
Figure 72.2: Interpretation of the phraseme *the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak* as a percentage of each age group's responses

72.3 Frequency of use

This phraseme appears to enjoy quite frequent use, with an average of 35% of all participants, including many from the youngest group, indicating they would use

it 'sometimes', and several older participants indicating they would use it 'often' (see Table 72.2). It is therefore likely to be encountered by the target group.

Table 72.2: Frequency of use of the phraseme *the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak* as a percentage of each age group's responses

Location	Age group	Never	Almost never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
Australia	16-22	67	13	17	4	0
	23-30	33	50	17	0	0
	31-40	0	38	38	25	0
	41-60	0	30	67	3	0
	61+	13	18	50	18	0
UK	16-22	89	7	4	0	0
	23-30	50	50	0	0	0
	31-40	0	75	25	0	0
	41-60	6	29	53	12	0
	61+	0	13	75	13	0

72.4 Phrasemes most frequently elicited

The only phraseme commonly elicited here was *that's the spirit*, meaning that someone approves of someone else's attitude, with 14 Australian and 3 UK tokens, all from participants aged 23 or over.

72.5 Dictionary coverage

The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak appears in *CALD, LDOCE, MEDAL* and *OALD*. This is good coverage for a phraseme that is likely to be encountered by the target group.

That's the spirit appears in *CALD, LDOCE, MEDAL* and *OALD*.

73. Survey 6, Phraseme 3: *To turn the other cheek*

Total Australian participants: 112
Total UK participants: 57
Suggested interpretation: Not to seek revenge
Dictionary inclusion: *CALD, COBUILD, LDOCE, MEDAL* and *OALD*

Table 73.1: Participant numbers for the phraseme *to turn the other cheek*

Australia	16-22	25
	23-30	6
	31-40	8
	41-60	35
	61+	38
	Total	**112**
UK	16-22	27
	23-30	1
	31-40	4
	41-60	17
	61+	8
	Total	**57**

73.1 Familiarity

This phraseme was familiar to nearly all the participants (98%), with the exception of five people in the 16-22 age group (see Figure 73.1), and was the third most familiar phraseme in the questionnaire.

Figure 73.1: Familiarity with the phraseme *to turn the other cheek* as a percentage of each age group's responses

73.2 Interpretation

Agreement with the suggested answer was mostly high, although a few people felt that 'none of these' was a better alternative (see Figure 73.2).
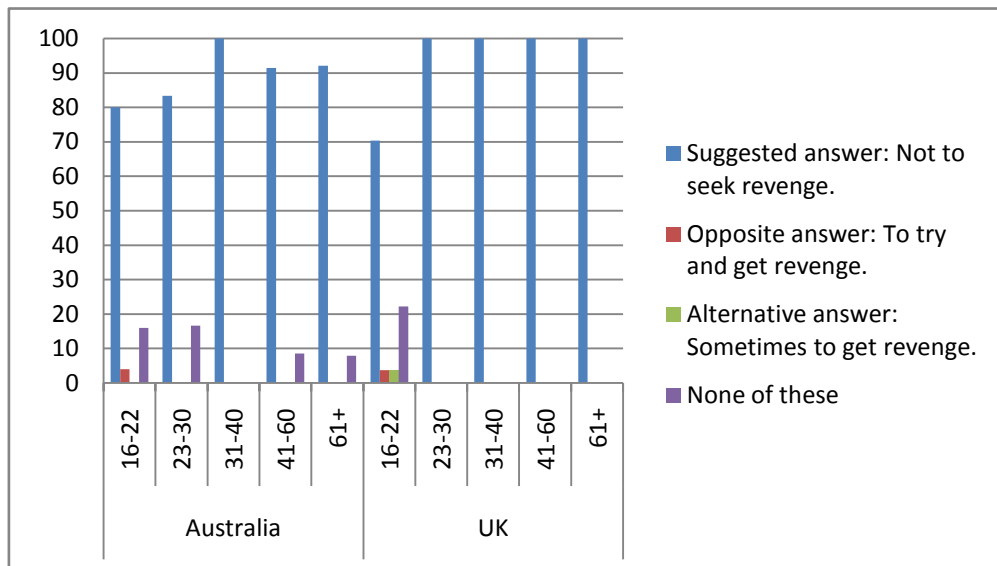
Figure 73.2: Interpretation of the phraseme *to turn the other cheek* as a percentage of each age group's responses

73.3 Frequency of use

All age groups but one indicated that they would use the phraseme at some time (see Table 73.2). The only age group who said they would never use it were the UK 23-30 group, represented by only one participant. In all other cases, the phraseme appears to enjoy quite a high frequency of use, with an average of 45% saying they would use it 'sometimes' and others indicating they would use it 'often'.

Table 73.2: Frequency of use of the phraseme *to turn the other cheek* as a percentage of each age group's responses

Location	Age group	Never	Almost never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
Australia	16-22	44	36	12	8	0
	23-30	0	50	50	0	0
	31-40	13	25	38	25	0
	41-60	6	40	46	9	0
	61+	8	32	53	8	0
UK	16-22	26	30	37	4	4
	23-30	100	0	0	0	0
	31-40	0	0	75	25	0
	41-60	6	29	59	6	0
	61+	0	13	75	13	0

73.4 Phrasemes most frequently elicited

(To live) cheek by jowl, meaning that people live in close proximity, had 13 Australian and 2 UK tokens from the two oldest groups. *Tongue in cheek*, meaning that someone says something ironically, had 5 Australian and 6 UK tokens, from a variety of age groups.

73.5 Dictionary coverage

To turn the other cheek appears in all the Big 5. This is excellent coverage for this popular phraseme.

Cheek by jowl and *tongue in cheek* also appear in all the Big 5.

74. Survey 6, Phraseme 4: *(To repent in) sackcloth and ashes*

Total Australian participants: 112
Total UK participants: 57
Suggested interpretation: These people are sorry
Dictionary inclusion: *CALD, COBUILD, LDOCE, MEDAL* and *OALD*

Table 74.1: Participant numbers for the phraseme *(to repent in) sackcloth and ashes*

Australia	16-22	25
	23-30	6
	31-40	8
	41-60	35
	61+	38
	Total	**112**
UK	16-22	27
	23-30	1
	31-40	4
	41-60	17
	61+	8
	Total	**57**

74.1 Familiarity

This phraseme was unusual, in that it was known to all the UK participants with the exception of the youngest group, but known in varying degrees in Australia,

with familiarity there rising with age (see Figure 74.1). Overall familiarity was 64%.
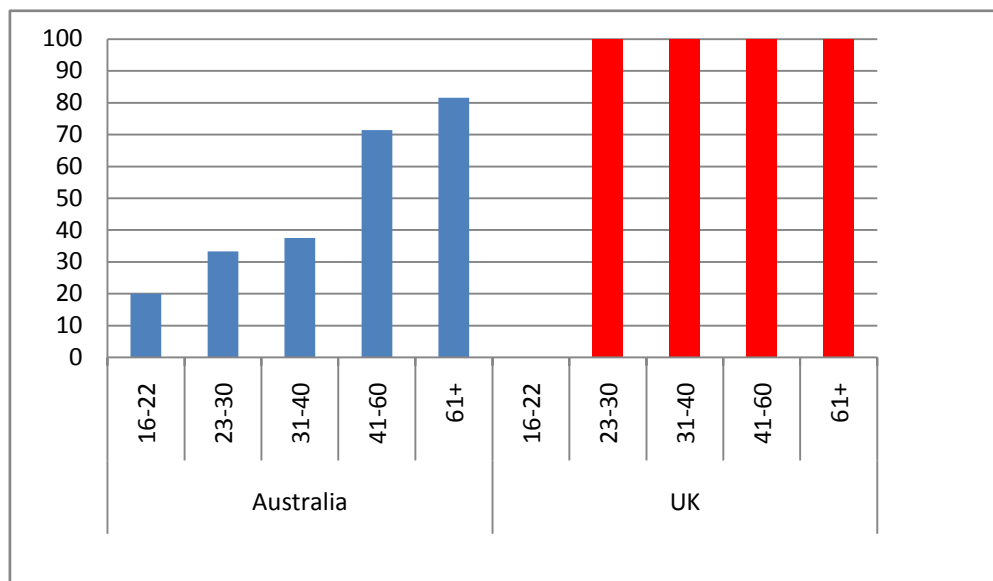
Figure 74.1: Familiarity with the phraseme *(to repent in) sackcloth and ashes* as a percentage of each age group's responses

74.2 Interpretation

Agreement with the suggested answer was high, except among the youngest group, who may have been unfamiliar with the meaning of 'repent' (see Figure 74.2). This suggests that the phraseme may be transparent only if the word 'repent' is included and people know the meaning of that word.

Figure 74.2: Interpretation of the phraseme *(to repent in) sackcloth and ashes* as a percentage of each age group's responses

74.3 Frequency of use

The only group to use this consistently appears to be the oldest UK group (see Table 74.2). Sixty-nine per cent of participants said they would never use it, however, suggesting that the target group are unlikely to encounter it.

Table 74.2: Frequency of use of the phraseme *(to repent in) sackcloth and ashes* as a percentage of each age group's responses

Location	Age group	Never	Almost never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
Australia	16-22	84	16	0	0	0
	23-30	83	0	17	0	0
	31-40	88	13	0	0	0
	41-60	74	21	6	0	0
	61+	63	26	11	0	0
UK	16-22	100	0	0	0	0
	23-30	100	0	0	0	0
	31-40	50	25	0	25	0
	41-60	35	59	6	0	0
	61+	13	50	38	0	0

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74.4 Phrasemes most frequently elicited

The only phraseme commonly elicited here was *to wear a hair shirt*, meaning *to act in a repentant manner*, with 4 Australian and 3 UK tokens from participants over the age of 31.

74.5 Dictionary coverage

Sackcloth and ashes is collocated with the verb *wear* in all the Big 5 except for *COBUILD*. The collocation *repent* is not given in any of the Big 5. This high coverage may be unnecessary for the target group, who are probably unlikely to hear the phraseme in Australia.

To wear a hair shirt appears as a phrase with a figurative meaning only in *COBUILD* and *MEDAL*, although *hair shirt* appears in *LDOCE* and *OALD* as an historical item.

75. Survey 6, Phraseme 5: *Something went out with the ark*

Total Australian participants: 111
Total UK participants: 58
Suggested interpretation: Something is old fashioned
Dictionary inclusion: *CALD, MEDAL* and *OALD*

Table 75.1: Participant numbers for the phraseme *something went out with the ark*

Australia	16-22	24
	23-30	6
	31-40	8
	41-60	35
	61+	38
	Total	**111**
UK	16-22	28
	23-30	1
	31-40	4
	41-60	17
	61+	8
	Total	**58**

75.1 Familiarity

This phraseme was very unfamiliar to the youngest group, and better known generally in the UK (79% familiarity) than in Australia (60%) (see Figure 75.1).
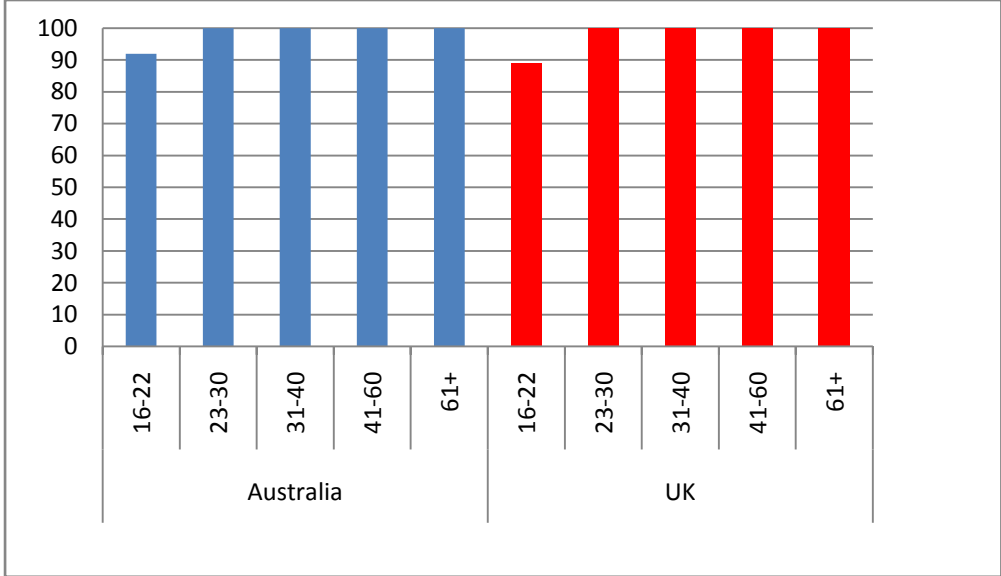

Figure 75.1: Familiarity with the phraseme *something went out with the ark* as a percentage of each age group's responses

75.2 Interpretation

Agreement with the suggested answer was high (see Figure 75.2), indicating that if someone is familiar with the word *ark* they will probably be able to guess the meaning of this phraseme.
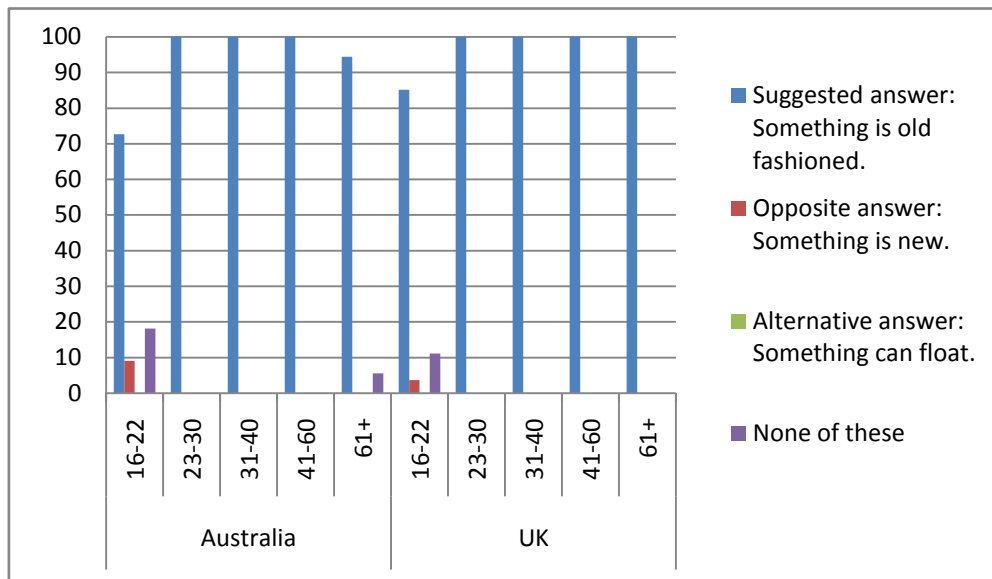
Figure 75.2: Interpretation of the phraseme *something went out with the ark* as a percentage of each age group's responses

75.3 Frequency of use

This phraseme did not show any real frequency of use below the age of 31, but many in the older groups said they would use it 'sometimes' (see Table 75.2). An average 20% of all participants said they would use it 'sometimes'. This indicates that it may be heard by the target group, but probably not among their peers.

Table 75.2: Frequency of use of the phraseme *something went out with the ark* as a percentage of each age group's responses

Location	Age group	Never	Almost never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
Australia	16-22	92	0	8	0	0
	23-30	67	17	17	0	0
	31-40	75	25	0	0	0
	41-60	26	43	29	3	0
	61+	32	22	43	0	3
UK	16-22	89	11	0	0	0
	23-30	100	0	0	0	0
	31-40	50	25	25	0	0
	41-60	18	29	53	0	0
	61+	13	50	25	13	0

75.4 Phrasemes most frequently elicited

Two phrasemes commonly elicited here appeared in the other surveys: *as old as Methuselah* (8 Australian, 2 UK tokens) (Survey 1:3) and *came out of the ark* (15 Australian, 5 UK tokens) or simply *out of the ark* (13 Australian and 13 UK tokens) (Survey 4:1). *As old as the ark*, meaning that something is very old, had 6 UK and 5 Australian tokens.

75.5 Dictionary coverage

Something went out with the ark is listed in *CALD*, *MEDAL* and *OALD*. This is reasonable coverage for a phraseme that is not frequently used in Australia, especially by younger people.

As old as Methuselah appears in *CALD, LDOCE* and *MEDAL. Out of the ark* is listed in *CALD, MEDAL* and *OALD*.

76. Survey 6, Phraseme 6: *The milk of human kindness*

Total Australian participants: 110
Total UK participants: 49
Suggested interpretation: Kindness
Dictionary inclusion: *CALD, LDOCE, MEDAL* and *OALD*

Table 76.1: Participant numbers for the phraseme *the milk of human kindness*

Australia	16-22	24
	23-30	6
	31-40	7
	41-60	35
	61+	38
	Total	**110**
UK	16-22	27
	23-30	1
	31-40	4
	41-60	17
	61+	8
	Total	**49**

76.1 Familiarity

This phraseme was more familiar in the UK, and little known by the two youngest groups in Australia (see Figure 76.1). An average 74% of participants had heard it before.
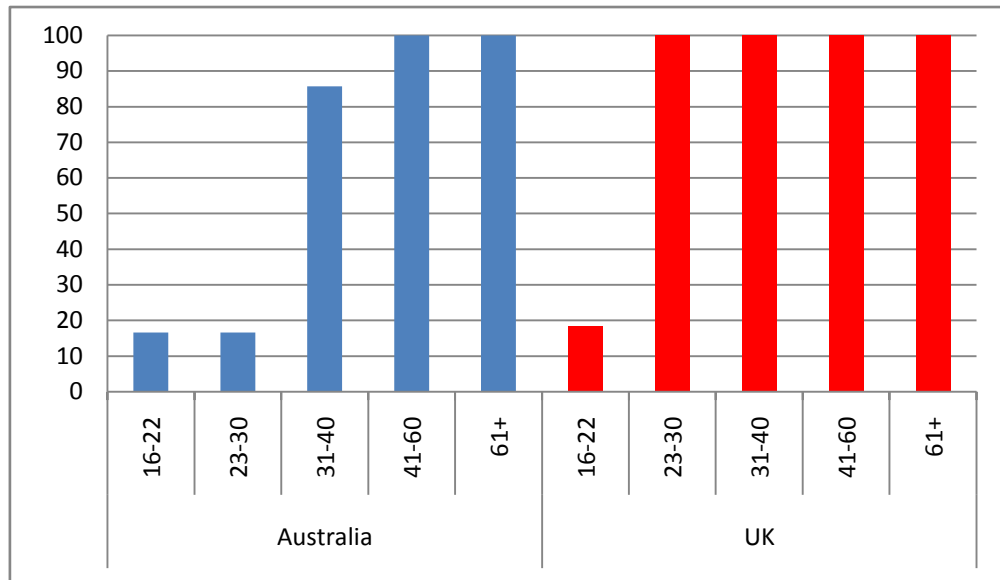
Figure 76.1: Familiarity with the phraseme *the milk of human kindness* as a percentage of each age group's responses

76.2 Interpretation

Several people disagreed with the suggested answer, particularly in Australia, indicating that the phraseme is not always understood the same way by everyone and may be hard to guess (see Figure 76.2).
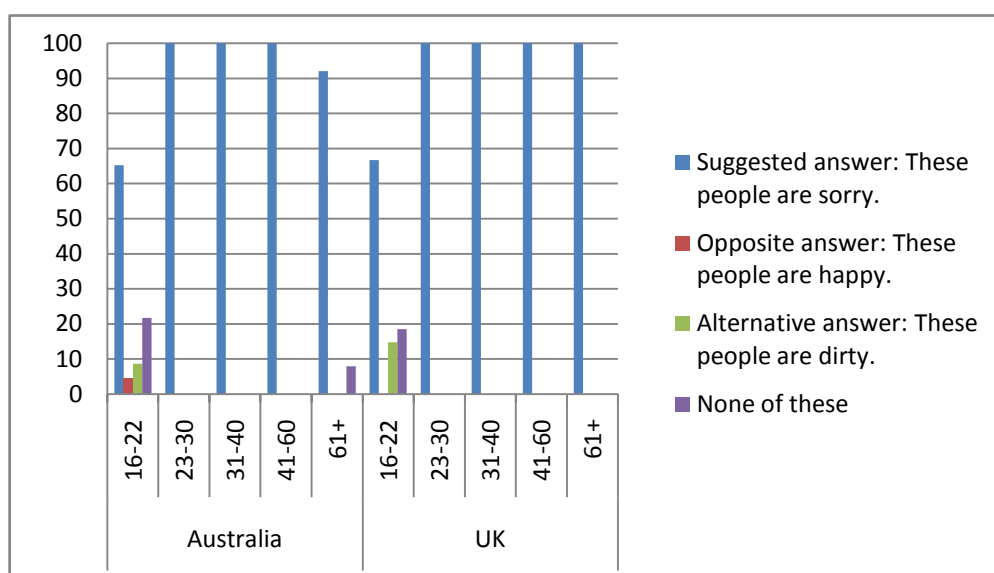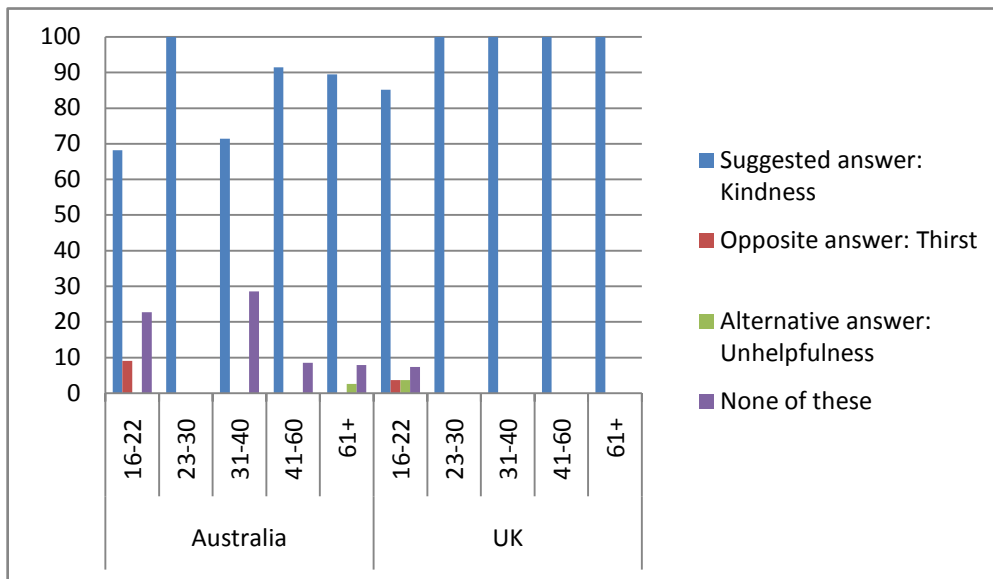
Figure 76.2: Interpretation of the phraseme *the milk of human kindness* as a percentage of each age group's responses

76.3 Frequency of use

This phraseme appears to be used more often in the UK than Australia, especially by the oldest group, suggesting that the target group may not encounter it (see Table 76.2).

Table 76.2: Frequency of use of the phraseme *the milk of human kindness* as a percentage of each age group's responses

Location	Age group	Never	Almost never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
Australia	16-22	88	13	0	0	0
	23-30	83	17	0	0	0
	31-40	71	29	0	0	0
	41-60	46	31	23	0	0
	61+	42	29	29	0	0
UK	16-22	93	7	0	0	0
	23-30	100	0	0	0	0
	31-40	50	50	0	0	0
	41-60	29	47	24	0	0
	61+	25	25	50	0	0

76.4 Phrasemes most frequently elicited

It's not worth/no use crying over spilt milk, meaning that a situation that is beyond repair is not worth lamenting, was a very popular suggestion, with 19 Australian and 9 UK tokens from all age groups. *A land of milk and honey* had 17 Australian and 7 UK tokens, again from all ages.

76.5 Dictionary coverage

The milk of human kindness appears in *CALD, LDOCE, MEDAL* and *OALD*. This is perhaps unnecessarily high coverage for a phraseme that is little used except by the two older groups.

It's not worth/no use crying over spilt milk and *a land of milk and honey* appear in all the Big 5 except for *COBUILD*.

77. Survey 6, Phraseme 7: *A pound of flesh*

Total Australian participants: 106
Total UK participants: 57
Suggested interpretation: Extreme repayment
Dictionary inclusion: *CALD, LDOCE, MEDAL* and *OALD*

Table 77.1: Participant numbers for the phraseme *a pound of flesh*

Australia	16-22	23
	23-30	6
	31-40	6
	41-60	35
	61+	36
	Total	**106**
UK	16-22	27
	23-30	1
	31-40	4
	41-60	17
	61+	8
	Total	**57**

77.1 Familiarity

This phraseme was known by all the participants except some in the youngest group, of whom 70% in Australia and only 52% in the UK had heard it before (see Figure 77.1). Average familiarity was 92%.
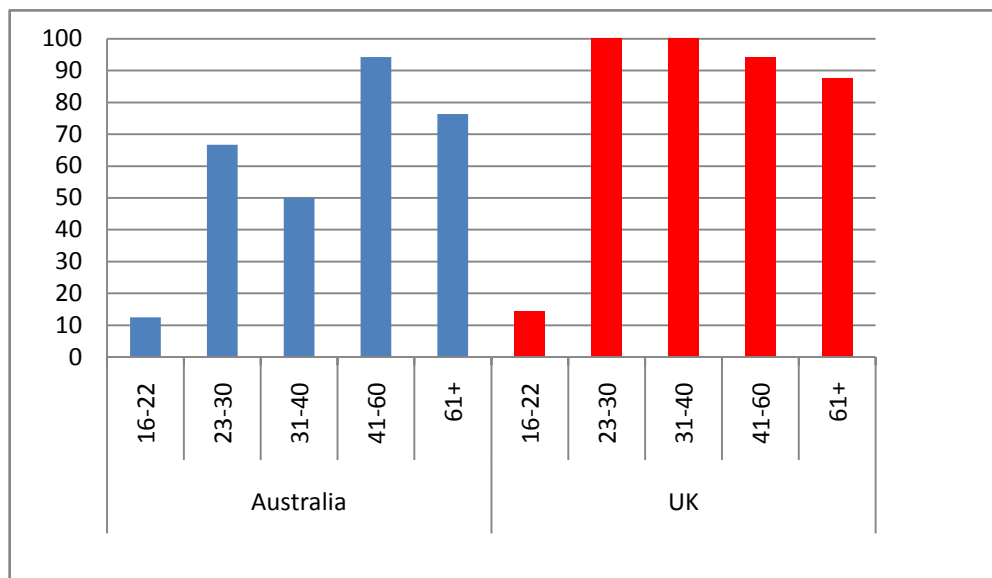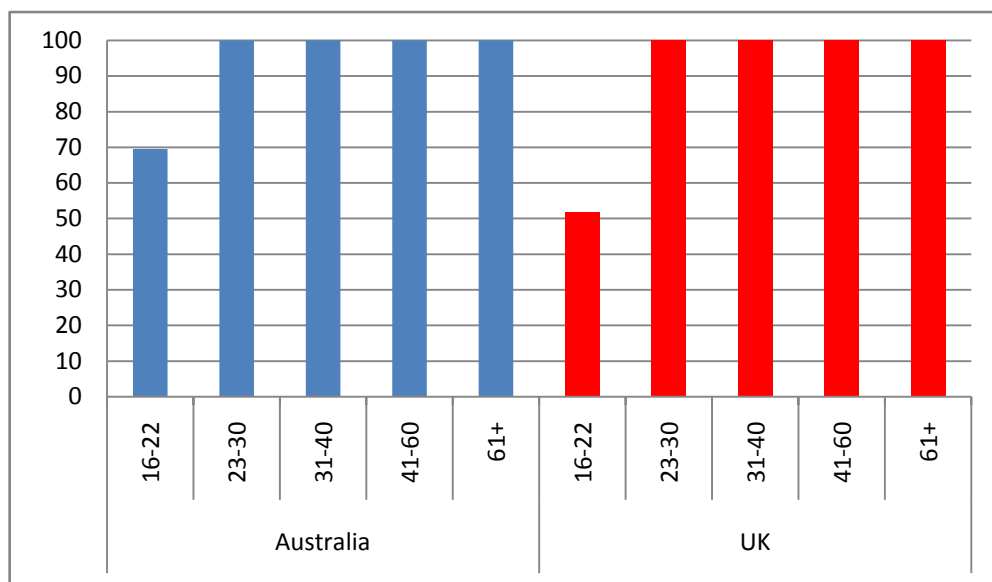

Figure 77.1: Familiarity with the phraseme *a pound of flesh* as a percentage of each age group's responses

77.2 Interpretation

Agreement with the suggested answer was mainly high, although some in the youngest group who had not heard the phraseme before were unsure as to its meaning (see Figure 77.2).
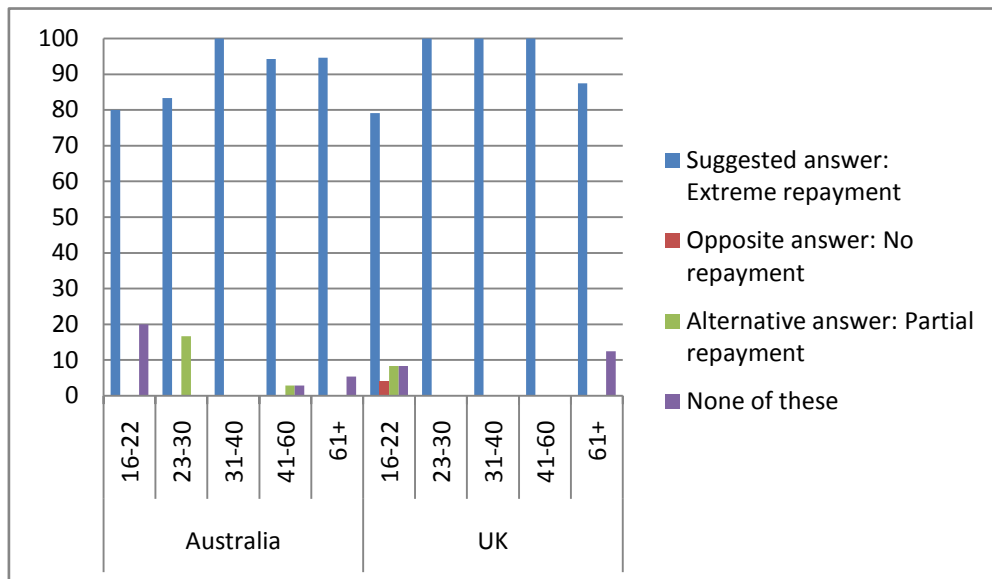
Figure 77.2: Interpretation of the phraseme *a pound of flesh* as a percentage of each age group's responses

77.3 Frequency of use

Although it is little used by the youngest group, this phraseme had quite high usage by other participants, indicating that the target group might come across it in their interactions with older speakers (see Table 77.2). An average 31% of participants said they would use it 'sometimes'.

Table 77.2: Frequency of use of the phraseme *a pound of flesh* as a percentage of each age group's responses

Location	Age group	Never	Almost never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
Australia	16-22	74	13	9	0	4
	23-30	50	33	17	0	0
	31-40	43	29	29	0	0
	41-60	17	26	51	6	0
	61+	19	22	57	3	0
UK	16-22	88	8	4	0	0
	23-30	100	0	0	0	0
	31-40	0	75	0	25	0
	41-60	6	24	71	0	0
	61+	13	0	75	13	0

77.4 Phrasemes most frequently elicited

The most common elicitations here were two phrasemes which also appeared at point 56.4. *In for a penny in for a pound* attracted 39 Australian and 19 UK tokens, from all age groups. *Penny wise pound foolish* had 5 Australian and 7 UK tokens from participants aged over 31.

77.5 Dictionary coverage

A pound of flesh appears in *CALD, LDOCE, MEDAL* and *OALD*. This is good coverage for a popular phraseme.

In for a penny in for a pound appears in all the Big 5 except *COBUILD*, while *penny wise pound foolish* appears only in *CALD* and *MEDAL.*

78. Survey 6, Phraseme 8: *(All animals are equal but) some are more equal than others*

Total Australian participants: 107
Total UK participants: 55
Suggested interpretation: Some are more important
Dictionary inclusion: *MEDAL* and *OALD*

Table 78.1: Participant numbers for the phraseme (all animals are equal but) some are more equal than others

Australia	16-22	23
	23-30	6
	31-40	7
	41-60	34
	61+	37
	Total	**107**
UK	16-22	26
	23-30	1
	31-40	4
	41-60	16
	61+	8
	Total	**55**

78.1 Familiarity

This phraseme was more familiar in the UK than in Australia, and not very well known by the youngest group (see Figure 78.1), although 5 Australian and 2 UK participants said they had read it in the George Orwell's *Animal farm*. Overall familiarity was 71%.
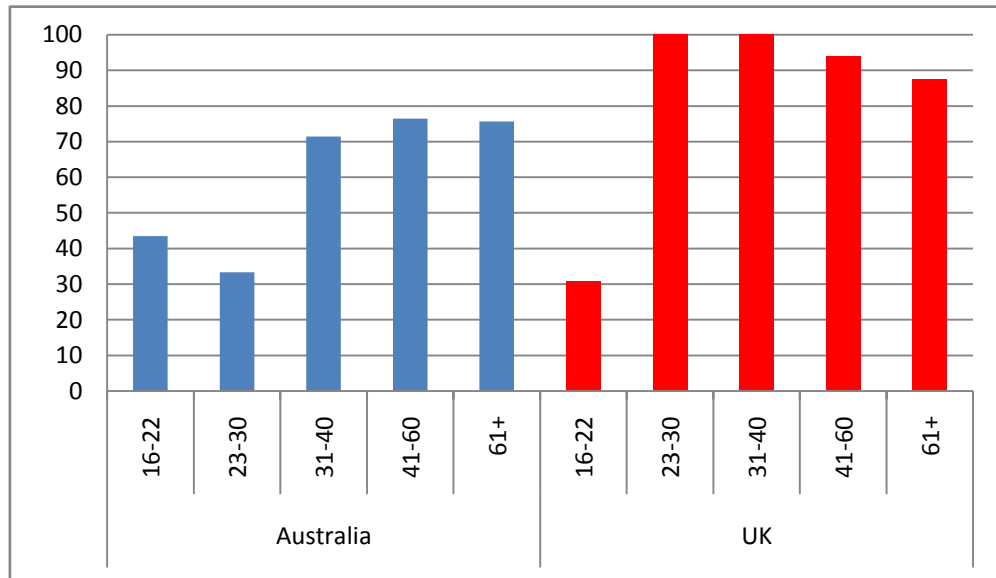
Figure 78.1: Familiarity with the phraseme *(all animals are equal but) some are more equal than others* as a percentage of each age group's responses

78.2 Interpretation

Most participants agreed with the suggested answer, with the exception of the youngest group in the UK (see Figure 78.2). This indicates that the phraseme may be rather opaque.
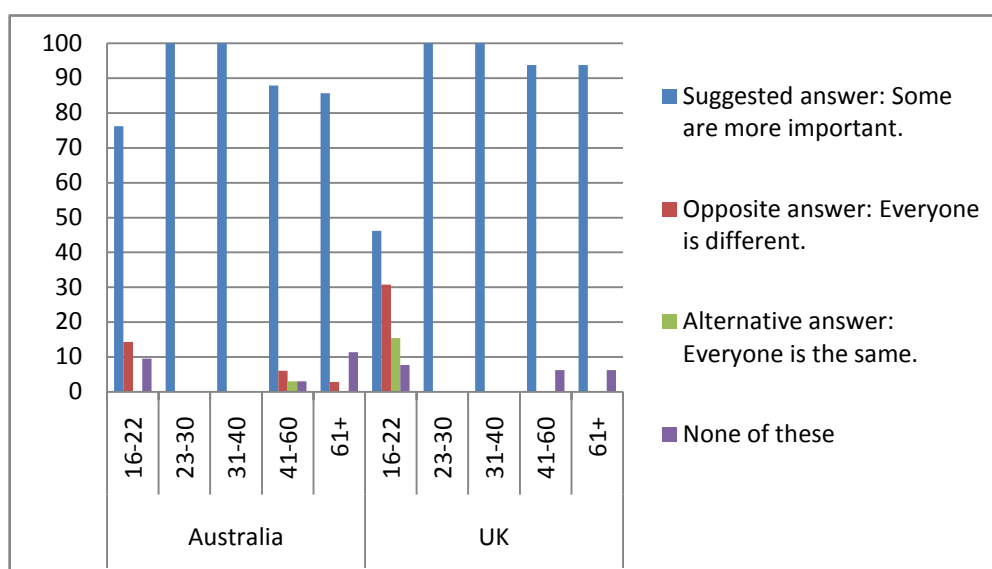
Figure 78.2: Interpretation of the phraseme *(all animals are equal but) some are more equal than others* as a percentage of each age group's responses

78.3 Frequency of use

This phraseme is used more in the UK than in Australia (see Table 78.2). In fact, 40% of UK participants said they would use it 'sometimes', compared to 13% in Australia. The target group may therefore not encounter it in Australia except among older speakers.

Table 78.2: Frequency of use of the phraseme *(all animals are equal but) some are more equal than others* as a percentage of each age group's responses

Location	Age group	Never	Almost never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
Australia	16-22	81	10	5	0	5
	23-30	83	17	0	0	0
	31-40	57	29	14	0	0
	41-60	59	28	13	0	0
	61+	35	30	32	3	0
UK	16-22	72	16	12	0	0
	23-30	0	0	100	0	0
	31-40	25	50	25	0	0
	41-60	31	38	31	0	0
	61+	31	38	31	0	0

78.4 Phrasemes most frequently elicited

No phrasemes were commonly elicited here.

78.5 Dictionary coverage

(All animals are equal but) some are more equal than others appears in both

MEDAL and *OALD*. This is reasonable coverage for a phraseme that is not often

used in Australia and so is not likely to be heard by the target group.

79. Survey 6, Phraseme 9: *Not to have a bar of something*

Total Australian participants: 105
Total UK participants: 55
Suggested interpretation: They won't allow that
Dictionary inclusion: *OALD*

Table 79.1: Participant numbers for the phraseme *not to have a bar of something*

Australia	16-22	22
	23-30	6
	31-40	7
	41-60	33
	61+	37
	Total	**105**
UK	16-22	26
	23-30	1
	31-40	4
	41-60	16
	61+	8
	Total	**55**

79.1 Familiarity

This phraseme was very unfamiliar in the UK but known to most of the Australian

participants, including 55% in the youngest group (see Figure 79.1). Ninety-one

per cent of Australians had heard it before, compared to only 9% in the UK.

Figure 79.1: Familiarity with the phraseme *not to have a bar of something* as a percentage of each age group's responses

79.2 Interpretation

Agreement with the suggested answer was quite high in Australia but varied in the UK, where most participants had not heard it before, indicating that the phraseme is very opaque and would be hard for the target group to guess (see Figure 79.2).
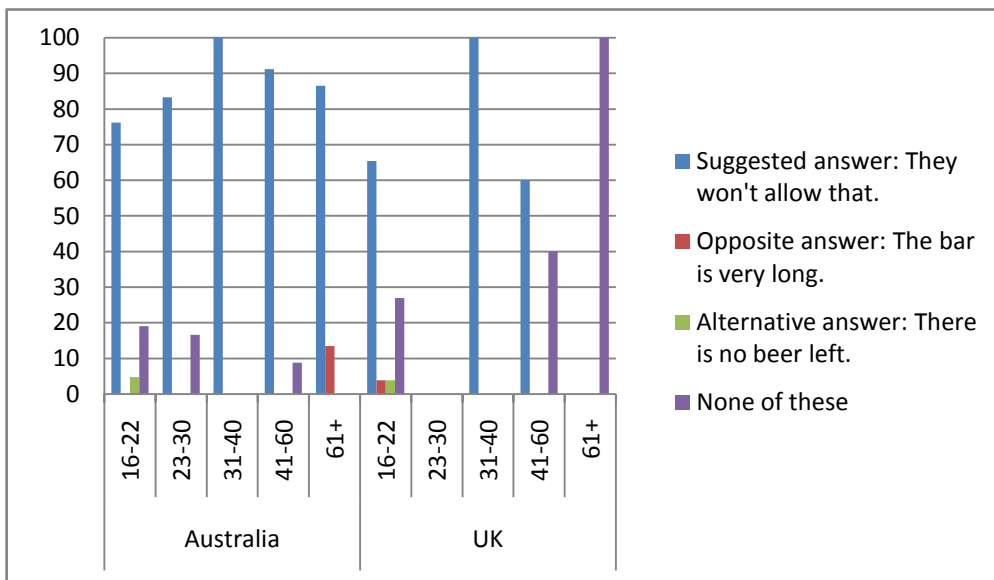
Figure 79.2: Interpretation of the phraseme *not to have a bar of something* as a percentage of each age group's responses

79.3 Frequency of use

Many participants in Australia (42%), including some from the youngest group, would use this phraseme 'sometimes' (see Table 79.2), suggesting that the target group are likely to encounter it.

Table 79.2: Frequency of use of the phraseme *not to have a bar of something* as a percentage of each age group's responses

Location	Age group	Never	Almost never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
Australia	16-22	64	23	14	0	0
	23-30	17	17	67	0	0
	31-40	14	57	29	0	0
	41-60	18	33	42	6	0
	61+	11	16	57	16	0
UK	16-22	92	8	0	0	0
	23-30	100	0	0	0	0
	31-40	75	25	0	0	0
	41-60	100	0	0	0	0
	61+	100	0	0	0	0

79.4 Phrasemes most frequently elicited

To raise the bar, meaning that standards are made higher, had 35 Australian and 20 UK tokens, from all age groups. *Bar none*, emphasising that someone is the best in their class, had 11 Australian and 3 UK tokens from participants aged over 23.

79.5 Dictionary coverage

Not to have a bar of something appears only in *OALD*. Given its familiarity and popularity in Australia, it is likely to be encountered by the target group and should be included in any MELD used in Australia.

To raise the bar appears only in *OALD*, although its popularity suggests it should be included in all MELDs. *Bar none* appears only in *LDOCE* and *MEDAL*.

80. Survey 6, Phraseme 10: *Up the mulga*

Total Australian participants: 100
Total UK participants: 55
Suggested interpretation: This place is remote
Dictionary inclusion: only an example in *CALD*

Table 80.1: Participant numbers for the phraseme *up the mulga*

Australia	16-22	22
	23-30	6
	31-40	7
	41-60	33
	61+	32
	Total	**100**
UK	16-22	26
	23-30	1
	31-40	4
	41-60	16
	61+	8
	Total	**55**

80.1 Familiarity

This phraseme was totally unknown in the UK and largely unknown by Australian participants (see Figure 80.1). None of the UK participants and only 14% of the Australians had heard it before, making it the second least familiar phraseme in the questionnaire. Eight Australian 61+ participants did not recognise the form *up the mulga*, although they were prompted to give the alternative *out in the mulga*.

Figure 80.1: Familiarity with the phraseme *up the mulga* as a percentage of each age group's responses

80.2 Interpretation

Agreement with the suggested answer varied, but was mostly quite high (see Figure 80.2), perhaps based on the context of the accompanying picture, which denoted a remote place. Understanding of the phraseme probably hinges on understanding the meaning and context of the word *mulga*, which is a type of tree found in outback Australia.
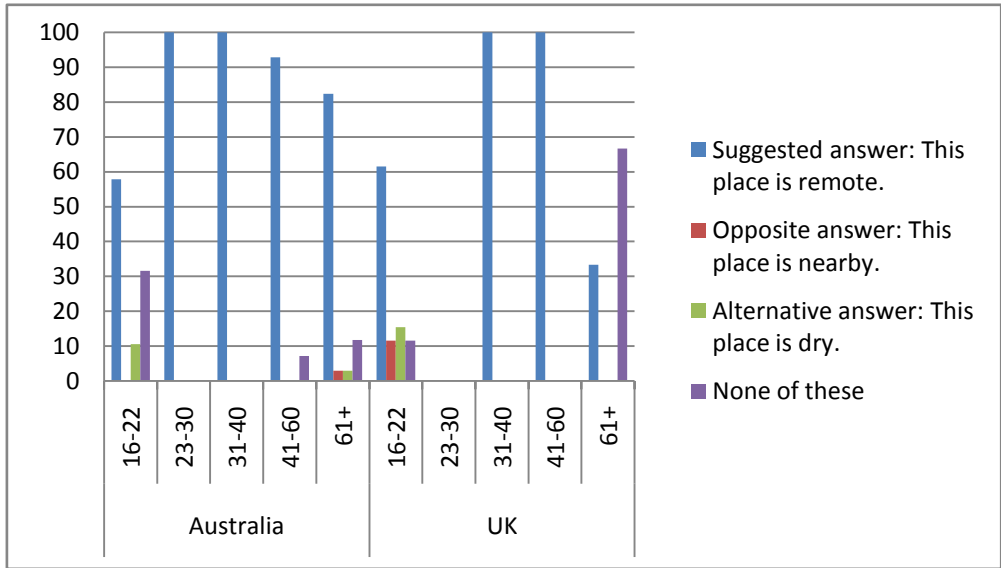
Figure 80.2: Interpretation of the phraseme *up the mulga* as a percentage of each age group's responses

80.3 Frequency of use

Despite its familiarity to Australian participants, this phraseme appears to be used seldom (see Table 80.2), with an average of 91% of participants saying they would never use it. It is therefore not likely to be encountered by the target group.

Table 80.2: Frequency of use of the phraseme *up the mulga* as a percentage of each age group's responses

Location	Age group	Never	Almost never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
Australia	16-22	95	5	0	0	0
	23-30	71	14	14	0	0
	31-40	100	0	0	0	0
	41-60	68	26	6	0	0
	61+	84	11	0	5	0
UK	16-22	92	8	0	0	0
	23-30	100	0	0	0	0
	31-40	100	0	0	0	0
	41-60	100	0	0	0	0
	61+	100	0	0	0	0

80.4 Phrasemes most frequently elicited

Three phrasemes were commonly elicited here, all referring to remote places. *Out in the mulga* had 21 Australian tokens from the three oldest groups. *Back of Bourke*, which appeared in Survey 1, had 12 Australian tokens from the two oldest age groups. *Beyond the black stump*, which was also commonly elicited in Survey 1, had 8 Australian and 1 UK tokens, again from the oldest groups.

80.5 Dictionary coverage

Up the mulga appears only in *CALD*, where it is listed as an example in the form *up in the mulga*. This coverage appears sufficient, and perhaps even unnecessary, for a phraseme that is seldom used by the participants of this study.

Out in the mulga is not in any of the Big 5. *Back of Bourke* appears in *MEDAL* and *OALD*, while *beyond the black stump* is listed only in *MEDAL*.

81. Survey 6, Phraseme 11: *Someone had a good innings*

Total Australian participants: 105
Total UK participants: 54
Suggested interpretation: They lived for a long time
Dictionary inclusion: *CALD, LDOCE, MEDAL* and *OALD*

Table 81.1: Participant numbers for the phraseme *someone had a good innings*

Australia	16-22	22
	23-30	6
	31-40	7
	41-60	33
	61+	37
	Total	**105**
UK	16-22	25
	23-30	1
	31-40	4
	41-60	16
	61+	8
	Total	**54**

81.1 Familiarity

This phraseme was almost totally familiar to all the age groups except the youngest, of whom 55% in Australia and 68% in the UK had heard it before (see Figure 81.1). The average rate of familiarity was a high 92%.
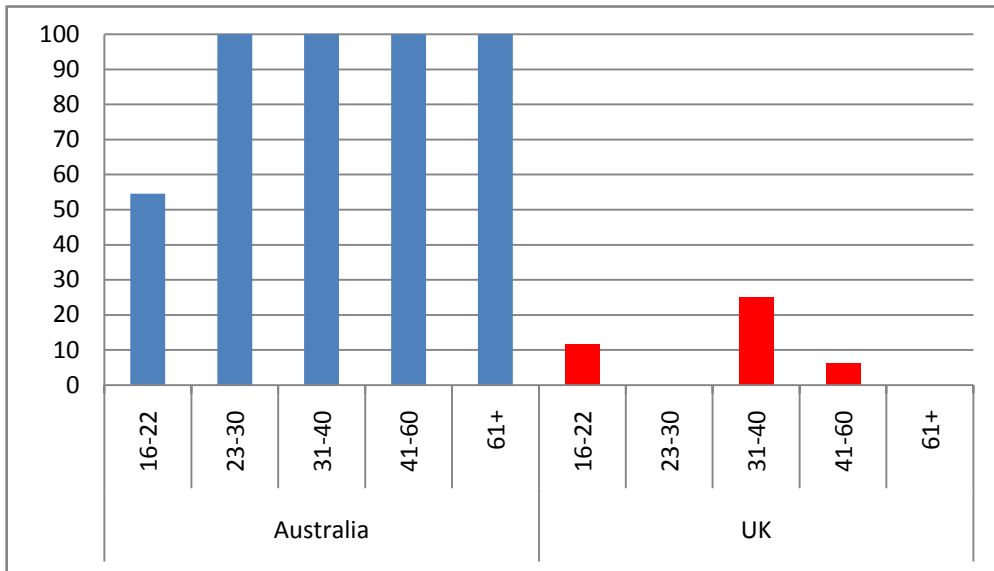

Figure 81.1: Familiarity with the phraseme *someone had a good innings* as a percentage of each age group's responses

81.2 Interpretation

Agreement with the suggested answer was high, except for a small number of participants who felt that 'none of these' was a better choice (see Figure 81.2). This does not mean that the phraseme is transparent, however, as most participants were already familiar with the phraseme. A knowledge of cricketing terms would help to make the phraseme more understandable, but that knowledge may well be lacking in the target group.

Figure 81.2: Interpretation of the phraseme *someone had a good innings* as a percentage of each age group's responses

81.3 Frequency of use

This phraseme had a high usage among the participants in the four older age groups in both locations (see Table 81.2), with the exception of the one UK participant in the 23-30 group. It is used sometimes by 38% of participants, with many Australian participants saying they would use it 'often'. The target group are thus very likely to encounter this phraseme.

Table 81.2: Frequency of use of the phraseme *someone had a good innings* as a percentage of each age group's responses

Location	Age group	Never	Almost never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
Australia	16-22	67	29	5	0	0
	23-30	33	17	33	17	0
	31-40	0	57	14	29	0
	41-60	9	21	61	9	0
	61+	11	32	38	19	0
UK	16-22	58	19	23	0	0
	23-30	100	0	0	0	0
	31-40	0	25	75	0	0
	41-60	13	31	44	13	0
	61+	0	0	88	13	0

81.4 Phrasemes most frequently elicited

There were no phrasemes commonly elicited here.

81.5 Dictionary coverage

Someone had a good innings appears in *CALD, LDOCE, MEDAL* and *OALD*. It is

a phraseme that should appear in any MELD used in Australia, since it is

commonly used and likely to be encountered by the target group.

82. Survey 6, Phraseme 12: *To run out of steam*

Total Australian participants: 104
Total UK participants: 55
Suggested interpretation: To have no more energy
Dictionary inclusion: *CALD*, *COBUILD*, *LDOCE*, *MEDAL* and *OALD*

Table 82.1: Participant numbers for the phraseme *to run out of steam*

Australia	16-22	21
	23-30	6
	31-40	7
	41-60	33
	61+	37
	Total	**104**
UK	16-22	26
	23-30	1
	31-40	4
	41-60	16
	61+	8
	Total	**55**

82.1 Familiarity

This phraseme was totally familiar to almost everyone who completed the survey, with the only lower rate being 71% among the Australian 16-22 year olds (see Figure 82.1). Average familiarity was 97%, putting it in fifth place in the questionnaire in terms of familiarity.
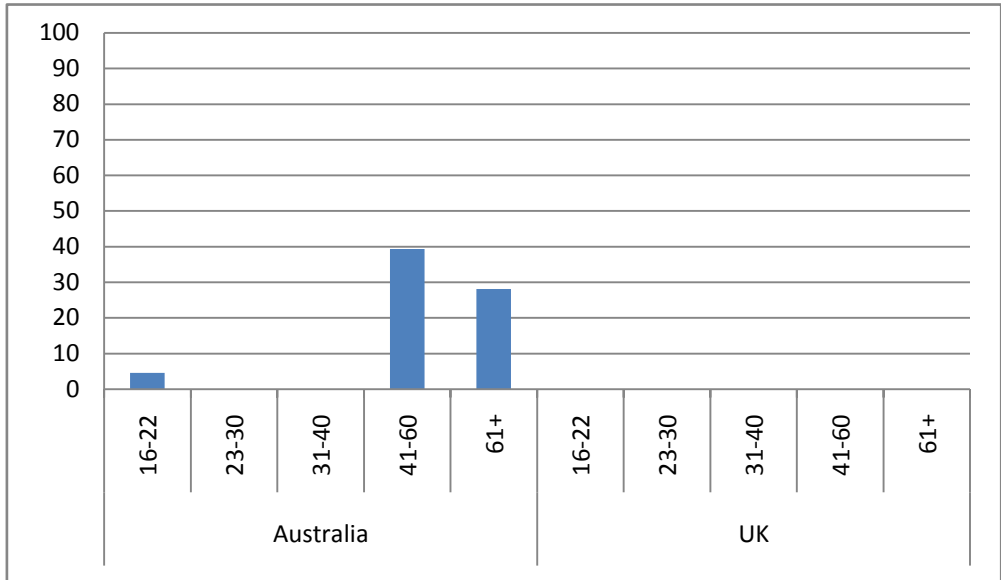

Figure 82.1: Familiarity with the phraseme *to run out of steam* as a percentage of each age group's responses

82.2 Interpretation

Agreement with the suggested answer was 100% from everyone except one participant in the Australian 16-22 group and one in the UK 16-22 group (see Figure 82.2). This was the highest agreement in the questionnaire.
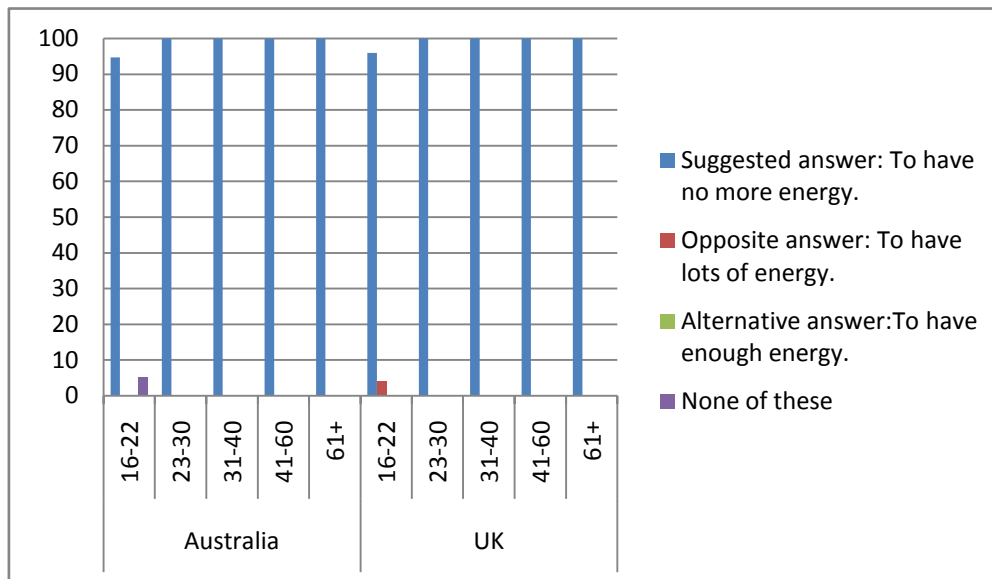
Figure 82.2: Interpretation of the phraseme *to run out of steam* as a percentage of each age group's responses

82.3 Frequency of use

Except for the single participant in the UK 23-30 group, all age groups would use this phraseme at some point (see Table 82.2). The average 'sometimes' rate was 48%, and 15% would use it 'often'. It is therefore very likely to be encountered by the target group.

Table 82.2: Frequency of use of the phraseme *to run out of steam* as a percentage of each age group's responses

Location	Age group	Never	Almost never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
Australia	16-22	48	19	29	5	0
	23-30	17	17	50	17	0
	31-40	29	14	43	14	0
	41-60	6	16	66	9	3
	61+	3	6	69	14	8
UK	16-22	23	12	46	19	0
	23-30	100	0	0	0	0
	31-40	0	25	50	25	0
	41-60	0	13	50	31	6
	61+	0	13	75	13	0

82.4 Phrasemes most frequently elicited

To run out of puff, which has the same meaning as the prompt phraseme, had 20 Australian and 4 UK tokens from all age groups. *To get up a (good) head of steam*, meaning *to gain impetus*, had 9 Australian and 3 UK tokens from participants aged over 31. Other phrasemes elicited were those which were used as prompts earlier in the questionnaire: *to let off steam* (16 Australian and 8 UK tokens) and *full steam ahead* (16 Australian and 6 UK tokens).

82.5 Dictionary coverage

To run out of steam appears in all the Big 5. This is excellent coverage for a phraseme which is likely to be encountered by the target group.

To let off steam and *full steam ahead* appear in all the Big 5. *To be/run out of puff* and *a head of steam* are listed only in *CALD, LDOCE* and *MEDAL*.

83. Survey 6, Phraseme 13: *To spend a penny*

Total Australian participants: 103
Total UK participants: 47
Suggested interpretation: Someone wants to go to the toilet
Dictionary inclusion: *CALD, LDOCE, MEDAL* and *OALD*

Table 83.1: Participant numbers for the phraseme *to spend a penny*

Australia	16-22	21
	23-30	6
	31-40	6
	41-60	33
	61+	37
	Total	**103**
UK	16-22	18
	23-30	1
	31-40	4
	41-60	16
	61+	8
	Total	**47**

83.1 Familiarity

This phraseme was very familiar to most of the participants, with the lowest figure of 57% in the Australian 16-22 group (see Figure 83.1). Overall familiarity was 95%, putting it at ninth position in the questionnaire.
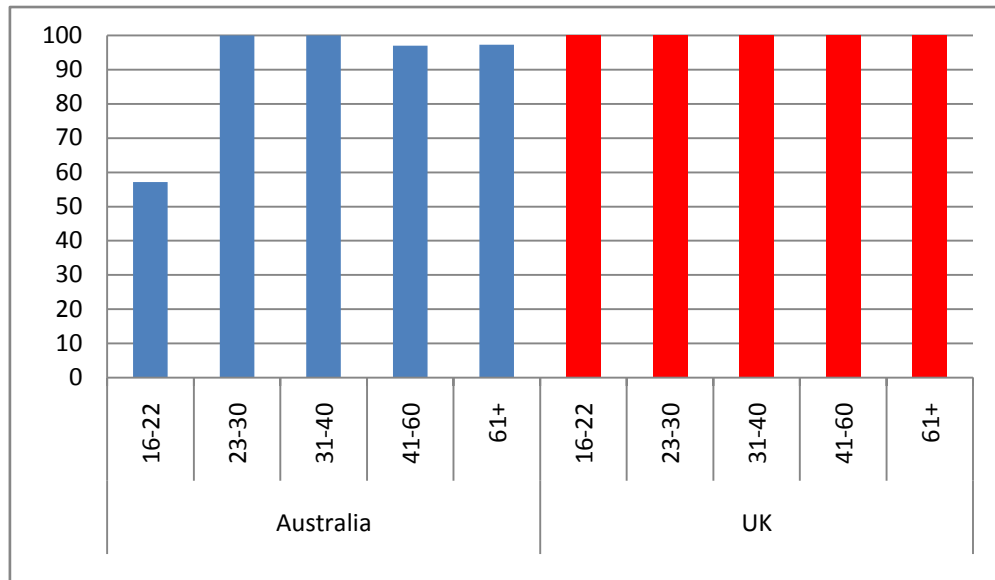
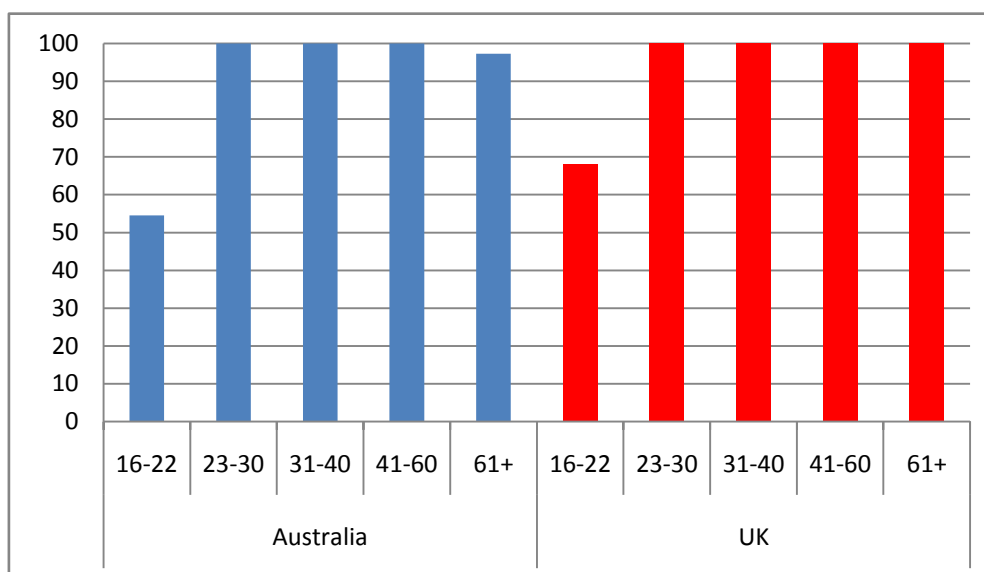Figure 83.1: Familiarity with the phraseme *to spend a penny* as a percentage of each age group's responses

83.2 Interpretation

Agreement with the suggested answer was high in most groups, with the exception of the two youngest age ranges in Australia (see Figure 83.2). In the case of the 16-22 year olds, this may have been because they were not already familiar with the phraseme and therefore found it hard to understand.
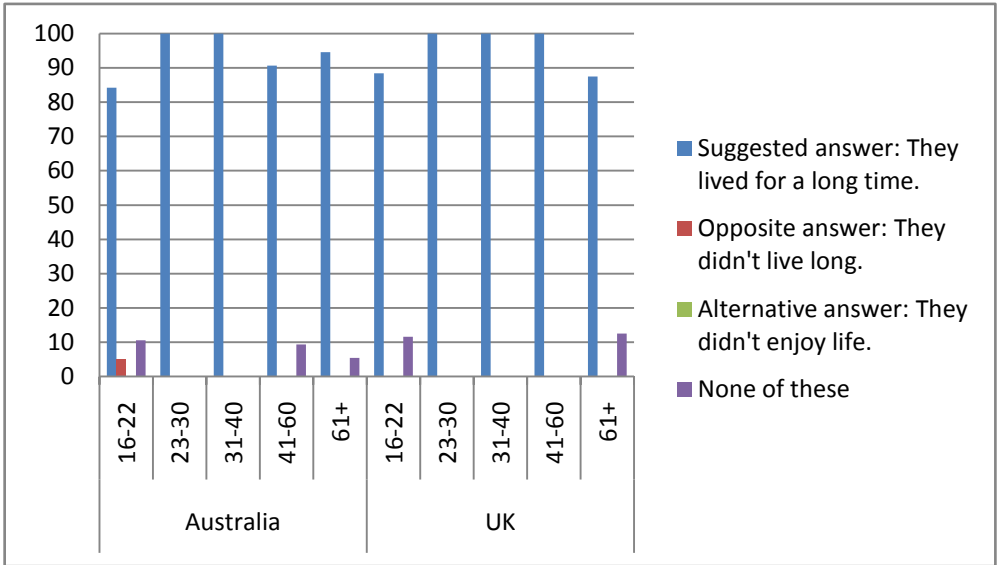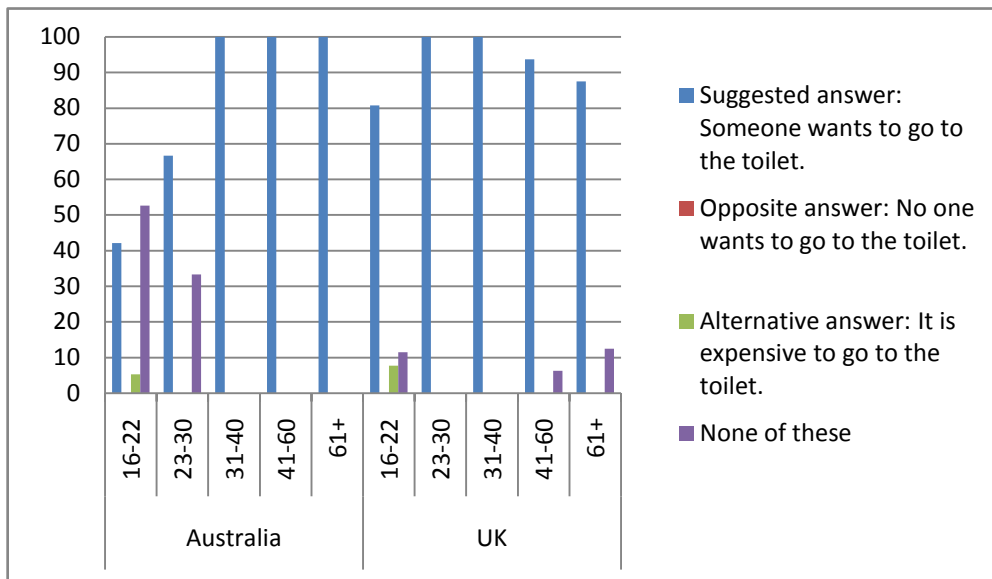
Figure 83.2: Interpretation of the phraseme *to spend a penny* as a percentage of each age group's responses

83.3 Frequency of use

This phraseme appears to be used by nearly all age groups in each location, although it is used more often in the UK (see Table 83.2). Twenty-eight per cent of all participants, and many from the youngest group, would use it 'sometimes'. It is therefore likely to be encountered by the target group.

Table 83.2: Frequency of use of the phraseme *to spend a penny* as a percentage of each age group's responses

Location	Age group	Never	Almost never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
Australia	16-22	76	10	14	0	0
	23-30	50	17	33	0	0
	31-40	100	0	0	0	0
	41-60	48	21	24	6	0
	61+	41	32	14	8	5
UK	16-22	58	19	12	12	0
	23-30	0	0	100	0	0
	31-40	25	0	25	50	0
	41-60	44	13	31	6	6
	61+	25	25	25	25	0

83.4 Phrasemes most frequently elicited

The phrasemes most commonly elicited here were those elicited at *two a penny* in point 56.4 in this chapter. *In for a penny in for a pound* had 23 Australian and 13 UK tokens. *A penny for your thoughts* had 22 Australian and 7 UK tokens. *The penny drops* had 14 Australian and 11 UK tokens, including 6 from the 16-22 age group. *Penny wise and pound foolish* had 15 Australian and 9 UK tokens. The frequency of these elicitations indicates that phrasemes using the word *penny* are common with all age groups and in both locations.

83.5 Dictionary coverage

To spend a penny appears in *CALD, LDOCE, MEDAL* and *OALD*. This is a phraseme which could usefully be included in any MELD used in Australia.

The inclusion in the Big 5 of the phrasemes elicited here is covered at point 56.5 above.

84. Survey 6, Phraseme 14: *Not to move an inch*

Total Australian participants: 101
Total UK participants: 55
Suggested interpretation: It will not move
Dictionary inclusion: *CALD, LDOCE, MEDAL* and *OALD*

Table 84.1: Participant numbers for the phraseme *not to move an inch*

Australia	16-22	21
	23-30	7
	31-40	5
	41-60	33
	61+	35
	Total	**101**
UK	16-22	26
	23-30	1
	31-40	4
	41-60	16
	61+	8
	Total	**55**

84.1 Familiarity

This phraseme was very familiar in both the UK and Australia (see Figure 84.1), with 81% of the youngest group in each location indicating they had heard it before. Overall familiarity was a high 95%.
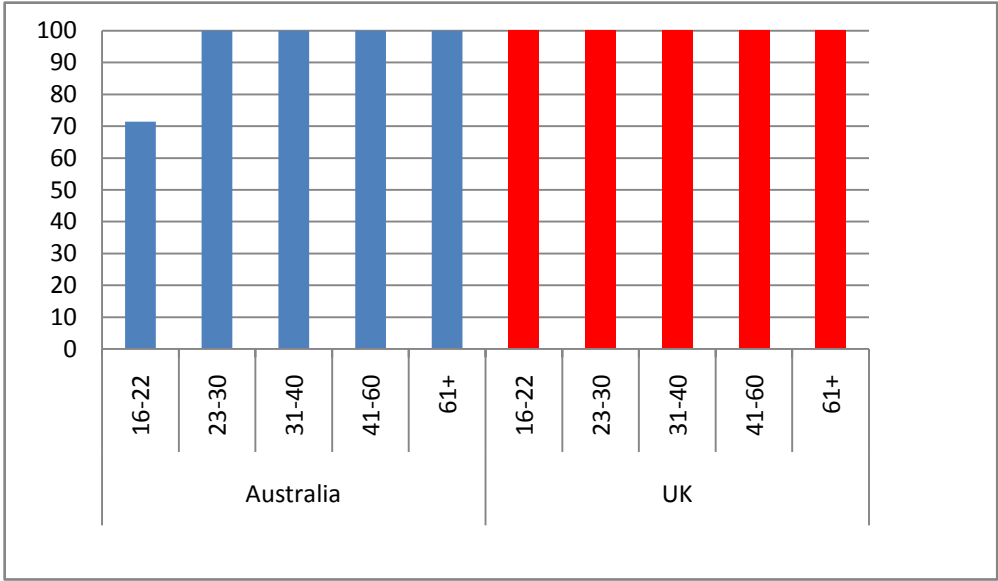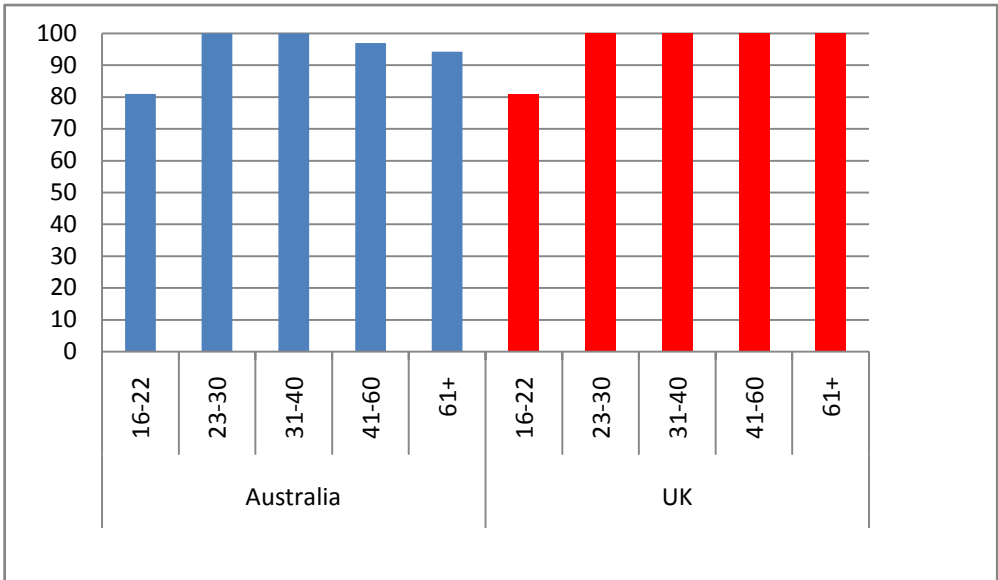

Figure 84.1: Familiarity with the phraseme *not to move an inch* as a percentage of each age group's responses

84.2 Interpretation

Agreement with the suggested answer was high (see Figure 84.2), although a few participants felt that 'none of these' was a more satisfactory interpretation.
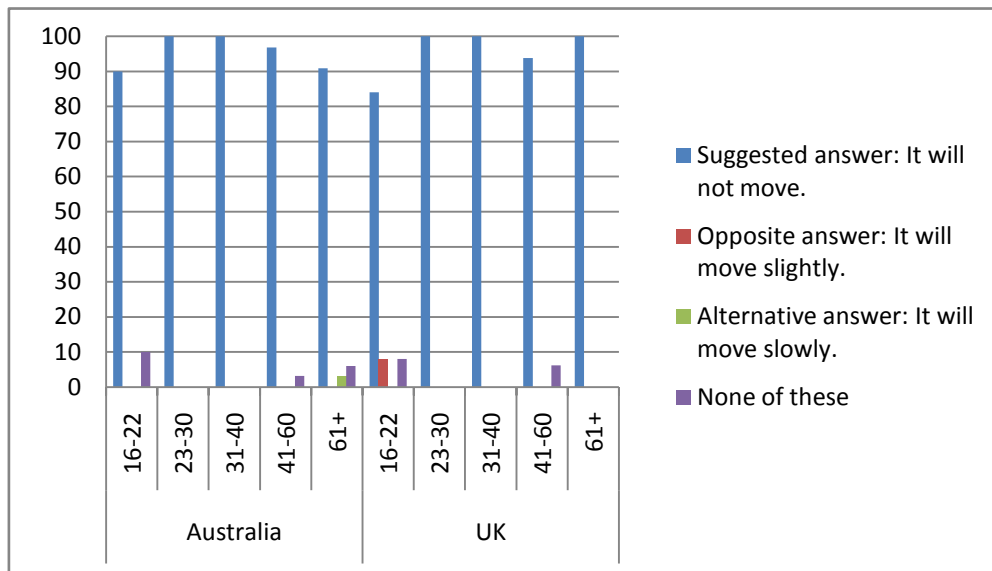
Figure 84.2: Interpretation of the phraseme *not to move an inch* as a percentage of each age group's responses

84.3 Frequency of use

This phraseme had high rates of usage (an average 41%), with 29% of the youngest group indicating that they would use it 'sometimes' (see Table 84.2). It is therefore likely to be encountered by the target group.

Table 84.2: Frequency of use of the phraseme *not to move an inch* as a percentage of each age group's responses

Location	Age group	Never	Almost never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
Australia	16-22	48	24	29	0	0
	23-30	33	17	33	17	0
	31-40	14	43	43	0	0
	41-60	28	25	41	3	3
	61+	9	44	38	6	3
UK	16-22	36	21	29	14	0
	23-30	0	100	0	0	0
	31-40	25	0	75	0	0
	41-60	0	13	69	6	13
	61+	13	38	50	0	0

84.4 Phrasemes most frequently elicited

Give them an inch and they take a mile, which also appears as a prompt in Survey 2, had 39 Australian and 20 UK tokens. *Inch by inch*, which appears in Survey 3, had 16 Australian and 12 UK tokens.

84.5 Dictionary coverage

Not to move an inch or *not to budge/give an inch* appear in *CALD, LDOCE, MEDAL* and *OALD*. This is a phraseme that should be included in any MELD designed for the target group.

Give them an inch and they take a mile appears in *CALD, LDOCE, MEDAL* and *OALD*.

Inch by inch is listed in all the Big 5.

85. Overall findings for familiarity throughout the questionnaire

The two most familiar phrasemes, when figures are averaged over both locations, were *to let off steam* and *to cry wolf*, familiar to 99% of participants. Next in order were *to turn the other cheek* (98%); *full steam ahead* and *to run out of steam* (97%); *in the land of Nod* (96%); *give someone an inch and they'll take a yard/mile, not to move an inch* and *to spend a penny* (95%); and *like a lamb to the slaughter, look before you leap, an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth* and *birds of a feather flock together* (94%). (For a complete list of phraseme familiarity rates, see Appendix 4.) Six of these phrasemes are from the older reference category, four are Biblical and three are literary.

The most familiar phrasemes in the UK were *to cry wolf, to let off steam, to run out of steam* and *to spend a penny* (100%); *in the land of Nod* (99%); *to turn*

the other cheek, full steam ahead and *like a lamb to the slaughter* (98%); and *to have someone's guts for garters* and *give someone an inch and they'll take a yard/mile* (97%). The major category represented in the UK was that of older reference.

The most familiar phrasemes in Australia were *to turn the other cheek, to let off steam* and *to cry wolf* (98%); *full steam ahead* (97%); *look before you leap, the penny drops* and *the blind leading the blind* (96%); and *not to move an inch, give someone an inch and they'll take a yard/mile, to run out of steam* and *a pound of flesh* (94%). Again, older reference phrasemes were in the majority.

The least familiar phrasemes in the questionnaire averaged over both locations were almost all Australian phrasemes. Only 1% of participants had heard the phraseme *to be a box of birds* before, and only 7% were familiar with *up the mulga*. *To come a gutser* and *the man/woman on the Clapham omnibus* (a UK phraseme) were familiar to 30%. Next highest in the list were *to get a guernsey* (35%); *back of Bourke* (36%); *like a shag on a rock* (40%); *jam tomorrow* (a literary phraseme) (43%); and *done like a dinner* and *in the box seat* (46%). Eight of these phrasemes were therefore Australian, one was from the UK and one was literary. The Australian phrasemes feature largely because they were generally unknown in the UK, which brought the average familiarity rates down greatly.

The ten least familiar phrasemes in the UK were identical to those in the list above, except that *jam tomorrow* was replaced by the Australian *don't come the raw prawn with me* (40%).

Generally, it seemed that the Australian participants were more familiar with most of the phrasemes than their English counterparts had been. The only phrasemes familiar to fewer than 50% of Australian participants were *to be a box*

of birds (1%); *the man/woman on the Clapham omnibus* and *up the mulga* (14%); *jam tomorrow* (20%); and *to repent in sackcloth and ashes* (49%). These represent all the categories in the questionnaire.

There were 53 phrasemes out of the total 84 which were unfamiliar to more than half of those in the youngest age group in Australia. Least familiar were *to come a gutser, to grasp the nettle, to be a box of birds* and *back of Bourke* (3%); *the man/woman on the Clapham omnibus* and *a dog in the manger* (4%); *up the mulga* and *carry/take coals to Newcastle* (5%); *don't come the raw prawn with me* (8%); and *jam tomorrow* (9%). These represent the Australian, UK and literary categories.

In the UK, the least familiar phrasemes for this age group were *up the mulga, (to repent in) sackcloth and ashes, like a shag on a rock, to get a guernsey, to come a gutser,* and *to be a box of birds* (0%); *back of Bourke* (1%); and *the scales fall from someone's eyes* (3%). Five of these were Australian in reference and two were Biblical.

86. Overall findings for frequency of use throughout the questionnaire

Overall findings for frequency of use for all the phrasemes in the questionnaire are given in Appendix 5. Percentages for use in Appendix 5 represent the rate at which participants said they would use a particular phraseme 'sometimes', since this was generally the highest rating given to most of the phrasemes in the questionnaire. Separate figures are given for average use in Australia and the UK, and among the youngest age groups in each location.

87. Overall findings for occasions on which phrasemes are used throughout the questionnaire

Participants were given 12 boxes to tick in order to indicate where they would use each phraseme. It was possible to tick more than one box, and occasionally someone would add a comment about where they would use a phraseme. For example, in response to the prompt *birds of a feather flock together*, an Australian male participant in the 31-40 age group said, 'In the tech world these days we have "BOF sessions" at conferences where people with similar interests can get together for impromptu meetings.'

Table 85 below indicates where participants would use the phraseme *full steam ahead*, which was one of the most familiar phrasemes in the questionnaire (97% familiarity across all age groups and in both locations). This phraseme is from Survey 1, which attracted the largest number of responses, and can be taken as representative of answers throughout the questionnaire, although the large number of responses from the youngest group in the UK may have had some effect on the overall balance of the results. Figures are given as a percentage of those who completed this question, rather than as a percentage of those who said they had heard the phraseme before, as some who said they were unfamiliar with the phraseme still said they would use it on various occasions, perhaps indicating what they intended to do in the future.

Table 85: Where participants would use the phraseme *full steam ahead*, by age and region, expressed as a percentage of those who answered this question

Where used	Australia 16-22 (no. = 81)	UK 16-22 (no. = 399)	Australia 23+ (no. = 170)	UK 23+ (no. = 219)	Average
Talking to children	15	10	34	21	20
Talking to parents	35	13	45	26	30
Talking to brothers or sisters	26	9	46	24	26
Talking to friends one's own age	32	14	60	38	36
Talking to younger people	19	11	45	32	27
Talking to older people	31	11	52	34	32
Talking to colleagues at work	14	8	44	32	25
Talking to one's boss	16	1	32	23	18
Talking in formal situations	15	1	16	9	10
Writing an essay	9	1	7	4	5
Writing a text message	9	0	7	5	5
Chatting on the internet	6	1	14	9	8

Full steam ahead, from the older reference category, was familiar to 97% of participants and used 'sometimes' by 35%. The greatest use by all participants was when talking to friends their own age (average 36%), followed by talking to older people (32%) and parents (30%), and then younger people (27%) and colleagues at work (25%).

88. Sources of phrasemes throughout the questionnaire

Check boxes were given in the questionnaire so that participants could indicate where they might have heard the phrasemes for the first time. Often it was difficult for people to remember where they had first encountered them, however, and so some people gave more than one source. For this reason, the percentages in

each column do not add up to 100. In this section, one phraseme from each category will be addressed in detail as representative of the larger group. This is because the areas in which phrasemes were first heard did not vary substantially throughout the questionnaire. The findings are given for all participants in Table 86 and then specifically for the 16-22 age group in Australia in Table 87, since they represent the target group of EAL speakers in Australia in their present exposure to phrasemes. As native speakers, however, the Australian 16-22 year olds will obviously have had greater contact with phrasemes over a longer period of time, and may have heard them in situations to which the target group are not privy, such as through native English speaking parents or other relatives. The phrasemes here are all taken from Survey 1, which had the greatest number of responses, and the phrasemes chosen represent each of the five categories: *wolf in sheep's clothing* (Biblical), *an albatross around the neck* (literary), *back of Bourke* (Australian), *carry/take coals to Newcastle* (UK) and *full steam ahead* (older reference).

Table 86: Sources given by participants from which five representative phrasemes were first heard by all participants, as a percentage of those who had heard the phraseme before. The number of participants who had heard each phraseme before is given in brackets.

Sources	Wolf in sheep's clothing (no. = 537)	An albatross round the neck (no. = 245)	Back of Bourke (no. = 141)	Carry/take coals to Newcastle (no. = 261)	Full steam ahead (no. = 463)
Bible/ Church	2	0	0	0	9
Books and stories	17	24	13	14	14
Bourke (location)	0	0	1	0	0
Childhood	5	4	3	7	3
Cartoon	1	0	0	0	0
Conver-sation	11	13	24	17	10
Friends	8	4	11	11	6
General use	12	6	9	13	11
Internet/ email	1	2	0	1	1
Media	17	16	27	17	23
Older people (non-relatives)	2	1	3	4	2
Nautical context	0	0	0	0	2
Parents	21	4	11	14	10
Poem	0	15	0	0	0
Railway context	0	0	0	0	3
Relatives (other than parents)	12	6	9	11	7
School	9	9	2	7	5
Song/ Nursery rhyme	2	0	2	0	0
Work	0	2	1	3	3

Table 87: Sources from which five representative phrasemes were first heard by Australian 16-22 year olds as a percentage of those in that group who had heard the phraseme before

Sources	Wolf in sheep's clothing (no. = 42)	An albatross around the neck (no. = 59)	Back of Bourke (no. = 2)	Coals to Newcastle (no. = 3)	Full steam ahead (no. = 56)
Bible/ Church	2	0	0	0	0
Books and stories	26	20	0	33	7
Bourke (location)	0	0	50	0	0
Cartoon	0	0	0	0	0
As a child	12	3	0	0	0
Conver-sation	33	15	0	0	0
Friends	14	3	0	0	5
General use	26	6	0	0	4
Internet/ email	2	0	0	0	0
Media	26	16	50	0	22
Older people (non-relatives)	5	1	0	0	0
Parents	21	3	50	0	14
Poem	0	7	0	0	0
Relatives (other than parents)	14	4	0	0	7
School	17	5	0	0	7
Work	0	0	0	0	2

Table 86 reveals that for all the participants, the places where they were most likely to hear these five phrasemes were in books and conversation. Parents seem to have been a particular source for the phraseme *a wolf in sheep's clothing*. From Table 87, it can be seen that the youngest group in Australia had also heard these particular phrasemes from a variety of sources. The 50% rates for *back of Bourke*, although they seem high, are not very representative, as only two people in this age group had heard this phraseme before. (One person had heard the phraseme on television, and the other had heard it from parents while travelling to the town

of Bourke.) The same can be said of the 33% rating for *carry/take coals to Newcastle*, which was only familiar to three people in this age group. The other phrasemes, however, had higher rates of familiarity. From this, it seems that the most common source for this age group to hear the phrasemes was through parents, followed by conversation, general use, school and the media.

Some specific instances where participants were keen to stress the source from which they had first encountered a phraseme are listed below:

- An English man aged over 61 said he had heard *to send someone to Coventry* in 'UK broadcasting about industrial relations 1940 onwards'.

- An Australian young man in the 16-22 group said he had heard *to live off the fat of the land* in the television weight loss show *The biggest loser*, while four UK participants in this group had heard it in John Steinbeck's novel *Of mice and men*, which they were studying at school.

- *Turn swords into ploughshares* was first heard by a lady in the UK 23-30 age group in Michael Jackson's song *Heal the world*.

- A creative source for *to hide one's light under a bushel* was the television motoring show *Top gear*, in which an Australian male participant in the 23-30 group said 'A high-powered-yet-sensible-looking family sedan was said to be an excellent bushel under which the car-mad-yet-responsible family man could hide his light.' Another Australian man in the 31-40 group had first heard the phraseme in the BBC radio show *Round the Horne*.

- *To gild the lily* was first encountered by many in books or on television, with one Australian lady in the 31-40 group giving the Australian cook Maggie Beer as her source.

- Some sources were more prosaic. *Fools rush in where angels fear to tread* was first seen by an Australian man (41-60 group) 'scribbled on a toilet wall'.

- Others were wistful or possibly humorous. *Hell has no fury like a woman scorned* was first heard by one Australian man in the oldest group in connection with his first girlfriend. Another participant (an Australian girl in the youngest group) had heard it in the television comedy series *Two and a half men*.

These phrasemes had obviously made an impact on the hearers and so become more memorable, in line with Hockett's suggestion (1956, p. 223).

89. Other phrasemes elicited from participants

The suggested phrasemes led to further elicitations in different ways. (For a complete list of all phrasemes elicited, please see the accompanying CD-ROM.) For example, the Biblical phraseme *to turn the other cheek* led to further examples of Biblical phrasemes on similar themes, such as *love thy neighbour*. It also led to Biblical expressions with an opposite meaning, such as *an eye for an eye (and a tooth for a tooth)*, and non-Biblical expressions with the opposite meaning, such as *revenge is sweet.* In addition, there were lexical links, such as *turn a blind eye* and *cheek by jowl*. Parts of speech varied, so that the verb *turn* was also used as a noun, in *one good turn deserves another*. Several participants created new phrasemes based on old ones, perhaps unintentionally, so that the word *dog* prompted *better the dog you know* rather than the more familiar *better the devil you know*. These appeared to be nonce forms, however, rather than established new forms.

Some variations may have been prompted by the phraseme in the picture of the previous question. The image for *kill the fatted calf*, for instance, was followed by the phraseme *like a lamb to the slaughter*, eliciting the form *kill the fatted lamb* from one Australian participant.

Names were another source of phrasemes. One female participant wrote, 'to spend a penny: turn up like a bad penny: penny for your thoughts: find a Penny pick her up: you were once a hap'ny, now a penny, when a tuppence?; pennies from Heaven (my name is Penny so I've heard most of them!!)'.

89.1 Phrasemes elicited most from the youngest group

The 16-22 age group in both locations were not very forthcoming in their suggestions of phrasemes. Since any number of suggestions could be made by any number of participants, and suggestions do not reflect those expressions that participants knew but only those which came to mind, figures are given here purely in terms of numbers who put forward an expression, and not as percentages. Numbers of participants for each survey varied, with much larger numbers for Survey 1, and there were many more UK than Australian participants in this age group for Survey 1 (399 from the UK and 81 from Australia in the 16-22 group), which accounts for the very high figure of 76 tokens from the UK in the first example (*the boy who cried wolf*). Survey 3 did not generate many suggestions. The most common expressions elicited from the youngest group (those with over 8 tokens in total), together with the survey which prompted them, are listed in Table 88. Expressions and phrasemes which were used as prompts are not included here.

Table 88: Phrasemes most frequently elicited from the 16-22 year old age group throughout the questionnaire

Survey and number of participants	Phrasemes suggested	Australian 16-22 year olds	UK 16-22 year olds
Survey 1	The boy who cried wolf	15	76
Australian no. = 81	Mutton dressed as lamb	11	15
UK no. = 399	Sheep in wolf's clothing	2	7
	A wolf among the sheep	5	7
	To wolf something down	3	6
	Beauty is in the eye of the beholder	6	7
	To see eye to eye	3	8
	To turn a blind eye to something	11	5
	He's one eyed	9	0
	The pen is mightier than the sword	7	17
	To cross swords with someone	2	8
	As light as a feather	2	8
	Light at the end of the tunnel	3	11
	Pearls of wisdom	5	11
	Good as gold	5	6
	Mad as a hatter	2	23
	The pot calling the kettle black	15	40
Survey 2	The fruit of my loins	6	11
Australian no. = 38	To have the world in your hands	2	10
UK no. = 41	To burn one's bridges	7	4
Survey 4	Black sheep	7	2
Australian no. = 24	Fools' gold	3	8
UK no. = 32	To throw/chuck another prawn/shrimp on the barbie	5	3
Survey 5	As blind as a bat	5	8
Australian no. = 32	On the road to nowhere	5	3
UK no. = 33	A penny for your thoughts	7	1
Survey 6	It's not worth/no use crying over spilt milk	4	5
Australian no. = 24			
UK no. = 27			

From Table 88 it can be seen that certain expressions were well known to many participants in the youngest group. The most popular was *the boy who cried wolf*, mentioned by a total of 91 participants in this age group. *The pot calling the kettle black* was elicited from 55 participants here; *mutton dressed as lamb* was mentioned by 26; and *the pen is mightier than the sword* had 24 elicitations from this age group. These expressions represent a range of older and literary items.

Some expressions were elicited more from one location than the other. Two were more commonly suggested by Australian than UK participants in this group: *to turn a blind eye to something* had 11 Australian but only 5 UK tokens, although there were many fewer Australian than UK participants from the 16-22 year old group who responded to this survey. *A penny for your thoughts* had 7 Australian but only 1 UK token, and here the numbers of participants across locations were almost identical. *Mad as a hatter* had 23 UK tokens but only 2 from Australia, although it is true that there were more UK responses overall in this survey. *To have the world in your hands* had 10 tokens from the UK but only 2 from Australia, although the number of participants in both locations was similar for this survey. These findings indicate that some phrasemes are certainly used more in one location than another, since they sprang to mind readily for these participants.

The only expression which appeared to be recently coined, and yet not invented for its humorous effect, was *the hamster is back on the wheel*, suggested by one Australian girl in the youngest group. A Google search for this phraseme revealed an instance in a product review on the Amazon UK website for a book by British media personality Richard Hammond (Amazon.com, Inc. 1996-2010), sometimes referred to as 'hamster'. There were 9 other instances on the Amazon UK site, and a further 219 Google hits for the phraseme. The phraseme indicates

that someone has returned to their familiar course, often of work, which is perceived as a treadmill. Although there was only one instance of this expression in my survey, this is a phraseme which may become more popular and thus may need to be included in future MELDs.

89.2 Variations

89.2.1 Humorous answers

There were many humorous answers, sometimes in response to the drawings and sometimes as pure inventions by those who did not know the phrasemes. Occasionally there would be an attempt to incorporate new material into an existing phraseme. The 16-22 age group proved especially adept at suggesting new expressions, indicating the ease with which a phraseme may be coined, though not necessarily the ease with which it is accepted into the language. These humorous expressions from this age group in either location are listed below:

No jam for the wicked

I left my sackcloth on last night and got a rash

Never judge a wolf by its cover

He's a wolf, that's what wolves do

Word of somicles (a play on the Sword of Damocles)

Pearls are eatable sometimes in the winter on Sundays

Feed pearls to pigs and there [sic] meat will sparkle

Don't feed pearls to pigs as they are not edible and could cause some kind of illness

She looked like a pig wearing pearls (possibly referring to Miss Piggy from the Muppets)

I've got an albatross scarf don't you?

Escape from albatross (confusion with, or a play on, Alcatraz)

You can march Rabbits to war, but you may lose

Rabbits are marching to war against the badgers. It's gonna get messy

The albatross ate my baby

This last expression is a creative variation on the expression 'a dingo got my baby', variously popularised as 'a dingo took my baby' and 'a dingo ate my baby', quoting Lindy Chamberlain, whose baby disappeared near Uluru in Australia in 1980 (Fitzsimmons 2008).

89.2.2 Reversals

Several participants reversed the order of items in expressions. Some reversed forms came up so frequently that it made me question whether a new phraseme had already been created. Such reversals are listed below:

Sheep in wolf's clothing (32 tokens) (for *wolf in sheep's clothing*)

The sword is mightier than the pen (1 token) (for *the pen is mightier than the sword*)

The kettle calling the pot black (6 tokens) (for *the pot calling the kettle black*)

Put the horse before the cart (1 token) (for *put the cart before the horse*)

Lamb dressed as mutton (1 token) (for *mutton dressed as lamb*)

March goes out like a lion (instead of *March comes in like a lion and goes out like a lamb*).

As mentioned earlier, *sheep in wolf's clothing* appeared so often that it may be becoming a phraseme in its own right.

89.2.3 Regional variations

Some expressions elicited variations which were explained by different participants. According to one Australian man in the 41-60 group, *to earn a guernsey* would be *to earn a jersey* in Queensland. Another man in this group quoted the phrase *dons the jersey*. *Dog's dinner* was used in both the UK and Australia, but there were no examples of *dog's breakfast* from the UK respondents, although there were two from Australia. One UK participant in the oldest group gave the variant *cat's dinner*.

Conclusion

The findings in this chapter give a detailed portrait of the 84 prompt phrasemes, their familiarity, interpretation and use, as well as elicited phrasemes and the coverage given to all these phrasemes by the Big 5. The following chapter will discuss these results in relation to the research questions and generational and regional models, in order to establish more clearly if a pattern has emerged which could be used to inform the inclusion and labelling of phrasemes in MELDs for EAL learners in Australia.

Chapter Six

Discussion

Introduction

In order to put the findings of the previous chapter into the context of this thesis, it is important first to restate the main research question:

To what extent do advanced learners' dictionaries in Australia meet the needs of university-aged EAL users in their coverage of phrasemes?

This is addressed in terms of five smaller questions:

1. *Is there a difference in the familiarity, interpretation or opacity of certain phrasemes for people of different age groups in Australia and the UK?*

2. *Are the phrasemes selected for the study still in use, by whom, and in what circumstances?*

3. *Can any difference in use be accounted for in terms of age and/or region?*

4. *Are any such differences reflected in the labelling systems and inclusion of these phrasemes in the Big 5?*

5. *What other phrasemes are elicited from the prompts given to participants in the study, and what variations do participants make to established phrasemes?*

These questions in turn lead to the two models of phraseme use which form the central hypotheses of this thesis (see Figure 1):

1. **Regional model**
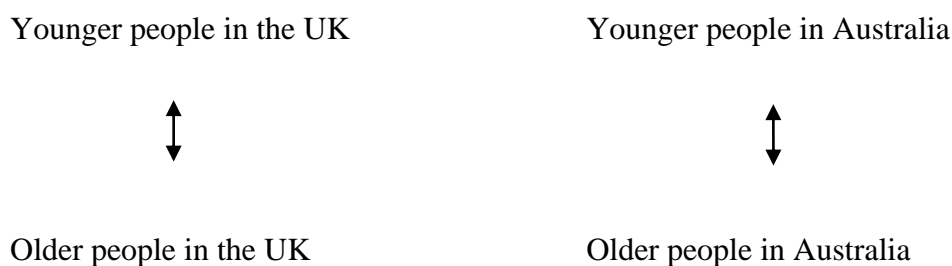
Younger people in the UK   Younger people in Australia

↕   ↕

Older people in the UK   Older people in Australia

2. **Generational model**

Younger people in the UK   ⟷   Younger people in Australia

Older people in the UK   ⟷   Older people in Australia
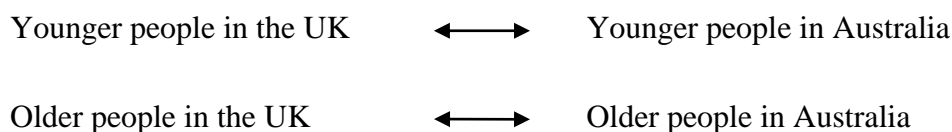
Figure 1: Two models of commonality in phraseme familiarity and use

These questions will now be discussed in the light of the findings.

1. Familiarity and interpretation of phrasemes

Is there a difference in the familiarity, interpretation or opacity of certain phrasemes for people of different age groups in Australia and the UK?

1.1 Familiarity

The average familiarity with the different categories of phraseme used in the study is summarised in Table 1, where the age groups of participants are separated by

region into those aged 16-22 and those aged 23 or over in either Australia or the UK.

Table 1: Average familiarity with the different categories of phraseme used in the study, according to region and age group

Order	Category of reference	Australia 16-22	UK 16-22	Australia 23+	UK 23+
1	Older reference	64	75	93	94
2	Literary/ Historical	44	39	79	92
3	Biblical	41	35	84	89
4	UK	19	29	73	84
5	Australian	18	7	70	16
	Overall average	37	37	80	75

Table 1 indicates in brief what is demonstrated in greater detail in the Findings chapter (Chapter Five). In general, familiarity rose with age in both locations, so that in very few cases did the youngest participants have greater familiarity with a phraseme than the average of the older groups in their location. The main exception was *an albatross around the neck*, where the Australian 16-22 group were more familiar with this phraseme than any other age group in either location. There are no obvious reasons for this except that it is possible the youngest group had studied *The rime of the Ancient Mariner* at school. Other exceptions were *to be a box of birds*, familiar to only two participants in Australia, one from the 16-22 age group and one from the 41-60 group. *Not to have a bar of something* was also more familiar to the youngest group in the UK (average 65%) than to the average of the older groups in that location (40%), although the numbers here were very small. (Three in the youngest group in the UK had heard it before, compared to one in the 31-40 group and one in the 41-60 group.) In general, however, the older groups in each location were more familiar than the younger groups with the phrasemes in the study (see Table 1). This points to a generational

model of familiarity rather than a regional model, even for the UK and Australian phrasemes.

The older reference category was the most familiar for all age groups in each location and is still in frequent use, despite the official demise of imperial counting and monetary systems. (Market stall holder Stephen Thorburn in the UK who was fined in 2001 for selling bananas by the pound (Peacock 2001) could at least take some comfort from the fact that most people would have been familiar with his terminology.) Literary/historical phrasemes were next most familiar to all participants with the exception of those aged over 23 in Australia, who seemed to be slightly more familiar with the Biblical phrasemes. Biblical phrasemes are still also well known by all age groups, although not everyone attends church regularly. In 2001, the National Church Life Survey revealed that roughly 8% of the population attended church weekly in Australia (NCLS Research 2009; Australian Bureau of Statistics 2003). In the UK, statistics show that 6.8% of the population attended church regularly in 2005, and that the average age of those who attended was rising steadily (Brierly 2005 in WhyChurch 2010). There were no statistics available for how many young people in each location attended church regularly, but the general church attendance rate per head of population is higher in Australia than in the UK. However, as Dobrovol'skij and Piirainen (2005, p. 231) indicate, 'Most biblical idioms are unobtrusive, have no special "biblical" contents and are so familiar that they are used with no conscious reference to the original context.'

The biggest disparity in familiarity rates is seen in the regional phrasemes. The Australian phrasemes in particular are known mainly by the Australian participants aged over 23, and the youngest Australian participants were scarcely more familiar with them than the older UK participants. For the UK phrasemes,

the UK 16-22 year old group were more familiar with them than their Australian counterparts, but the greatest similarity in figures was within age groups rather than inside the regions.

It is of course hard to quantify the institutionalisation or durability of a phraseme (Arnaud 1992; Doyle 2007). The findings above nevertheless reveal that certain phrasemes appear to be still familiar to the younger groups as well as to the older participants. These include older reference, literary/historical and Biblical phrasemes. Regional phrasemes, however, are less familiar to the younger group, indicating that, contrary to Svensén's suggestion (2009), the most common phrasemes are not necessarily the same in different varieties of the same language. Overall lack of familiarity with the phrasemes in the questionnaire was greater among the youngest age group. This may, however, simply reflect the fact that they had had less time to be exposed to these phrasemes (Curtain 2001, p. 266). Nevertheless, with regard to the generational and regional models it is evident that familiarity is greater within age groups than within regions. The only exception to this is with the Australian phrasemes, where neither the generational nor the regional model of phraseme familiarity appears to apply, as the UK participants were largely unfamiliar with these expressions.

The above findings had not been researched or documented prior to this investigation, but their implications are clear for dictionary makers. Given the findings, it is unlikely that the target group of EAL learners will hear most of the Australian and some of the UK phrasemes when conversing with their peers. Most Australian phrasemes should therefore be marked with a label indicating that they are rarely used by younger people.

1.2   Sources of phrasemes

The findings in Chapter Five indicate the sources from which participants first heard five phrasemes, one from each category, in Survey 1, which had the greatest number of responses. These findings suggest that books and conversation are the most likely places in which phrasemes are encountered. Both written and spoken discourse are therefore important sources of phrasemes. For the 16-22 age group in Australia, the most common source appears to have been spoken, with parents as the most likely medium, followed by phrasemes in other conversations, general use, school and the media.

Although the target group of EAL speakers will not have two native-English speaking parents, and so will not encounter phrasemes in family interactions, they may hear them at school, college or university, in conversation with native speakers, in general use around them and through the media. They are more likely to find them in spoken than written sources. In fact, the MICASE and LIBEL corpora contain many examples of phrasemes, which are often used to create a more informal atmosphere (McCarthy 1998). Phrasemes also occur in written English, where they may be used, for example, in newspaper headlines, or in the titles of journal articles: 'The wolf in sheep's clothing: an illustrative case report of aortic dissection and review of diagnostic clinical features' (Kanna & Jo 2007), or 'A wolf in sheep's clothing: cautionary words for teachers about linking with the community' (Lee n.d.). They are also a frequent source of puns in advertisements, as in the Kleenex tissue winter 2010 campaign in Australia, picturing a woman blowing her nose on a piece of sandpaper with the caption 'Soften the blow this winter' and a picture of soothing Kleenex tissues contrasting with the harshness of the sandpaper, which presumably represents other brands of tissues (Kimberley-Clark Worldwide, Inc. 2009). Such references and puns may

be mystifying for EAL speakers who do not know the phrasemes, and this means that there is a great need to include the more frequently used expressions in MELDs.

What is particularly interesting here is that participants should have remembered where they first heard certain phrasemes. Particular associations may therefore arise, with participants being reminded of a phraseme each time they are in the relevant place or listen to a popular musician. Conversely, the phraseme itself may have associations, reminding participants of events or situations in their past. As Hockett (1956) says, there is something memorable about phrasemes. Hearing a phraseme one has heard before is enough to 'reactivate' it in one's memory (Arnaud & Moon 1993). EAL learners may therefore find that the place where they first heard a phraseme is a spur to their memory in recalling it later.

Certainly the wide variety of phraseme sources in this section indicates the large number of places in which phrasemes occur, and the need to include certain of them in a MELD, always taking into account the familiarity and usage of these phrasemes by peers of the target group. If younger native English speaking peers are familiar with a certain phraseme, then the target group are likely to encounter it too and will need to understand it in order to improve their communicative skills. Likewise, if native speakers find a phraseme hard to understand, the target group are even more likely to have problems with comprehension.

1.3   Opacity and interpretation

Some of the phrasemes in the questionnaire were more opaque than others. Boers (2000) suggests that a language user's own metaphorical awareness and background can affect opacity/transparency. For example, if a learner is familiar with the metaphor ANGER IS HEAT they may find it easier to guess the meaning

of a phraseme such as *let off steam*. This awareness, however, may be culturally related, and Dobrovol'skij and Piirainen (2005, p. 124) caution against transferring metaphors too readily between cultures, lest the metaphor have a different meaning for a different language group. There is also the question of opacity being relative to the language user (Fernando 1996, p. 65), since native speakers will have different awareness of the origin of a phraseme and so may find it easier or harder to understand based on this interpretive background knowledge.

The findings on interpretation are illustrated in Table 2 (below), where agreement with the suggested answer is expressed as a percentage of each group's responses. The figures in Table 2 only reflect agreement with the suggested answer. Figures where participants thought that the suggested answer was unsuitable are given in detail in the Findings (Chapter Five).

Table 2: Percentage agreement with the suggested answer for the phrasemes in the questionnaire by age group and region

Order	Category of reference	Australia 16-22	UK 16-22	Australia 23+	UK 23+
1	Older reference	72	76	89	92
2	Literary/ Historical	70	74	83	90
3	Biblical	71	68	85	84
4	UK	57	62	81	93
5	Australian	63	58	81	62
	Overall average	69	69	84	84

These average rates for interpretation follow the same order as the familiarity rates, with the most familiar and easiest to interpret category being 'older reference', and the least familiar and hardest to interpret being the Australian phrasemes. The familiarity of individual phrasemes, however, was not always reflected in their interpretation rates.

Among the youngest age group in Australia, surprisingly, the phraseme which had least agreement with the suggested answer was *a wolf in sheep's clothing*, which had only 11% agreement, although the familiarity rate in this group was 55%. Fifty per cent of this group preferred the alternative meaning, 'someone looks like an animal'. Similarly, *an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth*, familiar to 89% of this group, had only 18% agreement with the suggested answer, with 59% choosing the alternative meaning, 'surgery'. I have a suspicion that answers such as this were chosen for their humour rather than their intrinsic correctness. It was an incidental effect of the questionnaire that the researcher had no control over how participants might respond, or how seriously they would give their answers. It appears, however, that familiarity is not necessarily linked to understanding. These findings match those of Arnaud's 1992 study, in which the 18-23 year old participants understood only half of the 284 proverbs with which they were familiar. Many in the youngest group may therefore hear a phraseme and be reasonably familiar with it, but fail to comprehend it, putting them in the same position as their EAL speaking peers.

Some phrasemes, conversely, had high agreement with the suggested answer in spite of a lower rate of familiarity. In the 16-22 age group in Australia, the phrasemes which showed greatest agreement with the suggested answers were *in the land of Nod* and *to reap what you sow*, with 100% agreement. However, the familiarity rates for these phrasemes in this age group in Australia were 89% and 90% respectively, suggesting that these phrasemes are very transparent for native speakers even when they are not already familiar with them. This does not, however, mean that they would be transparent to the target group of EAL students, since understanding may rely on the knowledge of individual lexical items or on surrounding cultural contexts.

Other phrasemes, such as *to have feet of clay*, had an overall familiarity rate of 66% but only 50% agreement in interpretation, with 22% preferring the alternative answer and 27% 'none of these'. This may indicate that the phraseme has developed different meanings to different participants. Whatever the reason, the seeming opacity of some phrasemes means that the target group of EAL speakers are also likely to have trouble interpreting them. Moreover, EAL speakers from different religious and cultural backgrounds may be much less familiar with the Biblical concepts and terms involved in these phrasemes, and find references to *ark* and Biblical characters such as Adam relatively opaque. They are also likely to be lacking in regional knowledge, such as the fact that Bourke is in a remote location or that Newcastle is located in a coalmining area (in both the UK and Australia).

Other levels of disagreement in interpretation may reflect more that participants felt that the suggested answer was inadequate, rather than that they did not understand it. For example, only 34% agreed with the suggested meaning of *to be/look every inch*, while 53% preferred 'none of these'. Similarly, only 49% agreed with the suggested meaning of *to rob Peter to pay Paul*, and 50% chose the answer 'none of these'.

Perhaps due to the variability in opacity, there was sometimes disagreement with the suggested answer. For example, one Australian woman in the 31- 40 age group commented on *to kill the fatted calf*: 'You wouldn't use *to kill the fatted calf* for all celebrations, it's usually used sarcastically about celebrations of things which may or may not be actually a good thing, or where someone is welcomed back (at least by some) despite wrongdoing.' This reflects the second use of the phrase in the Biblical original, where the elder son reflects bitterly on the Prodigal Son's return (Luke 15:30). Sometimes there was a difference in perspective, as

with the phraseme *like a lamb to the slaughter*. I had given the meaning of this as 'innocence', based on the victim's perspective, as in the Biblical original, in which Isaiah describes the innocent Messiah being led to his death. Some participants, however, concentrated on the action of leading a lamb to the slaughter itself, seeing it as wicked, and they therefore chose the alternative meaning of 'wickedness'. There was also occasional disagreement with the suggested answers for the Australian phrasemes, such as *in the box seat,* but the definitions for these were taken from the *Macquarie dictionary* and therefore reflect corpus-based research on their meanings and contexts. As P Peters (2007, p. 239) says, interpretation may also vary according to region, so that the suggested meanings may have been more acceptable in one location than another.

The implications of these findings for the target group, therefore, are that many phrasemes are indeed very opaque. EAL learners, moreover, have different sociocultural knowledge of English compared to native speakers. Underlying metaphors may be different in another language and culture (Dobrovol'skij & Piirainen 2005, p. 79), meaning that phrasemes which are transparent to native speakers are not readily understandable to non-native speakers. In addition, words which provide clues to native speakers, such as the expression *to nod off to sleep* and its obvious connections to the phraseme *in the land of Nod*, may be unfamiliar to EAL learners, again making the phrasemes harder to understand. For this reason, and because of the opacity of many phrasemes to the 16-22 year old group in Australia, any phraseme which is likely to be encountered by an EAL learner in Australia should be included in a MELD, and not left for learners to guess from context or by association with other words.

Comparing the interpretation rates of different age groups in different locations, we find that average agreement with the suggested answer was 84% in

each location for all those aged over 23, and 69% for all those aged 16-22. The youngest group found the Australian and UK phrasemes more opaque than those in the older reference, Biblical or literary/historical categories. These results indicate that the generational model is again in evidence, rather than the regional model.

In terms of the first research question, therefore, there is certainly a difference in the familiarity and opacity of certain phrasemes for people of different age groups in Australia and the UK, and the generational model of familiarity and understanding seems to be more accurate here than the regional model. Such variations need to be made apparent by inclusion and labelling of phrasemes in a MELD for use in Australia, so that EAL learners can understand phrasemes used by older speakers and in the media and written material, but use them only in appropriate situations for communication.

2. Usage

This section addresses the second research question:

Are the phrasemes selected for the study still in use, by whom, and in what circumstances?

2.1 Frequency of use

Although some participants indicated that they would use some phrasemes often, or even very often, generally the highest figures were in the 'sometimes', 'almost never' and 'never' columns. The figures for 'most used phrasemes' in this section are based on percentages from the 'sometimes' column, since 'sometimes' was the highest value given by the majority of participants to most phrasemes in the investigation. The complete table for the frequency of use of each phraseme is included in Appendix 5. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number,

with 0.5% rounded up. The use examined in this section is based on responses given by participants in Australia and the UK and is not intended to reflect other varieties of English.

Several participants who did not know a phraseme still responded to the questions 'How often would you use this phraseme?' and 'Where would you use this phraseme?' Since these questions were phrased using the conditional word 'would', it appears that participants were suggesting that they might use the phraseme in the future, even though they had not heard it before. In the case of some 16-22 year olds, it seems unlikely they would use many of the phrasemes 'very often', as some indicated, since they occasionally gave this response even for phrasemes with which they were not familiar, and general usage for this age group rarely moved above the 'sometimes' category. Average results for which the phrasemes are used 'sometimes' by different age groups are displayed in Table 3, according to categories.

Table 3: Average percentage for which the phrasemes in the questionnaire are used 'sometimes', by age group and region

Order	Category of reference	Australia 16-22	UK 16-22	Australia 23+	UK 23+
1	Older reference	20	24	32	42
2	Literary/ Historical	13	12	26	29
3	Biblical	10	9	25	28
4	UK	4	10	20	27
5	Australian	4	2	20	4
	Overall average	11	11	25	27

As can be seen in Table 3, the phrasemes which are used most often by all age groups belong to the older reference category, followed by literary/historical, biblical, UK and Australian. (For a full list of all usage rates, see Appendix 5.)

This matches the order of categories indicated in average familiarity (Table 1) and interpretation (Table 2), so that it becomes apparent that the most familiar and most widely understood phrasemes are used most often. Again, there is a pattern of common usage among age groups rather than inside regions, although UK phrasemes are used much more by the older UK groups and Australian phrasemes are used much more by those aged over 23 in Australia. Evidence is thus provided here to establish a hitherto untested link between familiarity and frequency of use, highlighted by Doyle (2007) and Liu (2008).

The phraseme least used by all participants is the Australian phraseme *to be a box of birds*, which 99% of those surveyed said they would never use. In the top ten phrasemes which are never used by participants in this questionnaire, there are seven Australian phrasemes, two Biblical expressions and one from the UK. Those phrasemes least used in Australia represent all the five categories, while in the UK the top ten least used phrasemes were largely Australian. This suggests that the Australian phrasemes are little used in either location, but UK and other phrasemes have a wider currency.

It is hard to get an exact picture of who is using these little-used phrasemes. Three Australian and two UK participants in the 16-22 age group (from a total of 49 Australian and 87 UK participants in this age group) said they would use *to be a box of birds*, but none of them had heard the phraseme before. Therefore, the only participant who had heard this phraseme before and said he would use it was an Australian in the 41-60 group, who said he would use it 'sometimes'. *Up the mulga* was used 'sometimes' by one Australian 23-30 year old and two Australian 41-60 year olds, and 'often' by two Australians in the 61+ group. *The man/woman on the Clapham omnibus* was used by two in the Australian 41-60 group and five people aged over 31 in the UK. Two in the youngest UK group said they would

use it 'sometimes', but they did not know the phraseme or its meaning before they did the questionnaire. In the case of little-used expressions, therefore, there is no particular age group which has the monopoly on their use, but they are generally used more by those aged over 41 and very little if at all by those aged 16-22. This again shows consistency with an age-related rather than a regional model of usage.

The phraseme most used by the youngest group in Australia was *an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth*, which had a 'sometimes' rating of 41%. Next were *full steam ahead* (38%), *to reap what you sow* (37%), *to cry wolf* (35%), *look before you leap* and *the penny drops* (34%) and *to let off steam* (33%). These represent the Biblical, literary and older reference categories. Interesting sociological comment might perhaps be made on the punitive or sarcastic potential of five of these seven phrasemes, but that is not the focus of this thesis.

The 16-22 age group appeared to use the phrasemes in the questionnaire less than the older participants. There were 51 phrasemes which 75% or more of the youngest age group averaged over both locations said they would never use. These included all the Australian phrasemes and all but one of the UK phrasemes. (For a detailed list, see Appendix 5.) Heading the list was *to kill the fatted calf*, never used by 98% of the participants in this group, followed by *to come a gutser, a dog in the manger* and *to get a guernsey*, which 97% of participants said they would never use. In the UK, the phrasemes least used by this age group were mostly Biblical and Australian. In Australia, the list of least used phrasemes was more diverse, but generally included Australian phrasemes and some literary phrasemes. Just because a phraseme is Australian, therefore, does not mean that it will be familiar to or used by the youngest group. This again indicates that a regional model of use is not predominant.

The generational model of use is therefore much in evidence as opposed to the regional model, even for region-specific phrasemes. Although the older reference, literary/historical and Biblical phrasemes are still in use by the younger generation, those phrasemes which appear to be region-specific are not used so frequently by this group. As Sinclair says (1991, p. 37), it is difficult to calculate when use of a term fades. The findings in this study indicate that many regional phrasemes are indeed fading from use.

The question of which phrasemes need to be learned by EAL learners has, as Liu states (2003, p. 674), been under-researched. McCarthy (1998, p. 145) found that most phrasemes in the CANCODE corpus were used by those over the age of 25, meaning that they should not be taught as 'productive vocabulary' for younger speakers. The findings above suggest that over half the phrasemes from the list are virtually never used by the youngest group and so would not be heard by the target group among their peers. For that reason, careful consideration needs to be given when including them in a MELD for use in Australia. If they are included, then a usage label could indicate any appropriate restrictions.

2.2 Where the phrasemes are used

In order to examine the situations in which the phrasemes are used, one of the most popular phrasemes, *full steam ahead*, has been addressed in the Findings chapter (Chapter Five). This may be taken as representative of the other phrasemes in the questionnaire, since it is one of the most familiar and most frequently used by all age groups. The results indicate that it is most likely to be used by all participants when talking to friends their own age, then talking to older people and parents followed by younger people and colleagues at work.

From the findings, it is therefore evident that phrasemes are used most by participants in this study in conversation, especially with friends, but also when talking to younger people and work colleagues. Fewer participants would use them in formal situations or when talking to their boss. Contrary to Moon's findings (1998a) when examining the Oxford Hector Pilot Corpus, phrasemes are used less in writing by the participants in this study, and very little used in text messages, though used slightly more often when chatting on the Internet. The lack of use in text messages is understandable, given that this is a condensed form of writing. It is therefore surprising that they are used at all while texting, and it would be interesting to see what form they take. Is *birds of a feather*, for instance, abbreviated in a text message to *bof*, as one participant mentioned in the Findings chapter with reference to *bof meetings*? Since phrasemes have such wide associations and can convey a large amount of meaning in a short phrase or sentence, an abbreviated form of a phraseme would be very informative for the recipient of a text, provided the abbreviation was understandable and the phraseme well known. Internet chatting, on the other hand, is common, and permits greater use of text, and since many universities in Australia use online discussion boards in their courses, to which students are expected to contribute, it is likely that EAL learners at Australian universities will encounter phrasemes in this source.

In respect to the regional and generational models, no clear pattern of place of use emerges, since all participants appear to use phrasemes in similar situations regardless of age or location.

As regards the second research question, *Are the phrasemes selected for the study still in use, by whom, and in what circumstances?*, it is clear that most of the phrasemes in the study are still in use, but to varying degrees and by different age

groups in different locations. Those that are used most by the Australian 16-22 year olds occur when they are talking to family members or friends of their own age, or when talking to older people. They are not, however, used much by the participants in this study in formal situations, such as in academic assignments. This bears out the literature which suggests that phrasemes are used more in informal contexts, or to add an air of informality to an interaction (O'Keeffe, McCarthy & Carter 2007). Although the target group of EAL learners may therefore encounter them in journal article titles (e.g. Kanna & Jo 2007), or in more informal areas of academic interaction (McCarthy 1998), they should be cautioned against using them in academic writing.

2.3   Familiarity and usage compared

The findings in this investigation provide new empirical data proving that there is obviously a link between familiarity and usage, as suggested by Liu (2008). What is particularly interesting, however, is that although those phrasemes which were used the most were also the most familiar, the reverse was not always true: those phrasemes which were the most familiar were not necessarily used very often. *As mad as a March hare*, for example, was familiar to 81% of participants, but used by only 52%. *To have someone's guts for garters* was familiar to 91% but used by only 61%. Although the least used phrasemes (*to be a box of birds* and *up the mulga*) were also very unfamiliar, others showed some disparity in use and familiarity. *The man/woman on the Clapham omnibus*, for example, was used by only 13% of participants, but known to 30%, while *don't come the raw prawn with me* was used by 17% but familiar to 54%.

In response to the second research question, although there is clearly a link between familiarity and usage (Liu 2008), the above findings clarify that while

frequency of use is connected to familiarity, merely knowing a phraseme does not ensure that someone will use it. EAL learners therefore need to tread carefully when using phrasemes themselves (Liu 2008, p. 111), and be careful to use those expressions which are most used by their own generation. Communicative competence thus includes knowledge about when not to use an expression, as well as when to use it.

3. The regional and generational models

The third research question asked, *Can any difference in use be accounted for in terms of age and/or region?* The above discussions on familiarity and use indicate that these two variables are significant. Importantly, the findings show that there is much greater similarity in familiarity, interpretation and use of the set phrasemes among age groups than among those in the same location, indicating that the generational model of phraseme use is more appropriate than the regional model (see Figure 2).

1. Regional model
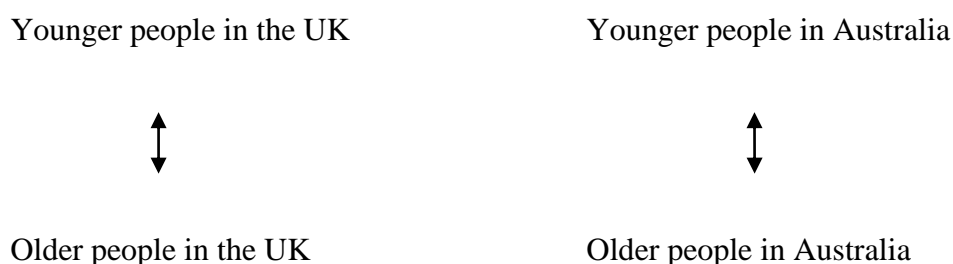
Younger people in the UK   Younger people in Australia

$\updownarrow$ $\updownarrow$

Older people in the UK   Older people in Australia

2. Generational model

Younger people in the UK $\longleftrightarrow$ Younger people in Australia

Older people in the UK $\longleftrightarrow$ Older people in Australia
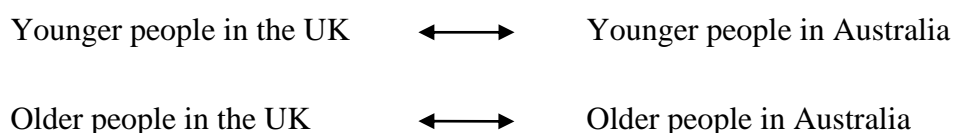
Figure 2: Two models of commonality in phraseme familiarity and use

The target group of EAL speakers may hear phrasemes in many situations and in many guises. They are likely to encounter them through their interactions with older people and through the media, and often among their peers. For this reason, those phrasemes which are used in Australia (further details of which are given in the Findings in Chapter Five and listed in Appendix 5) certainly need to be included in a MELD for use in that country. Care needs to be taken with the labelling of phrasemes, however, so that they are used in the correct context and among the appropriate age groups, since different age groups are shown here to have different knowledge and use of phrasemes. For example, the euphemistic but opaque *to spend a penny* is used by only 14% of the youngest group in Australia, but could possibly be used by an EAL learner when speaking to older age groups, among whom its use is more common. However, the elicited related phrasemes *to point Percy at the porcelain* (5 Australian tokens), *to syphon a python* (1 Australian and 5 UK tokens) and *to water the horses* (2 Australian tokens), all suggested by older age groups, would be less acceptable from a younger EAL speaker, since their use might be offensive or even ridiculous in certain situations. Conversely, the elicited euphemistic phraseme *to wash your hands* would probably be more acceptable. This is where the role of labels for phrasemes is crucial.

As discussed in the literature in Chapter Three, correct use of phrasemes enables EAL learners to gain more acceptance with native speakers (Lee 2007; Wray & Perkins 2000). It is important to bear in mind Bogaards' (1996) warning that phrasemes should be used at the correct level of discourse. Knowing that native speakers are much more likely to use phrasemes in conversation, particularly among friends, than in formal situations, is important for EAL learners who wish to be communicatively competent. Realising that many

phrasemes are not appropriate in certain situations is therefore an important part of communication skills and, as Nattinger and de Carrico (1992) and Liu (2003) say, such information should be included in language teaching. This information could also be included in the preface of a MELD, as well as in its labelling system.

In short, it can be said in response to the third research question that there is indeed a difference in the use of phrasemes by different age groups, and that although some phrasemes are better known in one location than another the main difference in use is generational rather than regional. MELDs need to make this information available for EAL learners, through their coverage and labelling of relevant phrasemes for both receptive and productive purposes.

4. Coverage by the Big 5

Coverage of the phrasemes in the questionnaire varied greatly among the Big 5. There was also much variation in choice of headwords and in labelling. These findings relate to the fourth research question, *Are any such differences [in use and familiarity] reflected in the labelling systems and inclusion of these phrasemes in the Big 5?*, and will be discussed further in this section. The findings here can be applied by lexicographers and publishers to make MELDs more user friendly.

4.1 Overall coverage

Of the 84 phrasemes included in the questionnaire, *OALD* included the greatest number, closely followed by *CALD* and *MEDAL* (see Table 4 below). *LDOCE* had fewer and *COBUILD* included less than a quarter. *OALD* therefore had the greatest coverage and *COBUILD* had the least. Of course, MELDs have different policies on phraseme inclusion, and all five publishers also produce separate

phraseme dictionaries. Nevertheless, as has already been stated, learners often do not recognise an expression as a phraseme (Bergenholtz & Gouws 2008, p. 242) and will therefore look for it in their MELD rather than in a dictionary of idioms or proverbs. Coverage in a MELD is therefore important.

Table 4: Coverage by the Big 5 of the phrasemes in the questionnaire

Category	Number of phrasemes included in each dictionary				
All phrasemes (no. = 84)	*OALD* (76)	*CALD* (72)	*MEDAL* (72)	*LDOCE* (62)	*COBUILD* (19)
Biblical phrasemes (no. = 33)	*CALD* (33)	*LDOCE* (29)	*MEDAL* (29)	*OALD* (29)	*COBUILD* (25)
Literary or historical phrasemes (no. = 19)	*OALD* (19)	*MEDAL* (16)	*CALD* (13)	*LDOCE* (12)	*COBUILD* (3)
Australian phrasemes (no. = 11)	*OALD* (7)	MEDAL (4)	*CALD* (3)	*LDOCE* (1)	*COBUILD* (0)
UK phrasemes (no. = 6)	*CALD* (6)	*OALD* (6)	*LDOCE* (5)	*MEDAL* (5)	*COBUILD* (1)
Older reference phrasemes (no. = 15)	*CALD* (14)	*LDOCE* (14)	*OALD* (14)	*MEDAL* (13)	*COBUILD* (7)
Ten most familiar phrasemes	*CALD* (10)	*LDOCE* (10)	*MEDAL* (10)	*OALD* (10)	*COBUILD* (5)
Ten most used phrasemes	*CALD* (10)	*LDOCE* (10)	*MEDAL* (10)	*OALD* (10)	*COBUILD* (5)
Ten phrasemes most used by the 16-22 age group	*LDOCE* (10)	*MEDAL* (10)	*OALD* (10)	*CALD* (9)	*COBUILD* (5)

The greatest coverage of the Biblical phrasemes was provided by *CALD*, which included all 33. The others of the Big 5 also provided good coverage (see Table 4). This coverage is worthwhile for the target group, since many of these phrasemes will be heard in everyday conversation around them, and several will be used by their peers. (For fuller details of which phrasemes are most used and

most familiar, please refer to the Findings in Chapter Five and to Appendices 4 and 5.)

The greatest coverage of the 19 literary or historical reference phrasemes was given by *OALD*, followed by *MEDAL, CALD, LDOCE* and finally *COBUILD*, which included only 3 (see Table 4). These phrasemes are likely to be encountered by the target group in general conversation, and some will be used by their peers, so inclusion of many of them in a MELD is again important. (Again, for details of which phrasemes are most used and most familiar, please refer to Chapter Five.)

The coverage of Australian phrasemes by the Big 5 varied greatly, from the inclusion of over half in *OALD,* to only a quarter in *MEDAL* and *CALD*, to none in *COBUILD* (see Table 4). Familiarity with these was generally not high among the Australian 16-22 year olds, but some, such as *not to have a bar of something, done like a dinner*, *in the box seat* and *like a shag on a rock* were better known, and at least one (*not to have a bar of something*) is sometimes used by 14% of this age group. They are used more often by the other Australian participants in the questionnaire. This indicates that these four expressions at least are worth including in a MELD in Australia.

The inclusion of the 6 UK phrasemes from the questionnaire was understandably very high in all the Big 5, with the exception of *COBUILD* (see Table 4). Only the two cricketing phrasemes, *it's not cricket* and *someone had a good innings*, were familiar to more than a third of Australian 16-22 year olds, and only these two expressions of the six from the UK are used 'sometimes' by more than a fifth of the participants in Australia. This suggests that inclusion of the other four UK phrasemes is redundant in a MELD for the target group, and

could even be unhelpful, if they attempt to use them productively rather than simply for decoding (Liu 2008, p. 111).

Older reference phrasemes were well covered by all except *COBUILD*. Good coverage is important, because many of these phrasemes are still in frequent use.

The ten most familiar phrasemes and the ten most used phrasemes in the questionnaire appeared in *CALD, LDOCE, MEDAL* and *OALD*, but only five were included in *COBUILD* (see Table 4). *LDOCE, MEDAL* and *OALD* included all of the ten phrasemes most used by the 16-22 age group in Australia, *CALD* included nine and *COBUILD* included only five. With the exception of *COBUILD*, therefore, this coverage is excellent in meeting the needs of the target group, including familiar and most used phrasemes and those most likely to be encountered among their peers.

Overall, 49 of the 84 phrasemes in the questionnaire received appropriate coverage in the Big 5, with some which are little used receiving minimum coverage and others which are well used appearing in all of the Big 5. However, a significant number (19) were inadequately covered for use in Australia. These included 7 of the 11 Australian phrasemes. While it is unfeasible for dictionary editors to check every entry for usage in a particular location, the inadequate or unnecessary coverage given to 35 of the phrasemes in this study (42% of the total) suggests that more care needs to be taken if a MELD is to be truly useful in many countries and not just in the UK or the United States.

In terms of the fourth research question, *Are any such differences [in use and familiarity] reflected in the labelling systems and inclusion of these phrasemes in the Big 5?,* it can therefore be seen that four of the Big 5 give good overall coverage, but that more needs to be done in terms of regional phrasemes, so that

Australian phrasemes are given greater inclusion and fewer distinctively British phrasemes appear. Little used phrasemes need less coverage and those that are used more should receive greater attention. This is where the current investigation provides innovative data that can usefully be applied in a MELD. Similar investigations in the future, with wider resources, could address the question in greater depth. This could be done through the media in each country, with promotion of a questionnaire via relevant television or radio programs, or their related blogs; through schools (for example, in English classes); and by MELDs themselves, which could survey their users to see if they had heard certain phrasemes around them in particular locations.

4.2 Headwords used in the Big 5

The fourth research question refers to coverage, and can be related to the headwords chosen for each phraseme, which is indeed a problem for EAL learners. In looking up the phrasemes in the Big 5, I encountered the same problems that a learner would face in regard to the choice of headword and was, in the words of Bergenholtz and Gouws (2008, p. 239), confused by 'the multi-layered nature of the access attempts' required to find a phraseme. Moon (1998a, p. 201) suggests that surveys of dictionary use indicate that learners tend to look first for phrasemes under nouns, although this may be influenced by previous experience with other dictionaries. It appears to be a convention for general dictionaries to list multi-word units under a noun or, if there is no noun, under a finite verb or other salient word (Doyle 2007; Bergenholtz & Gouws 2008). EAL speakers, however, often have trouble identifying parts of speech (Nesi & Haill 2002, p. 282), which can further complicate their searches. Each dictionary in this study had its own method of choosing headwords for phrasemes, echoing the finding of Gates' study (1986), which also showed a lack of consistency across

dictionaries. Moreover, the choice of headword was not always consistent within one dictionary, and it was frustrating not knowing which headword to check. (See Appendix 6 for a complete list of all the headwords used by the Big 5 for the 84 phrasemes in the study.)

CALD, LDOCE and *MEDAL* used nouns and verbs for their headwords, often cross-referencing a phraseme at both the noun and the verb. *COBUILD* and *OALD* favoured nouns, although *OALD* sometimes used verbs and adjectives instead. For example, *to hide your light under a bushel* appears at *hide* in *OALD*, but under *hide, light* and *bushel* in *CALD, LDOCE* and *MEDAL*. (It is not listed in *COBUILD*.) *Cry wolf* is listed under the noun *wolf* in all the Big 5 except *OALD*, which lists it under the verb *cry*. *CALD* and *MEDAL* give both *cry* and *wolf* as headwords, but the others do not provide any cross-referencing. *Mad as a March hare* appears at *mad* and *hare* in *CALD* but only under *mad* in *OALD*. (The other dictionaries do not include it.)

The Big 5 did not always list phrasemes under what might be regarded by a learner as the most salient, or unusual, word. For example, *to beat/turn swords into ploughshares*, with the less familiar word *ploughshare*, appears only at *sword* in *CALD* and *OALD*. *COBUILD* lists it only under *ploughshare* and *LDOCE* lists it under both *sword* and *ploughshare*. There was also a lack of consistency for phrasemes containing proper nouns. *Back of Bourke* is listed at *Bourke* in both *MEDAL* and *OALD*, but *carry/take coals to Newcastle* is listed at *coal* in *LDOCE, MEDAL* and *OALD,* and only *CALD* lists it at *Newcastle*. In another example, *not to know someone from Adam* is listed under *Adam* in *CALD, LDOCE* and *MEDAL* but only under *know* in *OALD*. *The man/woman on the Clapham omnibus* appears at *man, woman, Clapham* and *omnibus* in *CALD*, only at *Clapham* in *OALD*, and only at *man* in *LDOCE*. These examples assume that the student knows that the

words form a complete phraseme, but that might not be the case (Bergenholtz & Gouws 2008, pp. 242-243), and so the student would be more likely to look under the salient words, such as *ploughshare*, *omnibus* or *Clapham*.

Those MELDs that provide the most cross-references are the easiest to use, and *CALD* and *MEDAL* were the best in this respect. As an example, *birds of a feather flock together* appears in the search results for *birds, feather, flock* and *together* in *CALD* and *MEDAL*, but not under the singular *bird*. It is visible only after clicking the 'more' button at *bird* on the *COBUILD* website. In *LDOCE* and *OALD* it appears under *bird,* with a cross reference at *feather*.

Another problem for dictionaries is in choosing the canonical form a phraseme should take and listing any variations (Moon 1999, p. 273). All four dictionaries which listed *carry/take coals to Newcastle* included both verb variations, as did those which listed *not to budge/give/move an inch*. Only *MEDAL* gave the variations *hide/cover a multitude of sins; give somebody an inch and they'll take a yard/mile*; and only *LDOCE* and *OALD* gave the alternatives *cast/throw pearls before swine*. There was thus a lack of consistency in listing variations in the canonical form.

Singular and plural forms in particular can cause problems. Again, in the case of *birds of a feather flock together*, learners may look under the plural form *birds* rather than *bird* and so miss the phraseme in *LDOCE* and *OALD*, or look under the singular form *bird* and miss the phraseme in *CALD* and *MEDAL*, where it is listed under the plural form. With *to have someone's guts for garters*, they will find the phraseme under the singular *gut* in *LDOCE*; under the singular *gut* and the plural *garters* in *OALD*; and under the plural *guts* and *garters* in *CALD* and *MEDAL*.

Sometimes a phraseme is listed, but only by way of an example and not as a phraseme in its own right. For instance, *an albatross around the neck* is given as a phraseme in *LDOCE* and *MEDAL*, but only in an example sentence in *CALD, COBUILD* and *OALD*. Similarly, *brave* and *new* are listed as collocating adjectives in *CALD*, but the example *brave new world* appears in the example sentence, 'They introduced customers to the brave new world of telephone banking'. Another example is the expression *some are more equal than others*, which is listed under the separate heading of *Animal farm* in *OALD,* as a sub-entry of *equal*. While the reference to the book is helpful, it presupposes that learners know, first, that this is a phraseme, and secondly, that it originates in a book with the title *Animal farm.* EAL learners would therefore have to hunt quite carefully to find the phrasemes in these and other cases.

It can be seen, therefore, that there is much variation in headwords, making it difficult for students to move from one dictionary to another, or even to use one dictionary with consistent results, leading to frustration (Gouws & Prinsloo 2005, p. 9). Online versions of the Big 5 do make searching easier, but even then a phraseme may not be found if the wrong form of the headword is entered. This has serious implications for the theory of user friendliness.

4.3   Labels used in the Big 5

It may be true that usage labels will vary as language changes (Card, McDavid Jr & McDavid 1984), and lexicographers can only set out principles rather than provide up-to-date information on every dictionary entry, especially given the ephemeral nature of many terms (Atkins & Rundell 2008). However, since, as Kipfer says (1984, p. 140), any word that is not labelled is considered to be standard, can an EAL learner in Australia assume that what she or he reads in a

MELD is the standard language used around them? It is very hard for lexicographers to write usage labels (Atkins 1992/1993), and to achieve consistency, perhaps because it is very time-consuming to discover who is using which vocabulary items at a certain time. Norri, for example, claimed in 1996 that there was 'disharmony' (p. 26) in regional labelling in British and American dictionaries. This appears still to be true of MELDs in 2010.

Labelling of regional phrasemes showed some disparity in the Big 5, although there was more consistency for the Australian than the UK phrasemes (see Appendix 6 for a full list of all labels from the Big 5 given to the 84 prompt phrasemes). Those dictionaries which included the Australian phrasemes all gave them an Australian English label. For example, *to get a guernsey* and *back of Bourke* are labelled *Aus* in *MEDAL* and *OALD*. *To be a box of birds* is labelled as *Aus* in *MEDAL* but, as stated earlier, it was almost unknown by the participants in this questionnaire and appears to be more New Zealand in usage. *To be up a gum tree* was included in the investigation as an Australian reference, due to the referent *gum tree*, but it is actually a British English phraseme, and is labelled as such in *LDOCE, MEDAL* and *OALD*. Generally, however, the *Aus* label was accurately applied.

Labelling of the UK phrasemes varied. *To grasp the nettle, the man/woman on the Clapham omnibus* and *somebody had a good innings* are given a British English label in all the dictionaries in which they appear; *to carry/take coals to Newcastle* is marked as British English in all but *CALD*; *to send somebody to Coventry* is given a *British English* label in all but *MEDAL*; and *it's not cricket* is marked as British English only in *OALD*. This disparity makes it hard for an EAL learner with more than one dictionary to know which version to follow. Moreover, the findings of this study indicate that although *to send coals to Newcastle, to*

grasp the nettle, *the man/woman on the Clapham omnibus* and *to send someone to Coventry* are used more in the UK, *somebody had a good innings* and *it's not cricket* are equally popular in Australia. For the cricketing phrasemes, therefore, the British English label may be helpful in distinguishing their use from, say, American English, but there is little difference between British and Australian English in this regard. Another phraseme which is labelled as British English by *CALD* and *LDOCE* is *to separate the sheep from the goats*, from the Biblical category. The findings show, however, that it is used more often in Australia than the UK, since it is never used by an average of 62% of UK participants but never used by only 52% of Australian participants. Sometimes, as in the case of *to hide one's light under a bushel*, a phraseme is marked in a MELD as *British English* in usage, but the findings reveal that it is used equally in both locations. A note therefore needs to be made in a MELD for use in Australia that the British English label serves to distinguish an item from, say, American usage, but does not preclude its use in Australia.

The extent to which learners use cultural information provided by dictionaries has been questioned (Bogaards 1996). This does not mean it should not be included, however. Labels such as *humorous*, *literary*, *disapproving* or *informal* may be useful for the target group, but should be used with care, since inconsistency across MELDs may lead to greater confusion than assistance (Gouws & Prinsloo 2005, p. 9). There was again some disparity in entries in the Big 5, with *MEDAL* terming *the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak* as *mainly spoken*, but *CALD, LDOCE* and *OALD* labelling it as *humorous*. *MEDAL* was the only one to give the blanket label of *humorous* to all its examples of *to give up the ghost*; the other dictionaries gave the *humorous* label only in their examples of machines *giving up the ghost*. Humour is obviously subjective, varying from

country to country and, judging by these examples, from dictionary to dictionary. Again, however, this can be confusing for EAL learners. It is especially important for EAL students to use phrasemes in the right context. For this reason, a cultural note that certain expressions are not suitable in certain situations or in certain company is important, and the register labels need to be used more frequently and with greater accuracy and consistency.

Labels of currency should also be used with care. As noted in Chapter Two, there is a lack of consistency among the Big 5 in how they use the label *old-fashioned*, with only *CALD* and *MEDAL* indicating that the label means an item is mainly used by older speakers, rather than that it may be disappearing from usage altogether. Three phrasemes in this investigation with an *old-fashioned* label, *to spend a penny*, *it's not cricket* and *in the land of Nod*, do not warrant this label according to the results, which indicate that these three phrasemes are still used 'sometimes' by all age groups. Labelling for *in the land of Nod* varied, with *CALD* labelling it as *old-fashioned* and *informal*, *LDOCE* as *old-fashioned*, *MEDAL* as *humorous*, and *OALD* as *old-fashioned* and *humorous*. What is an EAL learner to make of these differences, and would he or she see them as mutually exclusive? Research on how users perceive labels in MELDs would be instructive in this regard. *The man/woman on the Clapham omnibus*, however, may indeed be disappearing from use, as the findings indicate that it is not used frequently by any of the participants. Care therefore needs to be taken when listing an item as *old-fashioned*, and the label itself needs to be more clearly defined so that it is clear whether an item has actually disappeared from common use or is merely used by an older age group (Sinclair 1991, p. 38).

Apart from the *old-fashioned* label, there were no labels to suggest that some phrasemes might be used more by older groups or by younger people, and

currency was indeed inconsistently marked (Stein 1999, p. 57) or not addressed at all. Fashions change, and it is hard to know what might be acceptable to a certain age group at any given time. Therefore, since intuition on the part of the lexicographer is indeed insufficient in this regard (Atkins 1992/1993, p. 27), more research into perceptions by the youngest group of the phrasemes already included in a MELD would be helpful, and could lead to a new label such as *youth* if young people readily identify an expression as very acceptable to their age group and corpus evidence of spoken data suggest that it is mainly used by younger speakers. At the moment, corpus data from younger speakers is largely lacking, and further research needs to be done in this area. If the ephemeral nature of some phrasemes is too difficult to monitor (Atkins & Rundell 2008, p. 229), then the *old-fashioned* label could perhaps be broken down further, so that there might be an *older use* label for items not used frequently by those under the age of 40, and an *old-fashioned* label for items which are indeed passing from current use. A label such as *common* could be applied to phrasemes used by all groups.

In terms of the fourth research question, *Are any such differences [in use and familiarity] reflected in the labelling systems and inclusion of these phrasemes in the Big 5?*, it is clear that the Big 5 are not consistent in their use of labels, and could give greater clarity in identifying the maturity of a speaker or the currency of the phraseme. This is therefore an area where more could be done to address user needs by conducting further investigations into native speaker use and surveying EAL learners regularly to see if they are aware of the phrasemes used around them.

5. Other phrasemes elicited from participants

The fifth research question asks, *What other phrasemes are elicited from the prompts given to participants in the study, and what variations do participants make to established phrasemes?* This part of the study was designed to reveal any new phrasemes from the 16-22 age group which might usefully be included in a MELD in Australia.

Dictionary coverage for the elicited expressions varied. *Mutton dressed as lamb* is in all the Big 5, as is *to turn a blind eye*. *The pot calling the kettle black, as mad as a hatter* and *a penny for your thoughts* appear in all the Big 5 except *COBUILD*. *The pen is mightier than the sword* appears only in *CALD, MEDAL* and *OALD*. *The boy who cried wolf* is not listed in any of the Big 5 as a separate expression, although *cry wolf* is in all of them. Given its popularity with this age group, however, it is an expression which could usefully be included. Other phrasemes not in the Big 5 but elicited from this age group are *to have the world in one's hands* and *a sheep in wolf's clothing*. While the latter is obviously a reversal, it would be fruitful to discover whether it is gaining meaning as a separate phraseme and should therefore be included in a MELD. Evidence for this might be gathered by means of repeated Internet searches over the coming years, to see whether, and in what contexts, it is becoming institutionalised.

Since memorability is important in the institutionalisation of a phraseme (Hockett 1956), it is unlikely that any of the humorous suggestions in Chapter Five will become part of the linguistic culture of either the UK or Australia. Their humour may be engaging, but their meaning appears to be opaque and they are likely to remain as nonce-forms, although *the albatross ate my baby* is an indication of the institutionalisation of the original 'dingo' expression. Regional

variations, however, appear to be more institutionalised, and EAL learners in Australia are more likely to encounter the variants *dog's breakfast* and *dog's dinner* than learners in the UK. This again demonstrates that, contrary to Svensén's assertion (2009), the most common phrasemes may not be the same in different varieties of English.

In response to the fifth research question, it is clear that many participants were prompted to suggest a wide range of phrasemes, a full list of which appears in the accompanying CD-ROM. The youngest group did not suggest many phrasemes, but one expression, *the hamster is back on the wheel,* may be an example of a new phraseme. Another is *to have the world in one's hands*. Variations were either regional, semantic or syntactic in line with Moon's observations (1998a, pp. 124-132), with reversals such as *a sheep in wolf's clothing* proving the most common source of variation on a canonical form. Such variations may be mistakes, or they may be examples of creative idiomaticity (Prodromou 2010, p. 234). They do, however, exemplify the variation which is possible, and which EAL students may encounter and find troublesome or indeed mystifying (Szczepaniak 2006, p. 86). While a MELD cannot capture creative variations, inclusion of the canonical forms will at least give the target group a starting point.

Conclusion

The findings discussed in this chapter, based on the five research questions, reveal an emerging pattern of phraseme familiarity and use by different age groups and in different locations. The 16-22 year olds are still familiar with many older reference, literary/historical and Biblical phrasemes, although their knowledge of regional phrasemes is less extensive. They also tend to use phrasemes less than

the older participants. Some of the phrasemes in the study are used by everyone, but others are used mostly by older participants, or not at all. The generational model of idiom use thus appears to be more accurate than the regional model, according to the findings of this questionnaire, since certain phrasemes were more familiar than others to the 16-22 year olds, irrespective of region. This group also had more trouble interpreting the phrasemes in the questionnaire, even when they had heard them before, which indicates that the target group would have even greater difficulty understanding them, since they have less cultural background in the target language to provide clues to their meaning. As mentioned, the youngest group did suggest some other phrasemes, but very few compared with the older age groups. The only new phraseme to emerge from this questionnaire was *the hamster is back on the wheel*, although *sheep in wolf's clothing* is another possible contender. Both these phrasemes meet Hockett's criterion of memorability (1956), since the first appears quite frequently on the Internet and the second was suggested by many participants. New expressions such as these need to be monitored through corpus data for inclusion in future MELDs. Many phrasemes also evidenced variations to the canonical forms, but these were only sometimes included in MELDs.

Coverage of the set and elicited phrasemes by the Big 5 was generally good, but there was still a major focus there on British English, and the Australian phrasemes mostly received relatively poor coverage. Sometimes the *British English* label was applied to phrasemes which are also commonly used in Australia, which could lead to confusion for users in this country. The *old-fashioned* label was also wrongly applied in several cases. Only the *Australian English* label was almost entirely accurate. Finding the phrasemes in the Big 5

was also often difficult, due to inconsistency of the headwords, and labelling proved to be inconsistent between the dictionaries.

The questions discussed in this chapter reveal that phrasemes are alive and well in all age groups and in both locations. Some expressions were obviously very familiar, while others appear to be on the decline. However, there is plenty of evidence that they form a vital part of not only receptive but also productive language, and provide the stimulus for innovation and creativity. For these reasons, accurate and consistent coverage in a MELD is vital if EAL learners in Australia are to use their dictionaries in order to increase their communicative competence. The wider practical implications of this thesis will be addressed in the following concluding chapter.

Chapter Seven

Conclusion

The central research question addressed in this thesis has been: *To what extent do advanced learners' dictionaries in Australia meet the needs of university-aged EAL users in their coverage of phrasemes?* The brief answer to this is: partially. The findings of this investigation reveal that MELDs used in Australia fall short in four main areas. These relate not just to the choice of phrasemes to include for the target group of university-aged EAL speakers in Australia in terms of decoding and encoding, but also to the headwords and labels given to such phrasemes, and the inclusion of new and emerging phrasemes.

Let us return again to the more detailed research questions:

1. *Is there a difference in the familiarity, interpretation or opacity of certain phrasemes for people of different age groups in Australia and the UK?*

2. *Are the phrasemes selected for the study still in use, by whom, and in what circumstances?*

3. *Can any difference in use be accounted for in terms of age and/or region?*

4. *Are any such differences reflected in the labelling systems and inclusion of these phrasemes in the Big 5?*

5. *What other phrasemes are elicited from the prompts given to participants in the study, and what variations do participants make to established phrasemes?*

Firstly, the findings indicate that there is indeed a difference in familiarity and interpretation of phrasemes, and that this difference is based on age rather than region. Secondly, over half the 84 phrasemes in the study are not used by the 16-22 year old native English speaking participants, and thirdly, differences in use

are based more on age than on region. Fourthly, these differences in use are not, however, often reflected in the labelling systems of the Big 5. Finally, many variations were made to established phrasemes, and many more phrasemes were elicited from participants, but few were commonly elicited from the youngest age group.

Returning to the central hypotheses of the thesis, regarding models of phraseme familiarity and use, the findings show that the generational model of phraseme use is more accurate than the regional model (Figure 1).

1. **Regional model**

Younger people in the UK	Younger people in Australia
↕	↕
Older people in the UK	Older people in Australia

2. **Generational model**

Younger people in the UK ⟷ Younger people in Australia

Older people in the UK ⟷ Older people in Australia
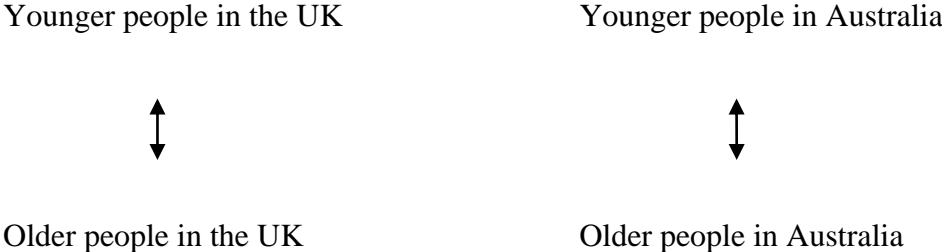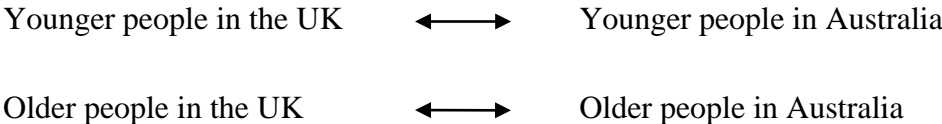
Figure 1: Two models of commonality in phraseme familiarity and use

Young people in Australia and the UK are thus likely to know and use the same phrasemes, and an Australian or British English phraseme will not necessarily be used by the youngest group purely because of its geographical origin or relevance, or because it is used by older speakers in that location. Such usage needs to be reflected in a usage label based on both region (Norri 1996) and

age (Card, McDavid Jr & McDavid 1984). There are thus many implications for MELDs in Australia.

With respect to the first three research questions, those phrasemes which are most familiar to the 16-22 year olds in Australia certainly need to be included in an Australian MELD for decoding purposes, since they will probably also be encountered by the target group when they talk to co-workers and lecturers; when reading journal articles; when talking to peers; when watching television; and on newspaper hoardings and advertisements when walking down the street. (Further corpus evidence would help to consolidate participants' claims that they had first encountered phrasemes in certain sources.) In particular, those phrasemes which have an older reference (especially to 'steam') or are Biblical or literary in origin, should be included. Examples of phrasemes most familiar to the youngest group in Australia are *an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth*, *to turn the other cheek* and *to let off steam*. The target group's lack of cultural and lexical familiarity in many areas will mean that they have fewer resources to draw upon when interpreting phrasemes. They may have a different cultural metaphor underlying the phraseme (Dobrovol'skij & Piirainen 2005), or may lack knowledge of associated words (as with *in the land of Nod*). It is not enough to say that idiom dictionaries are available, since it is very likely that EAL speakers will not necessarily recognise that a word is part of a phraseme (Bergenholtz & Gouws 2008, p. 242). Nor is it sufficient to leave EAL learners to guess from the context of a passage or speech or text, as teachers often do (Liu 2008, p. 66), since many phrasemes are opaque and can interrupt the whole flow of the passage. Inclusion of such familiar phrasemes in a MELD would enable the target group to engage more readily and easily with their surrounding culture (Wray & Perkins 2000).

Some phrasemes, on the other hand, are inappropriate for inclusion in an Australian MELD, particularly if space is an issue. These include those which are less used and less familiar, such as those with a mainly UK reference (*to grasp the nettle, the man/woman on the Clapham omnibus*), and some New Zealand phrasemes, such as *to be a box of birds*. The target group are unlikely to encounter them, and will probably not need them even for decoding purposes.

In terms of encoding, the most familiar and most used phrasemes need to be included in an Australian MELD. However, it is important that the target group recognise when to use a phraseme in conversation with their peers (Liu 2008). Although the use of phrases and multi-word expressions can make someone sound more like a native speaker, inappropriate use can make someone stand out as foreign to a culture (Liu 2003) and affect their communicative competence. Those phrasemes which deal with items of older reference, such as *to let off steam* and *full steam ahead*, are, perhaps counter-intuitively, the very phrasemes likely to be used by their peers. However, regional phrasemes from this survey, with the exception of *not to have a bar of something*, are not often used by the 16-22 year old Australians. It would therefore be inappropriate for the target group to use them when interacting with their peers. Books and dictionaries of idioms and Australian slang may be tempting for the EAL speaker, but they do not provide essential information on usage. This is where a MELD, designed on pedagogical lexicographical principles, could remedy this lacuna in the market, not only by including relevant phrasemes but by highlighting the most commonly used phrasemes. *LDOCE* and *MEDAL* already have a system which highlights in red the most frequently used words in their dictionary. Such a system could be extended to the use of phrasemes, showing which items are most familiar to a younger native speaker and which items such a speaker is more likely to use.

In terms of the fourth research question, coverage of all the 84 phrasemes by the Big 5 varied greatly. *CALD, LDOCE, MEDAL* and *OALD* covered a good number of the phrasemes in the survey. However, *COBUILD* included only five of the top ten phrasemes most frequently used by all participants, and only *LDOCE, MEDAL* and *OALD* listed all ten of those phrasemes most often used by the Australian 16-22 year olds (refer to Appendix 6 for details of coverage in the Big 5 of phrasemes in the questionnaire). Less familiar phrasemes, such as *to cast pearls before swine*, were included in four of the Big 5; on the other hand, a more familiar phraseme, *to kill the fatted calf*, appeared only in *CALD* and *LDOCE*. Greater prominence was given to British English phrasemes, such as *to send someone to Coventry* (which appears in all the Big 5), than to Australian phrasemes, such as *not to have a bar of something* (which appears only in *OALD*). *To send someone to Coventry* was familiar to 86% of UK participants but only 65% of Australian participants from all age groups. Conversely, *not to have a bar of something* was familiar to only 9% of UK participants but known to the vast majority (91%) of those in Australia. These differences in usage are not currently reflected in MELDs used in Australia, and more needs to be done in this area if the target group are to have their lexical needs met more effectively.

With regard to headwords, it would be difficult for an EAL speaker to draw up any principles for quick word searching in the Big 5, although online searches do facilitate the process. There was a lack of consistency both within and across dictionaries, echoing Gates' earlier findings (1986). A learner familiar with the style of one MELD would not easily find a phraseme in another. *CALD* and *MEDAL* proved particularly helpful in their cross-referencing, but it is frustrating to look for a phraseme under one word, such as *to carry/take coals to Newcastle* under the more salient word *Newcastle*, and find it only under *coal*, or to look

under *coal* and find it only under *Newcastle*. Moreover, many phrasemes appear to be used in variant or reversed forms, such as *sheep in wolf's clothing*. Only cross-referencing with several headwords will help the learner to find the original expression in a MELD. Publishers of dictionaries are obviously in competition with one another, and may be reluctant to work together on such matters, but consistency in this area would greatly facilitate user searches.

Online searching should make it easier for the user to find a phraseme. However, at the time of writing (April 2011) some recent changes have revealed a major pitfall that needs to be avoided in online MELDs. This is the mistaken thinking that an EAL learner will recognise an item as a phraseme and search for a term by entering several words rather than one key word. For example, the online version of *CALD*, previously so user-friendly in its linking of words and phrasemes through its online versions of its MELD and idioms dictionary, seems to have made the search process harder by providing less cross-referencing. A search at *wolf*, for example, no longer produces any related phrasemes at the main entry, and the user is obliged to know that *cry wolf* and *wolf in sheep's clothing* are phrasemes in order to find their meanings online. It is true that *CALD* has *wolf in sheep's clothing* and *cry wolf* in the 'More Results' column to the right of the page, but this column also contains a 'Smart Thesaurus', 'Word of the Day', 'New Words' and a blog, as well as advertisements, and a user may not find the phraseme amongst the different distractions on the screen. This is especially true since other MELDs such as *MEDAL* place their Google advertisements in the right hand column and so users may ignore this column altogether. This new system in *CALD* therefore appears to be a step backwards for a user who is used to searching at one key word, and who may not recognise a word as belonging to

a phraseme. Greater consistency and user-friendliness is obviously needed in this area.

Regional labelling was generally helpful in the Big 5, but not always accurate. For example, *to separate the sheep from the goats* is given a British English label in *CALD* and *LDOCE*, but is used more often in Australia than the UK, judging by the results of this study. What might appear to be British English may therefore be equally, or even more frequently, used in Australia, and this should be pointed out in the introductory material (for those students who do indeed read introductions). Other phrasemes, such as *to send someone to Coventry*, are in fact more often used in the UK, and this also needs to be distinguished.

The *old-fashioned* label is not always accurate, according to this investigation's results. As stated earlier, three phrasemes given this label in the Big 5 are still being used by all age groups in both locations. Moreover, at present there is no label indicating that young people may use certain phrasemes more than other phrasemes. Fifty one phrasemes were never used by 75% or more of the youngest group in the investigation. A new *youth* or *older speaker* label would make this clearer for EAL learners, and prevent them sounding like lexical dinosaurs by using expressions unknown to their native English-speaking peers. *Youth* would mean that an item is used mainly by young people, while *older speaker* would mean that the item is used mainly by those over a certain age (for example, 40). A label such as *common* could indicate that all age groups use an item. The *old-fashioned* label could then be reserved for items which are truly passing from use, either because the people who use them belong only to the oldest age group, or because the referent is becoming unknown. A prime example of this is the phraseme *to gird up one's loins*, where both the low frequency of use, even among the older age groups, and the unfamiliarity of the individual

words, mark the expression as one which is disappearing from everyday use. Such information on usage would go some way to addressing the gap in information highlighted by Arnaud (1992) and Doyle (2007).

Other usage labels were not used consistently in the Big 5. This is dependent on the choices of the individual editors, but is frustrating for EAL speakers who use more than one dictionary. The plethora of labels and lack of consistency were confusing. Again, although the Big 5 are in competition with one another, more consistency would lead learners to feel comfortable with consulting more than one dictionary, which could only be beneficial for the publishing industry. Further research into how users understand labels would indicate which would be most beneficial for them. This could perhaps be done through online user surveys on dictionary webpages.

It is also vital for learners to recognise the cultural situations and settings in which certain phrasemes might be more or less acceptable (O'Keeffe, McCarthy & Carter 2010). A note to this effect in a dictionary's introduction, pointing out that humorous or informal expressions should be used with care, would assist in this area. An online dictionary could take this further, giving examples of appropriate and inappropriate phrasemes (and of course, other lexemes) in connection with certain situations. Information should also be added to indicate which age groups are likely to use certain types of phrasemes. For example, the investigation examined throughout this thesis has found that younger people are likely to use phrasemes relating to older items, such as 'steam', but unlikely to use regional phrasemes. Therefore, simply because a phraseme is labelled as *Australian English*, that does not mean that the item is used by speakers of all ages in Australia.

The fifth research question asked, *What other phrasemes are elicited from the prompts given to participants in the study, and what variations do participants make to established phrasemes?* Thousands of phrasemes were elicited from participants, and many variations appeared. Some suggestions, such as *the albatross ate my baby*, were humorous and appeared to be nonce forms, but others, including the reversal *a sheep in wolf's clothing*, had many tokens from a range of participants. Apart from *a sheep in wolf's clothing*, only one other phraseme presented itself as a possibly emerging expression: *the hamster is back on the wheel,* suggested by an Australian in the 16-22 year old group. It would be worth monitoring expressions such as these in future, to establish whether they are entering the lexicon and should be included in a MELD.

Returning to the overall research question, *To what extent do advanced learners' dictionaries in Australia meet the needs of university-aged EAL users in their coverage of phrasemes*, it can therefore be seen that the Big 5 go a long way to meeting user needs, but more work needs to be done. The Venn diagram in Figure 2, which has provided a framework for this thesis, demonstrates that pedagogical lexicography, exemplified by the dictionary symbol, has a clear role to play in linking the three fields of communicative competence, lexicography and phraseology.
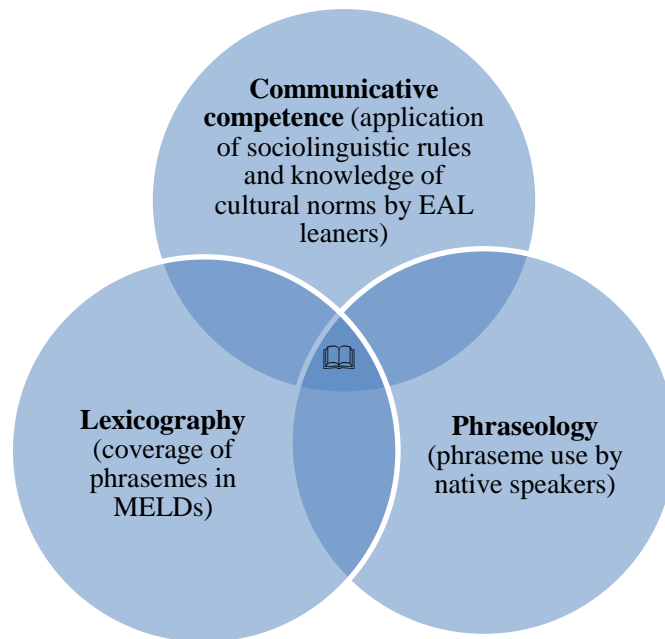
Figure 2: The relationship between communicative competence, phraseology and lexicography in this thesis

Pedagogical lexicography, however, needs to remember its abiding principle of user-friendliness (Zgusta 1971). In order to enhance the user-friendliness of MELDs in Australia, four recommendations arise from the present study. Firstly, further research needs to be conducted to ascertain if their *British English* labelling means that certain terms are used in the UK as compared to the US, or whether these terms are only used in British English and not in other varieties, such as Australian or South African English. Secondly, clarification of the *old-fashioned* label and possible introduction of a *youth* or *older speaker* label, and a *common* label, would greatly benefit the communicative needs of EAL learners. While frequent re-editions of a paper dictionary to reflect changing use would be costly, it is nevertheless a possibility for the online versions of MELDs to do this, if corpus and other evidence can be gathered. Thirdly, information about phraseme use should be added to the reference section of each MELD, indicating that some categories (such as the older reference category) are more likely to be used by younger speakers. Fourthly, the phrasemes most commonly used by

native speakers, and in particular by younger native speakers, could also be given a starred rating system at each entry in the dictionary, similar to that used to indicate the most commonly used words in *LDOCE* and *MEDAL*. Ideally, a new MELD should be produced for use in Australia. Given the financial constraints faced by publishers, however, this appears unlikely. Nevertheless, it should be possible to improve the user-friendliness of existing MELDs and make increased use of current technological possibilities in order to target specific groups of users. In particular, emerging phrasemes should be monitored, just as new single words are monitored, to see if they are becoming a part of everyday language. Once a phraseme has become established in the vocabulary, it should be added to a MELD.

It is certainly true that more work needs to be done in the area of labelling (Atkins & Rundell 2008, p. 496), especially in regard to pedagogical lexicography. New labels are necessary, some existing labels need clarifying, and the currency of all items needs to be examined at regular intervals in order for appropriate labels to be applied.

In conclusion, this thesis has laid the groundwork for further research leading to improved practice in the accuracy and consistency with which MELDs present information for their readers, particularly in regard to the labelling of phrasemes. The translation of theory to practice is not without problems, however, and as the saying goes, there's many a slip twixt cup and lip, or, as Pedro Carolino puts it, 'of the hand to mouth, one lose often the soup'.

List of Appendices

Appendix 1

Phrasemes in the questionnaire classified by type

Number in questionnaire	Phraseme	Idiom	Simile	Proverb/ Saying
1	A wolf in sheep's clothing	✓		
2	An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth			✓
3	As old as Methuselah		✓	
4	To beat/turn swords into ploughshares	✓		
5	To hide your light under a bushel	✓		
6	To cast pearls before swine	✓		
7	An albatross around someone's neck	✓		
8	All that glitters is not gold			✓
9	As mad as a March hare		✓	
10	The back of Bourke	✓		
11	To carry/take coals to Newcastle	✓		
12	A pretty/fine kettle of fish			✓
13	Full steam ahead	✓		
14	To have somebody's guts for garters	✓		
15	To fall on stony ground	✓		
16	To rain fire and brimstone	✓		
17	To gird up one's loins	✓		
18	To give up the ghost	✓		
19	To have feet of clay	✓		
20	To hide/cover a multitude of sins	✓		
21	Birds of a feather flock together			✓
22	Brave new world	✓		
23	To burn your boats	✓		
24	To be a box of birds	✓		
25	To be up a gum tree	✓		
26	To grasp the nettle	✓		
27	To get somewhere under your own steam	✓		

No.	Phrase			
28	Give somebody an inch and they'll take a yard/mile	✓		
29	In the land of Nod	✓		
30	To kill the fatted calf	✓		
31	Like a lamb to the slaughter		✓	
32	To live off the fat of the land	✓		
33	Man cannot live by bread alone			✓
34	Not to know someone from Adam			✓
35	To cry wolf	✓		
36	The cupboard is bare			✓
37	Discretion is the better part of valour			✓
38	To come a gutser	✓		
39	Done like a dinner		✓	
40	It's not cricket			✓
41	Inch by inch	✓		
42	To let off steam	✓		
43	Out of the ark	✓		
44	To quote something chapter and verse			✓
45	To reap what you sow	✓		
46	To rob Peter to pay Paul	✓		
47	To separate the sheep from the goats	✓		
48	A dog in the manger	✓		
49	Fools rush in where angels fear to tread			✓
50	To gild the lily	✓		
51	Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned			✓
52	Don't come the raw prawn with me			✓
53	To get a guernsey	✓		
54	The man/woman on the Clapham omnibus	✓		
55	To look/be every inch sth	✓		
56	Two a penny	✓		
57	To separate the wheat from the chaff	✓		
58	The blind leading the blind		✓	
59	A land of milk and honey	✓		
60	The road to Damascus	✓		
61	The salt of the earth	✓		

No.	Idiom			
62	An iron fist in a velvet glove	✓		
63	Jam tomorrow			✓
64	Look before you leap			✓
65	In the box seat	✓		
66	Like a shag on a rock		✓	
67	To send somebody to Coventry	✓		
68	The penny drops			✓
69	To pick up steam	✓		
70	Within an inch of something	✓		
71	The scales fall from someone's eyes			✓
72	The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak			✓
73	To turn the other cheek	✓		
74	Sackcloth and ashes	✓		
75	Something went out with the ark			✓
76	The milk of human kindness	✓		
77	A pound of flesh	✓		
78	(All animals are equal but) some are more equal than others			✓
79	Not to have a bar of something	✓		
80	Up the mulga	✓		
81	Somebody had a good innings			✓
82	To run out of steam	✓		
83	To spend a penny	✓		
84	Not to budge/give/ move an inch	✓		

Appendix 2

Phraseme origins, citations and current meanings

Introduction
1. Biblical
2. Literary/Historical
3. Australian
4. British
5. Older reference

Introduction

Since giving the etymology for an individual word is problematic (witness, for example, the debate in the *International Journal of Lexicography* over the origin of the English loanword 'boomerang' (Nash 2009, pp. 179-188 and Dixon 2009, pp. 189-190)), providing an origin for a phraseme is obviously even more complicated. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to provide a detailed etymology for each phraseme used in the survey, since my main focus is on the use of phrasemes in learners' dictionaries and not on the phrasemes themselves. What appears in this chapter, therefore, is an attempt to give the most likely source for each expression, and its original meaning, so that readers can have a feeling for its possible age and context. The primary references used in this chapter are the *Oxford English dictionary* and the *Macquarie dictionary*, both in their online versions, with references to other works as appropriate.

1. Biblical

Those phrasemes which have Biblical origins are based mainly on the King James Version, or Authorised Version, of the Bible, first published in 1611. This version draws largely on the earlier translations of the New Testament from Greek into

English by William Tyndale, first published in 1526, and his uncompleted translation of the Old Testament, which was finished by Miles Coverdale and published in 1535 (Martin 2002, pp. xvi, xxi). The Authorised Version became the official translation adopted by the Church of England, and many expressions were thus popularised in England (though not necessarily throughout the rest of the UK) through sermons, and private and public Bible reading. The Bible quotations below are all taken from the King James Version of the Bible, unless otherwise stated.

- *a wolf in sheep's clothing* - Matthew 7:15

In Matthew's gospel, Jesus warns his followers, ʿBeware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves'. A version of this is found in Aesop's fable 'The wolf in sheep's clothing' translated by Townsend (Aesop 2008). In the fable, a wolf disguises himself as a sheep, is locked in the sheepfold, but is then killed by the shepherd who has come looking for meat and mistakes him for a sheep. If someone is a wolf in sheep's clothing, this means that someone evil or dangerous is disguised as someone innocent.

- *an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth* - Deuteronomy 19:21; Exodus 21:24; Leviticus 24:20

In Deuteronomy chapter 19, verses 16-21, God gives these instructions to the Israelites:

If a false witness rise up against any man to testify against him that which is wrong;

Then both the men, between whom the controversy is, shall stand before the LORD, before the priests and the judges, which shall be in those days;

And the judges shall make diligent inquisition: and, behold, if the witness be a false witness, and hath testified falsely against his brother;

Then shall ye do unto him, as he had thought to have done unto his brother: so shalt thou put the evil away from among you.

And those which remain shall hear, and fear, and shall henceforth commit no more any such evil among you.

And thine eye shall not pity; but life shall go for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.

The context here is therefore one of justice and vengeance, and the meaning is that full payment will be exacted for any wrong done.

- *as old as Methuselah* - Genesis 5:21;

Methusaleh, as he appears in Genesis chapter 5, is the oldest character in the Bible, living to the age of 969. To call someone *as old as Methuselah* is thus to imply that that person is extremely old. The *OED* gives an earliest attestation in English of 1509 for this expression, in Watson's *Shyppe of Fooles*: 'Also olde as euer was matheusale'. Methuselah is thus often invoked as the epitome of old age.

- *to beat/turn swords into ploughshares* - Isaiah 2:4; Micah 4:3

The context in Isaiah (and Micah) is that in 'the last days':

. . . many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their

spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. (Isaiah 2:3-4)

The sometimes heated debate over endtimes and the 'last days', pre- and post-tribulationism and amillenialism is definitely beyond the scope of this thesis. Suffice it to say that the context of beating swords into ploughshares is representative of a time of peace.

The reverse concept is found in Joel 3:10: 'Proclaim ye this among the Gentiles; Prepare war, wake up the mighty men, let all the men of war draw near; let them come up: Beat your plowshares into swords and your pruninghooks into spears: let the weak say, I am strong.'

- *to bury your light under a bushel* - Luke 11:33; Mark 4:21; Matthew 5:15

The context in Luke's gospel shows Jesus teaching the crowd:

> No man, when he hath lighted a candle, putteth it in a secret place, neither under a bushel, but on a candlestick, that they which come in may see the light.

> The light of the body is the eye: therefore when thine eye is single, thy whole body also is full of light; but when thine eye is evil, thy body also is full of darkness.

> Take heed therefore that the light which is in thee be not darkness.

> If thy whole body therefore be full of light, having no part dark, the whole shall be full of light, as when the bright shining of a candle doth give thee light.

The original context is therefore that goodness should not be hidden. In modern parlance, this has extended to mean that one's good qualities or talents should not be hidden.

- *to cast pearls before swine* - Matthew 7:6

In Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, he advises his followers:

Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.

The clear message is that good things are wasted on the unappreciative.

- *to fall on stony ground* - Mark 4:5

In Jesus' parable of the sower, a farmer sows his seed:

And it came to pass, as he sowed, some fell by the way side, and the fowls of the air came and devoured it up.

And some fell on stony ground, where it had not much earth; and immediately it sprang up, because it had no depth of earth:

Jesus explains in verse 14 that he is actually talking about the sharing of God's word:

The sower soweth the word.

And these are they by the way side, where the word is sown; but when they have heard, Satan cometh immediately, and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts.

And these are they likewise which are sown on stony ground; who, when they have heard the word, immediately receive it with gladness;

> And have no root in themselves, and so endure but for a time: afterward, when affliction or persecution ariseth for the word's sake, immediately they are offended.

If something falls on stony ground, it is therefore not well received and ultimately proves to be unfruitful.

- *to rain fire and brimstone* – Genesis 19:24; Ezekiel 38:22; Luke 17:29; Psalm 11:6; Revelation 14:10; 20:10; 21:8;

Brimstone is the older name for sulphur, according to the *OED*. There are many references in the Bible to fire and brimstone, which are associated with judgement. For example, in Ezekiel 38:22, speaking of God's wrath against the land of Gog, we read:

> And I will plead against him with pestilence and with blood; and I will rain upon him, and upon his bands, and upon the many people that are with him, an overflowing rain, and great hailstones, fire, and brimstone.

It is common nowadays to speak of 'fire and brimstone preachers', who preach Hell and judgement, although I cannot find a reliable first attestation for this phrase.

- *to gird up one's loins* - 1 Kings 18:46

In the passage referred to in 1 Kings the prophet Elijah, having killed the prophets of Baal and prophesied rain to end a famine in the land of King Ahab, 'girded up his loins, and ran before Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel'. In other words, he tucked up his clothes so that he could run faster and beat the king, who was riding in a chariot. *To gird up one's loins* has therefore taken on the connotation of preparing for a great feat of strength.

- *to give up the ghost* - Job 3:11; 13:19; Luke 23:46 (and many more)

There are many references in the Bible to *giving up the ghost*, meaning that someone dies. For example, in Luke 23:46 we read: **'**And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost.' The phraseme is now extended to many situations and can be used humorously, as when one person says to another, 'My car has given up the ghost', implying that the car has finally broken down after a long struggle and cannot be repaired.

- *to have feet of clay* - Daniel 2:33

In the book of Daniel, King Nebuchadnezzar has a dream in which he sees a statue:

This image's head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass,

His legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay.

Daniel interprets the dream in terms of kingdoms to follow:

And whereas thou sawest the feet and toes, part of potters' clay, and part of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron, forasmuch as thou sawest the iron mixed with miry clay.

And as the toes of the feet were part of iron, and part of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken (verses 41, 42).

The clay in the statue's feet make it weaker. The *OED* gives an earliest citation of 1814 in Byron's *Ode to Napoleon* for the expession *feet of clay* in modern English. If someone has feet of clay, then however grand they may seem they are still fallible.

- *to hide/cover a multitude of sins* - 1 Peter 4:8; James 5:20

The apostle Peter warns:

But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer.

And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins.

The word *charity* is replaced in more recent version of the Bible with the word *love*, the meaning being that love disregards other people's transgressions and does not hold them against the other person. The phraseme is often extended now to other situations. For example, a friend of this author commented that extra weight gained in childbearing was hidden by her jeans, which 'covered a multitude of sins'.

- *in the land of Nod* - Genesis 4:16

In the Old Testament Cain, having killed his brother Abel, leaves the Garden of Eden and goes to live in the land of Nod. The *OED* sees the phraseme, as a pun on the word *nod*, which means a short sleep, and gives an earliest attestation from Jonathan Swift in 1738. If someone is *in the land of Nod*, they are asleep.

- *to kill the fatted calf* - Luke 15:23

In the parable of the Prodigal Son, the father, whose son has squandered his inheritance and then returned home repentant, gives his servants the command to kill his best animal and prepare a feast to welcome his son home. The phraseme therefore means that a celebration is held to mark a special occasion.

- *like a lamb to the slaughter* - Isaiah 53:7

In the Biblical passage, Isaiah prophesies about the Messiah who is to come:

> He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is
> brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb,
> so he openeth not his mouth.

The connotation here is one of innocence wrongly accused and killed.

- *to live off the fat of the land* - Genesis 45:18

In this passage, the patriarch Joseph, now an important dignitary in Egypt after being sold into slavery by his brothers, is reunited with them and invites them to leave famine-stricken Israel and live in Egypt, where they will be richly fed. The phraseme therefore indicates that someone is living richly on the best available food.

- *man cannot live by bread alone* - Deuteronomy 8:2-3; Matthew 4:4

Here, God tells the Israelites of their forty years wandering in the wilderness:

> And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna,
> which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee
> know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every [word] that
> proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live.

Food alone is therefore not enough; spiritual food is necessary. Jesus also quotes these words in the New Testament, when the devil is tempting him to turn stones into bread. It is often used nowadays to indicate that people need variety in their diet, not just bread, and the spiritual meaning seldom applies.

- *not to know somebody from Adam* - Genesis 2:19

The name *Adam* is in Genesis chapter 2, where he is created as the first man. Since this was a long time ago, and no one knows what he looked like, not

knowing another person from Adam means that someone has no idea who another person is.

- *out of the ark* - Genesis 6:14

The ark referred to here is Noah's Ark, built to escape the Biblical flood a long time ago. If something is *out of the ark* it is therefore very old.

- *to quote something chapter and verse*

The English Bible was first divided into chapters and verses in 1551 by Parisian printer Stephanus (*Encyclopedia Britannica*). If someone can cite both the chapter and verse of a reference, they therefore know it and quote it very accurately.

- *to reap what you have sown* – Galatians 6:7

There are many verses to reaping and sowing in the Bible. In this verse, the apostle Paul warns:

Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.

This is another way of saying that people will have to face the consequences of their actions.

- *to rob Peter to pay Paul*

Peter and Paul are both important apostles in the New Testament. To rob one in order to give to the other is to pay one debt and create another. The *OED* gives an earliest attestation of this phrase in about 1450.

- *to separate the sheep from the goats* - Matthew 25:32

Jesus tells his followers that when he returns to earth from heaven:

then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory:

And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth [his] sheep from the goats:

And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.

Separating the sheep from the goats therefore refers to judgement. Until this time the animals have lived together and been hard to distinguish. By separating them, however, the sheep will be in a favoured position. The expression is often used now to refer to the separation of people in terms of their abilities.

- *to separate the wheat from the chaff* - Luke 3:17

This reference is similar to the separation of the sheep and the goats. John the Baptist warns:

and he will throughly purge his floor, and will gather the wheat into his garner; but the chaff he will burn with fire unquenchable.

- *the blind leading the blind* - Matthew 15:14; Luke 6:39

Jesus uses this phrase to refer to the Pharisees, whom he sees as blind guides:

Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.

The implications of the blind leading the blind are that neither person can see where they are going, and so they cannot help each other and may even end up in deeper trouble.

- *the land of milk and honey* - Deuteronomy 6:3

In this verse, God refers to the Promised Land, into which he will lead the Israelites, as a land flowing with milk and honey. It is thus a land of plenty.

- *the road to Damascus* - Acts 9:3

In this verse, Saul the Pharisee has a conversion experience while he is on the road to Damascus, and his life is completely changed. He subsequently changes his name to Paul and becomes a leader in the Christian church instead of one of its chief persecutors. To have a road to Damascus experience is thus to undergo a life-changing event.

- *the salt of the earth* - Matthew 5:13

In this verse, Jesus tells his followers:

> Yee are the salt of the earth: But if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.

This means that the disciples are important and must maintain their faith. Nowadays there is often a connotation with farming (*earth*), and with honesty, simplicity and reliability.

- *the scales fall from somebody's eyes* - Acts 9:18

After Paul's conversion experience on the road to Damascus he is blind for three days. After this, he goes to the house of a disciple called Ananias, who places his hands on Paul and restores his sight:

> And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales, and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized.

This expression is used figuratively to mean that someone begins to see a situation clearly after their vision of it has been clouded.

- *the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak* - Mark 14:38

In this verse, Jesus takes the followers Peter, James and John to pray with him at night, before he is arrested, but they fall asleep despite themselves. They therefore desire to do something good but cannot carry it out.

- *to turn the other cheek* - Matthew 5:39

In Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, talking to many followers, he advises them:

> But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.

If someone turns the other cheek, they therefore do not resist an evil person or take revenge on them.

- *to wear sackcloth and ashes* – e.g. Esther 4:1; Luke 10:13

There are many references in the Bible to sackcloth and ashes, which are worn as signs of repentance. The expression can be used figuratively to mean that someone is repentant.

- *went out with the ark* - Genesis 6:14

Noah's ark, as mentioned earlier, was built a long time ago. If something went out with the ark, it is therefore very old or out of date.

2. Literary/Historical

Many phrasemes have their origins in the fables of Aesop, reputed to be a Greek writer born in 620BC (Townsend's year), but there is no evidence that he actually existed (Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc. 2008). The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* maintains that Phalareus produced the first fables supposedly by Aesop in the fourth century BC, but that this work had disappeared by the ninth century AD. One famous translation of these fables into English was published by George

Fyler Townsend in 1867, and this popular translation may be the source of many phrasemes ascribed to Aesop's *Fables*.

Shakespeare is of course another fruitful source of phrasemes, providing the origin of six of the expressions used in this survey. Other writers too have contributed popular phrasemes. The sources of information in this section are mainly the *OED* (online), the Project Gutenberg online version of Townsend's translation of Aesop's fables, and Gary Martin's 'Phrase Finder' website. Martin's sources are the *OED* and other Oxford publications, as well as newspaper archives and *Lighter's historical dictionary of American slang* (Gary Martin 2008, personal communication).

- *an albatross around your neck*

This phraseme appears in Coleridge's poem 'The rime of the ancient mariner' (1798), in which a sailor shoots an albatross. The ship is subsequently becalmed, and his fellow sailors hang the bird around his neck as a symbol of bad luck: 'Instead of the cross, the albatross/About my neck was hung'. It is likely that this figurative meaning of bad luck originated with or was popularised by Coleridge, since the papers of Joseph Banks in 1769, on Cook's voyage, detail how Banks shot albatrosses, implying that this was not an unlucky act. The phraseme has come to denote a symbol of burden and misfortune.

- *all that glitters is not gold*

This phraseme comes from Shakespeare's 1596 play *The merchant of Venice*, Act 5, scene 2, line 65. The original quote has *glister* instead of *glitter*, but the *OED* assures us that *glitter* is acceptable as a more modern alternative, and in fact 'John Dryden was quite happy to use "glitters" as long ago as 1687, in his poem, The Hind and the Panther:

For you may palm upon us new for old:

All, as they say, that glitters, is not gold.' (Martin 1996 – 2010)

The *OED* gives an earlier citation of 1553 for the expression 'All is not golde that glistereth', but it is the Shakespearean form which is common today. The meaning of the phraseme is that one should not judge by appearances, because something which appears to be valuable may not have any value.

- *as mad as a March hare*

This simile is attributed to Sir Thomas More in *The supplycacyon of soulys*, 1529. The *OED* explains that March is the breeding season for hares and their behaviour is more uncontrolled then than at other times. To say that someone is as mad as a March hare is therefore to accuse them of insane behaviour.

- *birds of a feather flock together*

The earliest citation of this proverb is given by the *OED* as coming from John Minsheu in 1599: 'Birdes of a feather will flocke togither.' Gary Martin quotes a 1545 version by William Turner in *The Rescuing of Romish Fox*: 'Byrdes of on kynde and color flok and flye allwayes together.' Townsend's nineteenth century version of Aesop's *Fables* includes the saying as the moral at the end of the Fable 'The Farmer and the stork'. The meaning is that like people will seek out each other.

- *brave new world*

This phrase has its origin in Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (1610-11), Act V, Scene I, where the character Miranda, raised on an isolated island, finally meets other humans besides her father, and exclaims,

O, wonder!

How many goodly creatures are there here!

How beauteous mankind is! O brave new world

That hath such people in't!

The phrase was later popularised by Aldous Huxley in his 1932 novel *Brave new world* (2001), where the phrase is used ironically to denote a world of nightmarish quality. It is this ironic meaning which appears to have become popularised in the phraseme.

- *to burn your boats*

The origin of this phrase is unclear. It may have originated in a translation from the Spanish of Francisco Cervantes de Salazar (1514? − 1575), who used the phrase 'quemando las naves' (burning the boats) to describe the action of Cortes in burning his fleet in 1519 to prevent his men from retreating. In fact, according to Reynolds (1959), he did not actually burn the ships but destroyed them by other means; the idea of burning did not occur until the eighteenth century. The *OED* gives no origin for the phraseme, and its earliest citation is 1886. The concept of a leader burning the boats to prevent their men from retreating is also associated with Alexander the Great and Julius Caesar. Use of the phraseme nowadays indicates that someone has no chance of turning back, and that they have usually created this state of impasse themselves, either intentionally or unintentionally.

- *to cry wolf*

Aesop's fable 'The shepherd's boy and the wolf' tells of a boy guarding the sheep and repeatedly crying 'Wolf! Wolf!' to annoy the villagers. When a wolf really did come, no one believed him and the flock was destroyed. The salutary lesson is that 'There is no believing a liar, even when he speaks the truth' (Aesop 2008).

The meaning of this phraseme, therefore, is that someone tries to deceive others by saying that there is a serious problem when there is none, but that this may rebound on them later.

- *the cupboard is bare*

This phraseme originates in an English Nursery rhyme:

Old Mother Hubbard

Went to the cupboard

To fetch her poor dog a bone;

But when she came there

The cupboard was bare

And so the poor dog had none.

(Opie & Opie 1951, p. 317)

Although the character of Old Mother Hubbard was apparently well known in the sixteenth century (Opie & Opie 1951, p. 321), Iona and Peter Opie give an 1805 publication date for the *The comic adventures of Old Mother Hubbard and her dog*, and add that 'Old Mother Hubbard has taken a leading place among the nursery rhyme characters' (p. 319). The phraseme is still often used to indicate that there is no food in the cupboard.

- *discretion is the better part of valour*

Shakespeare popularised the expression uttered by Falstaff, who has feigned death on the battlefield, 'The better part of valour is discretion' (*Henry IV*, part 1, Act 5, scene 4, line 121). This saying emphasises caution over bravery, although in the

case of Falstaff it may have had a stronger underlying ironical reference to cowardice rather than merely caution.

- *a dog in the manger* - Aesop, 6th century BC

Aesop's fable of 'The dog in the manger' tells of a dog which sat in a manger with the oxen and, although he could not eat their hay, prevented them from eating it themselves. If someone is a dog in a manger, therefore, they are selfish and do not even profit from their selfishness.

- *fools rush in where angels fear to tread*

This saying derives from Alexander Pope's poem *An essay on criticism* (1709), in which he belabours ignorant literary critics who do not appreciate the writers' craft and heedlessly criticise it. The saying has been popularised in other works of fiction, such as EM Forster's 1905 novel *Where angels fear to tread*. It compares people who act impetuously and thoughtlessly with angels, who might be supposed to have greater access to difficult situations without being harmed, and yet act more cautiously.

- *to gild the lily*

In Shakespeare's play *King John*, the king is crowned again and Lord Salisbury says,

Therefore, to be possess'd with double pomp,

To guard a title that was rich before,

To gild refined gold, to paint the lily,

To throw a perfume on the violet,

To smooth the ice, or add another hue

Unto the rainbow, or with taper-light

To seek the beauteous eye of heaven to garnish,

Is wasteful and ridiculous excess. (Act 4, scene 2)

This emphasises that such an act is pointless and indeed ridiculous. The phraseme has since been altered to the more popular form of *to gild the lily*, first attested in the *OED* in an article in the *Manchester Guardian Weekly* of 1928.

- *hell hath no fury like a woman scorned*

This saying comes from William Congreve's play *The mourning bride*, Act 3, scene 8, in which the captive queen Zara says 'Heav'n has no rage, Like love to hatred turn'd,/Nor hell a fury, like a woman scorned'. (This play begins with another famous line, 'Musick has charms to soothe a savage breast'.) The implication is that a woman who is rejected in love is the epitome of rage.

- *an iron fist in a velvet glove*

This phraseme is likely to be a calque from the French, from the Swedish king Bernadotte, one of Napoleon's marshals, who said that the French should be governed by 'une main de fer couverte d'un gant de velours', according to 'L'Intermédiaire des Chercheurs et Curieux (Notes and Queries Français)', vol. 156, p. 618, 10 November 1874, quoted by Doug Wilson in a LinguistList posting dated 8 October 2004. The meaning is that firmness can or should be disguised under a softer exterior.

- *jam tomorrow*

This phraseme comes from Lewis Carroll's book of 1821, *Through the looking glass and what Alice found there*. In chapter 5, Alice is conversing with the White Queen, who offers her 'twopence a week, and jam every other day' (Gasson 1978,

p. 153) to be her maid. Alice protests that she does not want to be a maid, does not like jam and, in any case, does not want any jam today:

'You couldn't have it if you *did* want it,' the Queen said. 'The rule is, jam tomorrow and jam yesterday—but never jam today.'

'It *must* come sometimes to "jam today",' Alice objected.

'No, it can't,' said the Queen. 'It's jam every *other* day: today isn't any *other* day, you know.' (Gasson 1978, p. 153)

The implied meaning is that good things never come.

- *look before you leap* - Aesop, 6th century BC – 'The fox and the goat'

This phraseme is the moral found in Aesop's fable 'The fox and the goat'. In the fable, a fox falls into a well and cannot escape. However, he persuades a passing goat, who is thirsty, to jump into the well and drink the water. He then stands on the goat's head to escape, but does not help the goat to escape in turn. The moral means that people should be careful before taking an action, especially one which is likely to cause trouble for them.

- *the milk of human kindness* - Shakespeare - *Macbeth*

Shakespeare uses this phraseme in Act 1, scene 5 of *Macbeth*, in which Lady Macbeth complains that Macbeth's nature is too full of 'the milk o' human kindness' to commit a cruel and violent act. This contrasts strongly with her later words in the same scene:

Shake my fell purpose, nor keep peace between

The effect and it! Come to my woman's breasts,

And take my milk for gall, you murdering ministers . . .

The milk of human kindness thus epitomises all that is good and caring in human nature.

- *a pound of flesh*

In Act 1, scene 2 of Shakespeare's *The merchant of Venice* (dated 1596-1598), the usurer Shylock says to his debtor Antonio,

> Go with me to a notary, seal me there
>
> Your single bond; and, in a merry sport,
>
> If you repay me not on such a day,
>
> In such a place, such sum or sums as are
>
> Express'd in the condition, let the forfeit
>
> Be nominated for an equal pound
>
> Of your fair flesh, to be cut off and taken
>
> In what part of your body pleaseth me.

Shylock subsequently demands this gruesome forfeit. The phraseme *a pound of flesh* has come to symbolise the fact that someone will try to take something from another person to the utmost limit and regardless of the suffering caused.

- *some are more equal than others*

The sentiments expressed in this phraseme come from George Orwell's allegorical novel *Animal farm*, first published in 1945. In the story, Major, the pig who instigates a rebellion, says that 'all animals are equal' (chapter 1). This becomes one of the animals' Seven Commandments once they have taken over the farm on which they live. However, it is subsequently replaced by the single commandment 'All animals are equal but some are more equal than others', indicating that there is now a hierarchy in spite of the professed desire for

equality. The phraseme is now used ironically to suggest that not everyone is treated equally.

3. Australian

P Peters (2007, pp. 248-249) mentions 'linguistic crafting', including alliteration and plays on words, and 'negative polarity', using negative phrases such as *no work at Bourke* or *wouldn't touch it with a forty foot pole*, as characteristic of Australian phrasemes. They are typically non-academic and informal (p. 251). She comments that many phrasemes originated orally, sometimes in the nineteenth century, and that they are indicative of Australian life. The adaptation of Australian phrasemes from their British equivalents 'provides sharp insights into the settlers' thinking: what they found the same but different about the new continent and the new society established on it' (P Peters 2007, p. 251).

Although the following phrasemes are all listed in the *Macquarie dictionary* (consulted online in 2010 and 2011), the origin is often uncertain or unknown. The *Australian national dictionary* was also consulted in its online edition on 18 March 2011 for the following definitions and citation information.

- *the back of Bourke*

The *Macquarie dictionary* says that *the back of Bourke* refers to any remote location, since the town of Bourke stands at the edge of outback Australia. The earliest date is given as the 1890s. The *Australian national dictionary* gives 1896 as the earliest citation:

Bulletin (Sydney) 15 Feb. 3/2 Where the mulga paddocks are wild and wide, That's where the pick of the stockmen ride, At the Back o' Bourke.

- *to be a box of birds*

The *Macquarie dictionary* defines this phraseme as meaning 'to be happy and in good health'. No origin is given, but it is possible that this expression might be from New Zealand, since anecdotally the phraseme appears to be unknown to all this author's Australian colleagues. The two examples of the phrase found in the *OED* are both from texts by New Zealand writers Frank Sargeson and Dan Davin, writing in 1943 and 1947 respectively. The phraseme does not appear in the *Australian national dictionary* and was unknown to all but one of the Australian participants in the investigation.

- *to be up a gum tree*

The earliest citation for this phraseme is 1829 in the *OED*, where the phraseme is listed as an American expression which appears to be part of a song title. The phrase appears in British writer Dorothy Sayers' 1926 book *Clouds of witness* with the modern meaning of 'in trouble'. By contrast, P Peters (2007, p. 239) mentions the Australian phraseme *like a possum up a gumtree* as indicating happiness with a situation. The *Australian national dictionary* gives a further meaning of 'in another place, another state of mind; 'treed', cornered; in a state of confusion; in a predicament'.

- *to come a gutser*

The *Macquarie dictionary* explains this phrase as 'to fall over' or 'to fail as a result of an error of judgement'. The *OED* gives it as an Australian or New Zealand expression. The *Australian national dictionary* adds the variation *to come a gutzer*, and gives the meaning as 'to fail as a result of miscalculation, to "come a cropper" '.

- *done like a dinner*

This phraseme does not appear in the *OED*, but is listed as colloquial in the *Macquarie*, which gives the meaning as 'completely defeated or outwitted'. *Australian national dictionary* gives an earliest citation of 1847.

- *don't come the raw prawn with me*

The *OED* lists this expression as an Australian colloquialism, with its earliest allusion in 1940 and the complete phraseme appearing in a 1942 text. This date is also given by the *Australian national dictionary*. The *Macquarie dictionary* gives the meaning as 'to try to put over a deception'.

- *to get a guernsey*

The origin of this phrase appears in the *Macquarie dictionary* as being based on the sleeveless football sweater, or 'guernsey', worn by players of Australian rules football. The literal meaning is 'to be selected for a football team', implying that one is successful if selected and then given a guernsey to wear as part of the team. The overall meaning is therefore one of success and praise. The *Australian national dictionary* defines it as 'to win selection, recognition, or approbation', with an earliest citation of 1918.

- *in the box seat*

The *Macquarie dictionary* gives the meaning of this phrase as 'to have reached a peak of success; be in the most favourable position'. No origin is given. The *OED* lists *box-seat* as a noun, referring to the box upon which a coach driver would have sat, but does not include the phrase *in the box seat*. It does not appear in the *Australian national dictionary*.

- *like a shag on a rock*

The *Macquarie dictionary* describes this as meaning 'alone; deserted; forlorn' and the *OED* complements this with 'isolated' and 'exposed', indicating that it is an Australian expression, with the earliest attestation in 1845. This date is also given by the *Australian national dictionary*, adding the word 'deprivation' to the definition. Anyone who has seen a cormorant or shag on a rock, its wings outstretched, will be able to visualise the loneliness of this image.

- *not to have a bar of something*

This phraseme is not listed in the *OED* and in the *Macquarie* is given the meaning 'not to tolerate'. The *Australian national dictionary* gives an earliest citation of 1933 but states that the origin is unknown.

- *up the mulga*

This is listed as a phrase in the *Macquarie dictionary*, which gives the variation *up (in) the mulga* and the meaning 'in the bush'. *Mulga* is a type of acacia tree or bush found in outback Australia. The word *mulga*, or *malga*, comes from different Aboriginal languages of New South Wales and South Australia. The phraseme does not appear in the *Australian national dictionary*.

4. British

The phrasemes in the section refer either to English placenames, the game of cricket, and an English plant. The *OED* has been used as a reference source in describing each of these expressions.

- *to carry/take coals to Newcastle*

This phraseme is frequently written with either *take* or *carry* as the collocating verb. It was first used in 1661 in Thomas Fuller's *The history of the worthies of England*: 'To carry Coals to Newcastle, that is to do what was done before; or to busy one's self in a needless imployment' (*OED*). It therefore denotes a superfluous action.

- *to grasp the nettle*

A nettle, or 'stinging nettle' as it is popularly known in the UK, is a plant whose leaves and stem bear small hairs which sting when touched. However, if someone grasps the nettle firmly they will crush the hairs and so will not get stung. *To grasp the nettle* is therefore to tackle a difficult task resolutely, not timidly.

- *it's not cricket*

Cricket is the quintessential English game, defined by the *OED* as 'an open-air game played with ball, bats, and wickets, by two sides of eleven players each; the batsman defends his wicket against the ball, which is bowled by a player of the opposing side, the other players of this side being stationed about the "field" in order to catch or stop the ball.' To play cricket is to play fairly (perhaps it is linked to that most elusive of English concepts, the 'gentleman'), and if something is 'not cricket' it is not morally fair and upright. The *OED* gives an earliest citation of 1851 by J Pycroft: 'We will not say that any thing that hardest of hitters…does is not cricket, but certainly it's anything but *play*'. The concept of gentlemanly behaviour in relation to cricket may be changing, however, given the examples of 'sledging' (or insults) included in Portnoi's book (2010) of cricket players' insults. One exchange Portnoi mentions is between cricketer Shane Warne, who tells opponent Daryll Cullinan 'I've been waiting two years for

another chance to humiliate you', to which Cullian retorts, 'Looks like you spent it eating'. Such exchanges are definitely 'not cricket'.

- *the man/woman on the Clapham omnibus*

According to the *OED*, this phrase was first used by Lord Bowen in 1903, in a negligence case, to represent an 'ordinary reasonable man'. The Clapham referred to by Lord Bowen was an ordinary middle class London district. The word 'omnibus' means 'a large public vehicle carrying passengers by road, running on a fixed route and typically requiring the payment of a fare' (*OED*). This word has now been shortened to *bus*, and nowadays we think of the vehicle as motorised rather than horse-drawn. The phraseme therefore refers to an ordinary person.

- *to send somebody to Coventry*

Coventry is an ancient city in Warwickshire, UK. To send someone to Coventry is to refuse to talk to or associate with that person. The *OED* gives no firm origins for the expression, but suggests it was first used by the first Earl of Clarendon in 1647, who used it literally to refer to a location to which prisoners had been sent. A 1765 citation seems to give the first recorded figurative use: 'Mr. John Barry having sent the Fox Hounds to a different place to what was ordered ... was sent to Coventry, but return'd upon giving six bottles of Claret to the Hunt' (*OED*). The phrase became a popular feature of stories set in private schools in the mid-twentieth century. For example, in Enid Blyton's *Last term at Malory Towers* (1995, p. 106) we find the following: 'We shall send you to Coventry,' said June. 'We shall not speak to you, any of us, or have anything to do with you for three whole weeks. See?' Having read numerous similar stories by many authors, all set in British boarding schools of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, I only recall

this phrase appearing in conversation by girls, and not boys. That in itself could provide an interesting sociolinguistic study.

- *somebody had a good innings*

An innings is the time in which a team is in a batting position in the game of cricket (*OED*). The *Macquarie dictionary* (*online*) defines *have had a good innings* as a colloquial expression originating in the eighteenth century, meaning 'to have had a long life or long and successful career'.

5. Older reference

Decimal currency was introduced to Australia in 1966 (P Peters 2007) and to the UK in 1971 (BBC 2008). Before that, the coinage used was pounds, shillings and pennies. The penny features in many older phrasemes, and several have been included in this survey, as they appear in the current MELDs.

Both Australia and the UK used to use imperial measurements, such as miles, yards, inches and pounds, but these are now complemented in the UK by metric measurements (kilometres, metres, centimetres and kilograms) and no longer taught as the standard measuring system in schools, and they were withdrawn from general legal use in Australia and replaced by metric measurements in 1988 (Commonwealth of Australia 2010).

Other 'older' words may refer to changes in the common meaning of a word, or changes in modes of transport (with petrol largely replacing steam in engines, for example).

- *a fine kettle of fish*

According to the OED, the word *kettle* dates back, through various spellings, to the eighth century, and refers to a pot used for cooking. Johnson, in 1755,

distinguished a kettle from a pot by saying that the kettle grew wider towards the top. Nowadays, *kettle* is used in both British and Australian English to mean a cooking implement with a lid and a spout, used to heat water. It is often electric.

The phrase *kettle of fish* has an earliest attestation of 1791in the *OED*, and is used to describe an outdoor picnic, where fish is cooked in a kettle (or pan) on an open fire. The addition of the adjective *fine*, or sometimes *pretty, nice* or *rare*, indicates ironically that the situation is confused or unpleasant. The first example given is in Henry Fielding's *Joseph Andrews* of 1742.

- *full steam ahead*

- *to get somewhere under your own steam*

- *to let off steam*

- *to pick up steam*

- *to run out of steam*

The *OED* does not give the origins of each *steam* expression individually, but connects them to figurative uses of the word *steam* as relating to steam engines. A search using an online-literature website did not reveal any instances of the following phrasemes in the writings of George Eliot, Thomas Hardy, Elizabeth Gaskell or Walter Scott, although *put a little more steam on,* meaning 'hurry up', is found in Charles Dickens' *The posthumous papers of the Pickwick Club* of 1837.

Full steam ahead means that someone is progressing energetically and making good progress.

The earliest example of *to get somewhere under your own steam* is found in Conrad (1912). It means to reach a place by one's own exertions.

To let off steam is given an earliest example (though not apparently a figurative one) of 1831, and a more figurative example in Blackwell's Magazine of 1863. It is defined as referring to a harmless release of energy or emotions. The *Macquarie dictionary* explains that this is what steam engines do to release pressure.

To pick up steam does not appear in either the *OED* or the *Macquarie dictionary*, but refers to an engine gaining strength and moving more quickly, so that this is extended metaphorically to mean that a person or project is progressing quickly.

To run out of steam is defined by the *OED* as 'to exhaust one's energy, ideas, etc.'. An earliest citation of 1961 is given.

- *give somebody an inch and they'll take a yard/mile*

The *OED* gives the precursor to this saying, *give somebody an inch and they'll take an ell*, with an earliest citation of 1546. The *ell* measurement is now obsolete, but an English ell was 45 inches long, according to the *OED*. The meaning is the same, in that if someone is conceded a small amount they will take a much larger amount.

- *have somebody's guts for garters*

This bloodthirsty expression has an earliest attestation of around 1592 in the *OED*. It means that someone will wear another person's innards to hold up their socks and is, one hopes, only used metaphorically.

- *inch by inch*

This phraseme is a simple measurement of degrees, but can be taken to mean that one progresses very slowly. The earliest attestation in the *OED* is by Congreve in 1700.

- *to look/be every inch*

If someone *looks every inch* like someone or something else, they entirely resemble the other person or thing. The earliest example is found around 1420, from Saint Etheldred, according to the *OED*.

- *not to budge/give/move an inch*

If something will not *budge/give/move an inch*, it will not move at all. The phraseme is not found in either the *OED* or the *Macquarie*, although it appears in *CALD, LDOCE, MEDAL* and *OALD*.

- *within an inch of something*

This phraseme, which means that something is very close to happening, is often collocated with the words *of one's life*, and in fact those words are part of the phrase in the *OED*, where the earliest citation is given as 1726.

- *the penny drops*

This phraseme appears in both the *OED* and the *Macquarie*, which both explain the allusion to a penny being used to operate machinery. Once the penny drops through the slot the machine will work. The first figurative allusion is dated to 1939 in the *OED*. Figuratively, the phraseme means that someone comes to understand something.

- *to spend a penny*

The origin of this phrase, which is a euphemism for 'to go to the toilet', is that it used to be common to put a penny in the slot of the door on a public convenience to gain entry, or to pay a penny to an attendant in order to gain access to the toilets. The earliest citation is given as 1945 in the *OED*. Inflation has meant that a more recent visit in 2009 to the public conveniences at King's Cross station in London necessitated a 20 pence coin, rather than the original penny.

- *two a penny*

If two items can be bought for a penny then they are very cheap and therefore of little value. The *OED* gives an earliest attestation of 1852, and also lists the alternative *ten a penny*, which has the same meaning.

Appendix 3

Phrasemes in the questionnaire according to category

Table 1a: Biblical phrasemes included in the questionnaire on phraseme usage in Australia and the UK, indicating dictionaries in which the phrasemes appeared

Number in question-naire	Phraseme	CALD	COBUILD	LDOCE	MEDAL	OALD
1	A wolf in sheep's clothing	✓	X	✓	✓	✓
2	An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth	✓	X	✓	✓	✓
3	As old as Methu-selah	✓	X	✓	X (Methu-selah – word but no phras-eme)	X (Methu-selah – word but no phras-eme)
4	To beat/turn swords into plough-shares	✓	✓	✓	X	✓
5	To hide your light under a bushel	✓	X	✓	✓	✓
6	To cast pearls before swine	✓	X	✓	✓	✓
15	To fall on stony ground	✓	X	✓	✓	✓
16	To rain fire and brimstone	✓	✓	X	X	X
17	To gird up one's loins	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
18	To give up the ghost	✓	X	✓	✓	✓
19	To have feet of clay	✓	X	✓	✓	✓

20	To hide/cover a multitude of sins	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
29	In the land of Nod	✓	X	✓	✓	✓
30	To kill the fatted calf	✓	X	✓	X	X
31	Like a lamb to the slaughter	✓	X	✓	✓	✓
32	To live off the fat of the land	✓	X	✓	✓	✓
33	Man cannot live by bread alone	✓	X	X	✓	X
34	Not to know someone from Adam	✓	X	✓	✓	✓
43	Out of the ark	✓	X	X	✓	✓
44	To quote something chapter and verse	✓	X	✓	✓	✓
45	To reap what you sow	✓	X	✓	✓	✓
46	To rob Peter to pay Paul	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
47	To separate the sheep from the goats	✓	X	✓	✓	✓
57	To separate the wheat from the chaff	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
58	The blind leading the blind	✓	X	✓	✓	✓
59	A land of milk and honey	✓	X	✓	✓	✓
60	The road to Damascus	✓	X	✓	✓	✓

61	The salt of the earth	✓	X	✓	✓	✓
71	The scales fall from someone's eyes	✓	X	✓	✓	X
72	The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak	✓	X	✓	✓	✓
73	To turn the other cheek	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
74	Sackcloth and ashes	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
75	Something went out with the ark	✓	X	X	✓	✓

Table 1b: Literary or historical reference phrasemes included in the questionnaire on phraseme usage in Australia and the UK, indicating dictionaries in which the phrasemes appeared

Number in question-naire	Phraseme	CALD	COBUILD	LDOCE	MEDAL	OALD
7	An albatross around someone's neck	X (alba-tross, but only in the example)	✓	✓	✓	X (alba-tross, but only in the example)
8	All that glitters is not gold	✓	X	X	X	✓
9	As mad as a March hare	✓	X	X (March hare, but no phras-eme)	X	✓
21	Birds of a feather flock together	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
22	Brave new world	X (brave new as an exam-ple)	✓	✓	✓	✓
23	To burn your boats	✓	X	✓	✓	✓

35	To cry wolf	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
36	The cupboard is bare	✓	X	X	✓	✓
37	Discretion is the better part of valour	✓	X	✓	✓	✓
48	A dog in the manger	✓	X	X	✓	✓
49	Fools rush in where angels fear to tread	X	X	✓	✓	✓
50	To gild the lily	✓	X	✓	✓	✓
51	Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned	X	X	X	✓	✓
62	An iron fist in a velvet glove	✓	X	X	X	✓
63	Jam tomorrow	✓	X	✓	✓	✓
64	Look before you leap	X	X	✓	✓	✓
76	The milk of human kindness	✓	X	✓	✓	✓
77	A pound of flesh	✓	X	✓	✓	✓
78	Some are more equal than others	X	X	X	✓	✓

Table 1c: Australian phrasemes included in the questionnaire on phraseme usage in Australia and the UK, indicating dictionaries in which the phrasemes appeared

Number in question-naire	Phraseme	CALD	COBUILD	LDOCE	MEDAL	OALD
10	The back of Bourke	X	X	X	✓	✓
24	To be a box of birds	X	X	X	✓	X
25	To be up a gum tree	X	X	✓	✓	✓
38	To come a gutser	X	X	X	X	✓
39	Done like a dinner	X	X	X	X	✓
52	Don't come the raw prawn with me	✓	X	X	X	X
53	To get a guernsey	X	X	X	✓	✓
65	In the box seat	X	X	X	X	✓
66	Like a shag on a rock	✓	X	X	X	X
79	Not to have a bar of something	X	X	X	X	✓
80	Up the mulga	(✓) (mulga, in the phrase 'up in the mulga')	X	X	X	X

Table 1d: UK phrasemes included in the questionnaire on phraseme usage in Australia and the UK, indicating dictionaries in which the phrasemes appeared

Number in question-naire	Phraseme	CALD	COBUILD	LDOCE	MEDAL	OALD
11	To carry/take coals to Newcastle	✓	X	✓	✓	✓
26	To grasp the nettle	✓	X	✓	✓	✓
40	It's not cricket	✓	X	X	✓	✓
54	The man/ woman on the Clapham omnibus	✓	X	✓	X	✓
67	To send somebody to Coventry	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
81	Somebody had a good innings	✓	X	✓	✓	✓

Table 1e: Older reference phrasemes included in the questionnaire on phraseme usage in Australia and the UK, indicating dictionaries in which the phrasemes appeared

Number in question-naire	Phraseme	CALD	COBUILD	LDOCE	MEDAL	OALD
12	A pretty/fine kettle of fish	✓	X	X	X	X
13	Full steam ahead	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
14	To have some-body's guts for garters	✓	X	✓	✓	✓
27	To get some-where under your own steam	✓	X	✓	✓	✓
28	Give somebody an inch and they'll take a yard/mile	✓	X	✓	✓	✓
41	Inch by inch	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
42	To let off steam	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
55	To look/be every inch sth	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
56	Two a penny	✓	✓	✓	X	✓
68	The penny drops	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
69	To pick up steam	✓	X	✓	✓	✓
70	Within an inch of something	✓	X	✓	✓	✓
82	To run out of steam	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
83	To spend a penny	✓	X	✓	✓	✓
84	Not to budge/ give/move an inch	✓	X	✓	✓	✓

Appendix 4   Phrasemes in order of familiarity

List of phrasemes in order of familiarity, from most familiar to least familiar in terms of all age groups in both locations and then for the 16-22 year olds in each location. Percentages for the ten phrasemes most familiar to the 16-22 year olds in each location are underlined in bold font.

Familiarity (from most to least familiar)	Phraseme (number in questionnaire)	Percentage average familiarity in Australia	Percentage average familiarity in the UK	Percentage average familiarity overall	Percentage average familiarity to 16-22 year olds in Australia	Percentage average familiarity to 16-22 year olds in the UK
1	To let off steam (42)	98	100	99	**<u>91</u>**	**<u>100</u>**
2	To cry wolf (35)	98	100	99	**<u>89</u>**	**<u>100</u>**
3	To turn the other cheek (73)	98	98	98	**<u>92</u>**	**<u>89</u>**
4	Full steam ahead (13)	97	98	97	**<u>85</u>**	**<u>88</u>**
5	To run out of steam (82)	94	100	97	71	**<u>100</u>**
6	In the land of Nod (29)	93	99	96	**<u>89</u>**	**<u>96</u>**
7	Give someone an inch and they'll take a yard/mile (28)	94	97	95	71	83
8	Not to move an inch (84)	94	96	95	81	81
9	To spend a penny (83)	90	100	95	57	**<u>100</u>**
10	Like a lamb to the slaughter (31)	90	98	94	68	**<u>88</u>**
11	Look before you leap (64)	96	91	94	81	81

Familiarity (from most to least familiar)	Phraseme (number in questionnaire)	Percentage average familiarity in Australia	Percentage average familiarity in the UK	Percentage average familiarity overall	Percentage average familiarity to 16-22 year olds in Australia	Percentage average familiarity to 16-22 year olds in the UK
12	An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth (2)	91	96	94	**100**	83
13	Birds of a feather flock together (21)	92	95	94	70	77
14	(It is like) the blind leading the blind (58)	96	90	93	**84**	58
15	A pound of flesh (77)	94	90	92	70	52
16	Someone had a good innings (81)	90	94	92	55	68
17	Inch by inch (41)	89	95	92	**88**	**90**
18	Within an inch (of something) (70)	88	94	92	77	68
19	To reap what you sow (45)	90	92	91	**90**	61
20	Guts for garters (14)	84	97	91	42	**87**
21	The cupboard is/was bare (36)	89	91	90	61	74
22	The penny drops (68)	96	81	89	81	81
23	The salt of the earth (61)	89	88	89	59	39
24	A wolf in sheep's clothing (1)	87	90	89	55	61
25	All that glitters is not gold (8)	89	88	89	53	61
26	Brave new world (22)	87	88	87	46	52
27	A land of milk and honey (59)	86	87	87	66	37
28	Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned (51)	85	88	87	67	41
29	Man cannot live by bread alone (33)	87	85	86	59	50

Familiarity (from most to least familiar)	Phraseme (number in questionnaire)	Percentage average familiarity in Australia	Percentage average familiarity in the UK	Percentage average familiarity overall	Percentage average familiarity to 16-22 year olds in Australia	Percentage average familiarity to 16-22 year olds in the UK
30	To pick up steam (69)	84	87	86	61	55
31	To get somewhere under one's own steam (27)	85	86	85	35	44
32	The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak (72)	85	84	84	40	21
33	To give up the ghost (18)	86	80	83	38	11
34	It's not cricket (40)	84	81	83	36	24
35	To rob Peter to pay Paul (46)	81	83	82	29	15
36	To live off the fat of the land (32)	83	80	82	26	42
37	To separate the wheat from the chaff (57)	80	84	82	41	18
38	As mad as a March hare (9)	79	83	81	32	45
39	Not to know someone from Adam (34)	70	90	80	23	57
40	Fools rush in where angels fear to tread (49)	73	85	79	41	24
41	Two a penny (56)	67	91	79	33	60
42	To hide a multitude of sins (20)	67	89	78	24	44
43	The road to Damascus (60)	75	78	76	16	9
44	To quote something chapter and verse (44)	66	86	76	13	28
45	Here's a fine/pretty kettle of fish (12)	76	76	76	52	58
46	To send someone to Coventry (67)	65	86	76	10	29
47	The milk of human kindness (76)	64	84	74	17	19

Familiarity (from most to least familiar)	Phraseme (number in questionnaire)	Percentage average familiarity in Australia	Percentage average familiarity in the UK	Percentage average familiarity overall	Percentage average familiarity to 16-22 year olds in Australia	Percentage average familiarity to 16-22 year olds in the UK
48	To hide your light under a bushel (5)	73	71	72	32	23
49	All animals are equal (78)	60	83	71	43	31
50	Discretion is the better part of valour (37)	66	75	70	15	9
51	To kill the fatted calf (30)	71	68	70	32	12
52	Something went out with the ark (75)	60	79	70	13	14
53	To rain fire and brimstone (16)	78	58	68	40	31
54	To gild the lily (50)	62	72	67	12	6
55	A dog in the manger (48)	56	78	67	4	6
56	Out of the ark (43)	62	70	66	25	18
57	To gird up one's loins (17)	66	66	66	20	8
58	To have feet of clay (19)	66	66	66	15	14
59	To fall on stony ground (15)	58	73	66	45	33
60	(To repent in) sackcloth and ashes (74)	49	80	64	20	0
61	As old as Methuselah (3)	72	56	64	20	18
62	To separate the sheep from the goats (47)	69	60	64	38	38
63	To grasp the nettle (26)	58	69	64	3	30
64	To carry/take coals to Newcastle (11)	60	63	62	5	13
65	To be up a gum tree (25)	59	64	62	19	20

Familiarity (from most to least familiar)	Phraseme (number in questionnaire)	Percentage average familiarity in Australia	Percentage average familiarity in the UK	Percentage average familiarity overall	Percentage average familiarity to 16-22 year olds in Australia	Percentage average familiarity to 16-22 year olds in the UK
66	An iron fist in a velvet glove (62)	62	60	61	22	21
67	To be/look every inch (55)	64	55	60	42	24
68	To cast pearls before swine (6)	60	56	58	24	21
69	To burn one's boats (23)	51	66	58	18	17
70	The scales fall from someone's eyes (71)	53	60	57	15	3
71	Don't come the raw prawn with me (52)	69	40	54	8	16
72	An albatross round the neck (7)	50	57	54	**_83_**	14
73	To beat swords into ploughshares (4)	60	43	52	12	7
74	Not to have a bar of something (79)	91	9	50	55	12
75	In the box seat (65)	75	18	46	29	10
76	Done like a dinner (39)	77	14	46	30	22
77	Jam tomorrow (63)	20	66	43	9	6
78	Like a shag on a rock (66)	74	6	40	23	0
79	Back of Bourke (10)	69	3	36	3	1
80	To get a Guernsey (53)	70	0	35	17	0
81	The man/woman on the Clapham omnibus (54)	14	46	30	4	10
82	To come a gutser (38)	57	2	30	3	0
83	Up the mulga (80)	14	0	7	5	0
84	To be a box of birds (24)	1	0	1	3	0

Appendix 5   Frequency of use

Frequency of use of each phraseme in the survey as a percentage, ranked in descending order, from most frequently used on average to least frequently used. The figures are based on the frequency with which participants said they would use a phraseme 'sometimes', since this was generally the highest usage rate given to most phrasemes in the investigation. The ten phrasemes which are used most frequently by the Australian and UK 16-22 year olds, respectively, have been underlined in bold font.

Frequency of use, from most to least frequent	Phraseme (number in questionnaire)	Category	Percentage use for all partici-pants (Australia)	Percentage use for all partici-pants (UK)	Average percentage use all partici-pants (both locations)	Percentage use for 16-22 year olds (Australia)	Percentage use for 16-22 year olds (UK)
1	The penny drops (68)	Older	55	56	56	**34**	**32**
2	To let off steam (42)	Older	46	63	55	**33**	30
3	(It is like) the blind leading the blind (58)	Biblical	51	52	52	**28**	26
4	To run out of steam (82)	Older	51	44	48	**29**	**46**
5	To turn the other cheek (73)	Biblical	40	49	45	12	**37**
6	Give someone an inch and they'll take a yard/mile (28)	Older	43	43	43	18	**37**
7	To cry wolf (35)	Literary	46	40	43	**35**	**32**
8	To reap what you sow (45)	Biblical	34	49	42	**37**	30
9	A wolf in sheep's clothing (1)	Biblical	41	42	41	14	17
10	Not to move an inch (84)	Older	37	44	41	**29**	29

Frequency of use, from most to least frequent	Phraseme (number in questionnaire)	Category	Percentage use for all participants (Australia)	Percentage use for all participants (UK)	Average percentage use all participants (both locations)	Percentage use for 16-22 year olds (Australia)	Percentage use for 16-22 year olds (UK)
11	An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth (2)	Biblical	37	40	39	**<u>41</u>**	**<u>35</u>**
12	Within an inch (of something) (70)	Older	28	48	38	23	**<u>32</u>**
13	Someone had a good innings (81)	UK	30	46	38	5	23
14	Look before you leap (64)	Literary	40	34	37	**<u>34</u>**	**<u>39</u>**
15	Like a lamb to the slaughter (31)	Biblical	38	35	37	14	19
16	All that glitters is not gold (8)	Literary	34	36	35	20	16
17	Full steam ahead (13)	Older	30	40	35	**<u>38</u>**	**<u>42</u>**
18	To give up the ghost (18)	Biblical	38	31	35	8	9
19	Birds of a feather flock together (21)	Literary	41	28	35	24	26
20	The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak (72)	Biblical	38	31	35	17	4
21	To rob Peter to pay Paul (46)	Biblical	30	37	34	15	6
22	Inch by inch (41)	Older	30	33	32	24	24
23	Fools rush in where angels fear to tread (49)	Literary	24	38	31	12	3
24	A pound of flesh (77)	Literary	32	30	31	9	4
25	To get somewhere one's own steam (27)	Older	33	28	31	14	8
26	In the land of Nod (29)	Biblical	18	40	29	18	**<u>37</u>**
27	To hide a multitude of sins (20)	Biblical	24	33	29	0	2
28	To spend a penny (83)	Older	17	39	28	14	12
29	Guts for garters (14)	Older	18	37	28	11	23

Frequency of use, from most to least frequent	Phraseme (number in questionnaire)	Category	Percentage use for all partici-pants (Australia)	Percentage use for all partici-pants (UK)	Average percentage use all partici-pants (both locations)	Percentage use for 16-22 year olds (Australia)	Percentage use for 16-22 year olds (UK)
30	The salt of the earth (61)	Biblical	28	27	28	10	7
31	Discretion is the better part of valour (37)	Literary	33	21	27	3	0
32	Out of the ark (43)	Biblical	21	33	27	3	6
33	To separate the wheat from the chaff (57)	Biblical	23	31	27	6	3
34	Two a penny (56)	Older	10	43	27	4	21
35	All animals are equal (78)	Literary	13	40	27	5	12
36	Not to know someone from Adam (34)	Biblical	22	30	26	6	14
37	To separate the sheep from the goats (47)	Biblical	23	29	26	8	3
38	The cupboard is/was bare (36)	Literary	32	17	25	21	17
39	It's not cricket (40)	UK	26	20	23	3	10
40	To carry/take coals to Newcastle (11)	UK	21	24	23	10	4
41	A land of milk and honey (59)	Biblical	22	22	22	25	6
42	Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned (51)	Literary	15	28	22	21	10
43	To quote something chapter and verse (44)	Biblical	18	24	21	3	0
44	To pick up steam (69)	Older	18	24	21	13	13
45	Not to have a bar of something (79)	Australian	42	0	21	14	0
46	Something went out with the ark (75)	Biblical	19	21	20	8	0
47	As mad as a March hare (9)	Literary	17	22	20	6	9
48	To burn one's boats (23)	Literary	17	22	20	3	0

Frequency of use, from most to least frequent	Phraseme (number in questionnaire)	Category	Percentage use for all partici-pants (Australia)	Percentage use for all partici-pants (UK)	Average percentage use all partici-pants (both locations)	Percentage use for 16-22 year olds (Australia)	Percentage use for 16-22 year olds (UK)
49	Brave new world (22)	Literary	23	15	19	3	7
50	To hide your light under a bushel (5)	Biblical	15	22	19	1	8
51	Jam tomorrow (63)	Literary	1	36	19	0	7
52	To send someone to Coventry (67)	UK	12	23	18	3	7
53	To cast pearls before swine (6)	Biblical	19	15	17	6	3
54	Man cannot live by bread alone (33)	Biblical	23	11	17	12	4
55	To gild the lily (50)	Literary	15	18	17	4	26
56	To have feet of clay (19)	Biblical	16	15	16	3	0
57	To be up a gum tree (25)	Australian	14	16	15	6	3
58	Back of Bourke (10)	Australian	26	3	15	1	1
59	To gird up one's loins (17)	Biblical	16	12	14	3	2
60	Done like a dinner (39)	Australian	26	2	14	3	4
61	An iron fist in a velvet glove (62)	Literary	18	10	14	13	7
62	Here's a fine/pretty kettle of fish (12)	Older	10	16	13	3	13
63	To fall on stony ground (15)	Biblical	11	15	13	0	7
64	In the box seat (65)	Australian	18	8	13	10	7
65	To kill the fatted calf (30)	Biblical	12	13	13	0	0
66	The milk of human kindness (76)	Literary	10	15	13	0	0
67	To grasp the nettle (26)	UK	8	16	12	3	8

Frequency of use, from most to least frequent	Phraseme (number in questionnaire)	Category	Percentage use for all participants (Australia)	Percentage use for all participants (UK)	Average percentage use all participants (both locations)	Percentage use for 16-22 year olds (Australia)	Percentage use for 16-22 year olds (UK)
68	As old as Methuselah (3)	Biblical	16	8	12	4	2
69	To live off the fat of the land (32)	Biblical	16	7	12	3	0
70	A dog in the manger (48)	Literary	9	14	12	0	0
71	The scales fall from someone's eyes (71)	Biblical	8	14	11	4	0
72	An albatross round the neck (7)	Literary	10	11	11	14	3
73	The road to Damascus (60)	Biblical	11	9	10	0	0
74	To be/look every inch (55)	Older	6	13	10	9	3
75	Like a shag on a rock (66)	Australian	18	1	10	3	3
76	(To repent in) sackcloth and ashes (74)	Biblical	7	9	8	0	0
77	To get a guernsey (53)	Australian	15	0	8	4	0
78	Don't come the raw prawn with me (52)	Australian	11	2	7	0	3
79	The man/woman on the Clapham omnibus (54)	UK	2	10	6	0	7
80	To come a gutser (38)	Australian	10	0	5	0	0
81	To beat swords into ploughshares (4)	Biblical	6	4	5	5	1
82	To rain fire and brimstone (16)	Biblical	6	1	4	3	2
83	Up the mulga (80)	Australian	4	0	2	0	0
84	To be a box of birds (24)	Australian	1	1	1	3	3

Appendix 6   Headwords and labels in the Big 5

Headwords under which the 84 phrasemes in the questionnaire are listed or cross-referenced in the Big 5, together with labels assigned by the Big 5. (Not all the phrasemes in the study are assigned a label.) The symbol X indicates that a phraseme is not included in a particular dictionary. Labels in underlined bold font indicate that the findings of the questionnaire support the dictionary label.

Number in questionnaire	Phraseme	CALD	COBUILD	LDOCE	MEDAL	OALD
1	A wolf in sheep's clothing	wolf, clothing	X	wolf, sheep	wolf, sheep, clothing	wolf
2	An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth	eye, tooth	X	(eye)	eye, tooth	eye
3	As old as Methuselah	Methuselah *(humorous)*	X	Methuselah	X (Methuselah – word but no phraseme)	X (Methuselah - word but no phraseme)
4	To beat/turn swords into ploughshares	sword *(literary)*	plough-share *(journalism)*	sword/ plough-share	X	sword *(literary)*
5	To hide your light under a bushel	hide, light, bushel	X	hide, light, bushel	hide, light, bushel	hide *(Br E)*
6	To cast pearls before swine	cast, swine	X	cast, pearl (alternative 'throw') *(formal)*	cast, pearl, swine	pearl (alternative 'throw')
7	An albatross around someone's neck	X (albatross, but only in the example)	X (albatross, but only in the example)	albatross	albatross	X (albatross, but only in the example)
8	All that glitters is not gold	gold	X	X	X	gold (alternative 'glisten')

Number in questionnaire	Phraseme	CALD	COBUILD	LDOCE	MEDAL	OALD
9	As mad as a March hare	mad, hare	X	X (March hare, but no phraseme)	X	mad *(informal)*
10	The back of Bourke	X	X	X	back, Bourke (***Aus*** *informal*)	Bourke (***Aus***)
11	To carry/take coals to Newcastle	Newcastle (carry/take)	X	coal (carry/take) *(Br E)*	coal (carry/take) *(Br E)*	coal (carry/take) *(Br E)*
12	A pretty/fine kettle of fish	kettle, fish *(old-fashioned)*	X (a different kettle of fish)	X (a different kettle of fish)	X (a different kettle of fish)	X (a different kettle of fish)
13	Full steam ahead	full, steam, ahead	steam	full, steam	steam	steam
14	To have somebody's guts for garters	guts, garters *(UK, informal)*	X	gut *(Br E, informal)*	guts, garters *(Br E, old-fashioned)*	gut, garters *(Br E, informal)*
15	To fall on stony ground	fall, stony, ground	X	fall, stony	stony	stony
16	To rain fire and brimstone	brimstone	brimstone *(literary)*	X	X	X
17	To gird up one's loins	gird *(literary or humorous)*	gird, loin *(literary, **old-fashioned**)*	gird, loin *(humorous)*	gird *(often humorous)*	gird *(literary or humorous)*
18	To give up the ghost	give, ghost	X	give, ghost	ghost *(humorous)*	ghost
19	To have feet of clay	feet, clay	X	foot, feet, clay	foot, feet, clay *(mainly literary)*	foot
20	To hide/cover a multitude of sins	multitude *(humorous)*	multitude, sin	multitude *(humorous)*	cover, hide, multitude *(humorous)*	multitude *(often humorous)*
21	Birds of a feather flock together	birds, feather, flock, together	bird	bird, feather *(informal)*	birds, feather, flock, together	bird, feather
22	Brave new world	X (brave new, with 'world' in the example)	brave, world	brave, new, world	brave, new, world	brave

Number in questionnaire	Phraseme	CALD	COBUILD	LDOCE	MEDAL	OALD
23	To burn your boats	burn	X	burn, boat *(informal)*	burn	burn *(Br E)*
24	To be a box of birds	X	X	X	box *(Aus)*	X
25	To be up a gum tree	X	X	gum tree *(Br E, informal)*	gum, tree *(Br E, informal)*	gum tree *(Br E, informal)*
26	To grasp the nettle	grasp, nettle *(UK)*	X	grasp, nettle *(Br E)*	grasp, nettle *(Br E)*	grasp *(Br E)*
27	To get somewhere under your own steam	under, own, steam	X	steam	under, own, steam	steam *(informal)*
28	Give somebody an inch and they'll take a yard/mile	give, inch, mile	X	inch	give, inch, mile, yard	inch
29	In the land of Nod	land, nod *(old-fashioned, informal)*	X	land, nod *(old-fashioned)*	land, Nod *(humorous)*	land *(old-fashioned, humorous)*
30	To kill the fatted calf	kill, fatted, calf	X	kill, fatted, calf	X	X
31	Like a lamb to the slaughter	like, lamb, slaughter	X	lamb	lamb, slaughter	lamb
32	To live off the fat of the land	live, fat, land	X	fat	live	live
33	Man cannot live by bread alone	man, bread, alone	X	X	man, bread, alone	X
34	Not to know someone from Adam	know, Adam *(informal)*	X	Adam *(informal)*	know, Adam *(informal)*	know, Adam *(informal)*
35	Cry wolf	cry, wolf *(disapproving)*	wolf	cry, wolf	wolf	cry
36	The cupboard is bare	cupboard, bare	X	X	cupboard, bare *(Br E)*	cupboard *(Br E)*

Number in questionnaire	Phraseme	CALD	COBUILD	LDOCE	MEDAL	OALD
37	Discretion is the better part of valour	discretion, better, part, valour	X	discretion	discretion, better, part, valour	discretion
38	To come a gutser	X	X	X	X	gutser (***Aus***)
39	Done like a dinner	X	X	X	X	dinner (***Aus***)
40	It's not cricket	not, cricket (*old-fashioned or humorous*)	X	X	not, cricket (*informal, old-fashioned*)	cricket (*old-fashioned, Br E, informal*)
41	Inch by inch	inch	inch (*emphasis*)	inch	inch	inch
42	To let off steam	let, steam	let, steam (*informal*)	let, steam	let, steam	steam
43	Out of the ark	ark (*UK*)	X	X	Ark (*Br E, informal*)	ark (*Br E, informal*)
44	To quote something chapter and verse	chapter, verse	X	chapter	chapter, verse	chapter
45	To reap what you sow	reap, sow	X	reap	reap, sow	reap, sow
46	To rob Peter to pay Paul	rob, Peter, Paul	Peter (*disapproval*)	rob, Peter	rob, Peter, Paul	rob, Paul
47	To separate the sheep from the goats	separate, sheep, goats (*UK*)	X	separate, sheep (*Br E*)	separate, sheep, goats	sheep, goats
48	A dog in the manger	dog, manger	X	X	dog, manger (*Br E*)	dog
49	Fools rush in where angels fear to tread	X	X	fool	fool, rush, fear, tread (*spoken*)	fool
50	To gild the lily	gild, lily (*disapproving*)	X	gild, lily	gild, lily	gild, lily

Number in questionnaire	Phraseme	CALD	COBUILD	LDOCE	MEDAL	OALD
51	Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned	X	X	X	hell, hath, fury, woman, scorned	hell *(Br E)*
52	Don't come the raw prawn with me	raw, prawn *(**Aus**)*	X	X	X	X
53	To get a guernsey	X	X	X	guernsey *(**Aus**)*	guernsey *(**Aus**)*
54	The man/woman on the Clapham omnibus	man, woman, Clapham, omnibus *(**UK, old-fashioned**)*	X	man *(**Br E, old-fashioned**)*	X	Clapham *(**Br E**)*
55	To look/be every inch sth	every, inch	inch *(emphasis)*	every, inch	every, inch	inch *(figurative)*
56	Two a penny	two, penny *(UK)*	two, penny *(Br E, informal)*	two, penny *(Br E, used to show disapproval)*	X	penny *(Br E)*
57	To separate the wheat from the chaff	separate, wheat, chaff	wheat, chaff	separate, wheat, chaff	separate, wheat, chaff	wheat
58	The blind leading the blind	blind, leading	X	blind	blind	blind
59	A land of milk and honey	land, milk, honey	X	land, milk	land, milk, honey	land
60	The road to Damascus	road, Damascus	X	Damascus	Damascus	Damascus
61	The salt of the earth	salt, Earth	X	salt, earth	salt	salt
62	An iron fist in a velvet glove	iron, velvet, glove	X	X	X	iron
63	Jam tomorrow	jam, tomorrow	X	jam *(**Br E**, informal)*	jam, tomorrow *(**Br E**)*	jam *(**Br E**, informal)*
64	Look before you leap	X	X	look, leap	leap	leap

Number in questionnaire	Phraseme	CALD	COBUILD	LDOCE	MEDAL	OALD
65	In the box seat	X	X	X	X	box seat *(Aus informal)*
66	Like a shag on a rock	like, shag, rock *(**Aus** slang)*	X	X	X	X
67	To send somebody to Coventry	send, Coventry *(**UK**, old-fashioned)*	send, Coventry *(**Br E**)*	Coventry *(**Br E**)*	send, Coventry	Coventry *(**Br E**)*
68	The penny drops	penny *(UK informal)*	penny *(mainly Br E, informal)*	penny *(Br E, informal)*	penny *(Br E, informal)*	penny *(esp. Br E, informal)*
69	To pick up steam	pick, steam	X	pick, steam	pick, steam	steam *(informal)*
70	Within an inch of something	within, inch	X	inch	within, inch	inch
71	The scales fall from someone's eyes	scales, fall, eyes *(literary)*	X	scale *(literary)*	scale *(mainly literary)*	X
72	The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak	spirit, willing, flesh, weak *(humorous)*	X	spirit, flesh *(often used humorously)*	spirit, willing, flesh, weak *(mainly spoken)*	spirit *(humorous)*
73	To turn the other cheek	turn, other, cheek	cheek	turn, cheek	turn, other, cheek	cheek
74	(To repent in) sackcloth and ashes	(wear) sackcloth, ashes	sackcloth	(wear) sackcloth *(Br E)*	(wear) sackcloth, ashes	(wear) sackcloth
75	Went out with the ark	out, ark	X	X	ark *(Br E, informal)*	ark *(Br E, informal)*
76	The milk of human kindness	milk, human, kindness	X	milk *(literary)*	milk, human, kindness *(mainly literary)*	milk, kindness *(literary)*

Number in questionnaire	Phraseme	CALD	COBUILD	LDOCE	MEDAL	OALD
77	A pound of flesh	pound, flesh (*disapproving*)	X	pound, flesh	pound, flesh	pound
78	(All animals are equal, but) some are more equal than others	X	X	X	equal	Animal Farm (which is listed under 'equal')
79	Not have a bar of something	X	X	X	X	bar (***Aus E***, *NZ E*)
80	Up the mulga	(mulga, in the example phrase 'up in the mulga') (***Aus***)	X	X	X	X
81	Somebody had a good innings	have, good, innings (*UK, informal*)	X	innings (*Br E, informal*)	have, innings (*Br E, informal, old-fashioned*)	innings (*Br E, informal*)
82	To run out of steam	run, steam	run, steam (*informal*)	run, steam	run, steam	steam (*informal*)
83	To spend a penny	spend, penny (*UK, old-fashioned, polite*)	X	spend, penny (*Br E, spoken, old-fashioned*)	spend, penny (*Br E, informal, old-fashioned*)	spend (*Br E, old-fashioned*)
84	Not to budge/give/move an inch	budge, give, inch	X	inch (and in an example at 'budge')	budge, give, inch	inch (and in an example at 'budge')

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