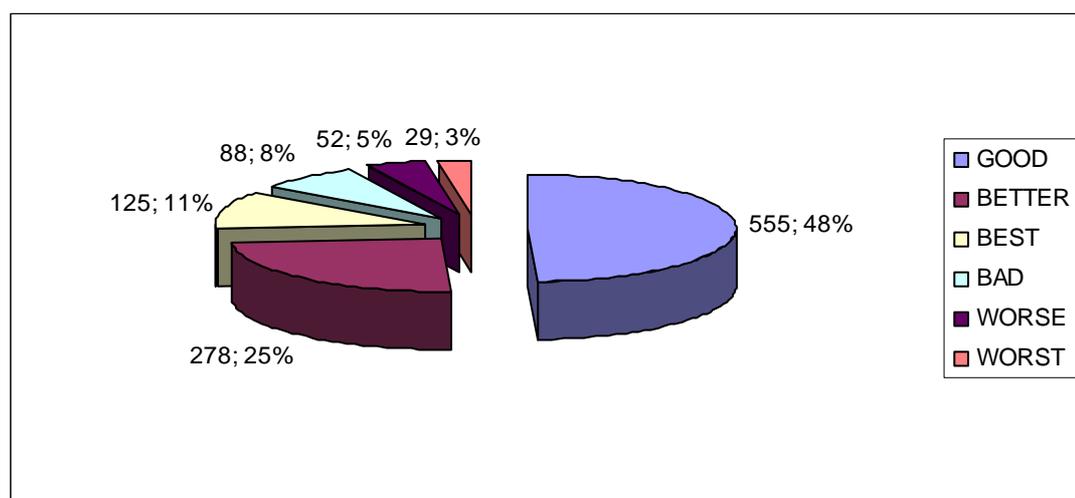


## QUALITATIVE AND STRUCTURAL CHARACTERISTIC OF ENGLISH PROVERBS WITH COMPONENTS GOOD AND BAD

The base of the given research is 947 proverbs with components “good”, “bad” and their degrees of comparison “better”, “best”, “worse”, “worst” taken from “The Wordsworth Dictionary of Proverbs” by G.L.Apperson.

The selection comprises 1127 elements, the correlation of which is shown in the following pie chart.



As can be seen, the biggest part is presented by the component *good* (555 units, which is 48% of the whole). Then go its comparative degrees *better* and *best* (278 and 125 units accordingly). Similar situation is observed with the component *bad* and its degrees of comparison, the difference consists just in absolute quantity of the elements (88, 52 and 29 examples for *bad*, *worse* and *worst* accordingly).

In general, there are much more elements with positive connotation: 958 positive elements vs. 169 negative ones.

Now, let’s consider the correlation between the proverbs with the components we are interested in. The data are given in the table.

COMPONENT	NUMBER OF PROVERBS WITH THIS COMPONENT
GOOD	498
BETTER	276
BEST	118
BAD	84

WORSE	52
WORST	29

Presentation of this information in the form of a pie chart seems to be illogical, as there exist proverbs including different components simultaneously (e.g. *a **bad** custom is like a **good** cake, **better** broken than kept*). We see that the components in the table are situated in the same order as the number of proverbs, comprising these components, abates. Such a gradation coincides with their degree-of-comparison distribution from *good* to *best* and then from *bad* to *worst*.

Of special interest are the proverbs in which one and the same component is reiterated (e.g. *though **good** be **good**, yet **better** is **better***) and the proverbs including more than one component (e.g. *it is **bad** to do evil, but **worse** to boast of it*). Let's have a closer look at both the groups.

#### A) Reiteration of one component.

The data are presented in the table below.

	REITERATION		
	NO	ONCE	TWICE
<b>GOOD</b>	443	53	2
<b>BETTER</b>	274	2	-
<b>BEST</b>	111	7	-
<b>BAD</b>	80	4	-
<b>WORSE</b>	52	-	-
<b>WORST</b>	29	-	-

What is natural, in the majority of the proverbs there is no reiteration of one and the same component. For instance, 443 of 498 proverbs, including *good* don't contain reiteration. It makes considering the proverbs with repetition more valuable. As we see, most often there are two reiterated components within a proverb. Among the proverbs with *good* the phenomenon is represented by 53 examples: *better a **good** keeper than a **good** winner; he's born in a **good** hour who gets a **good** name; none so **good** that's **good** to all*; etc. Double reiteration of other components can be met much rarer: 2 proverbs with *better* (*if **better** were within, **better** would come out; though **good** be **good**, yet **better** is **better***); 7 – with *best* (*the **best** bred have the **best** portion; the **best** is **best** cheap; the **best** is **best** to speak to; the **best** of men are but men at the **best**; clowns are **best** in their own company, but gentlemen are **best** everywhere; the suit is **best** that **best** suits me; women want the **best** first, and the **best** always*); 4 – with *bad* (*there's*

but **bad** choice where the whole stock is **bad**; **bad** is a **bad** servant, but worse being without him; a **bad** Jack may have as **bad** a Jill; **bad** words find **bad** acceptance). The components *worse* and *worst* are not found within one proverb more than once. Triple repetition is to be found just in 2 proverbs with *good*: *all women are good*, viz. either *good* for something, or *good* for nothing; *good* wife and *good* name hath no mate in goods nor fame.

#### **B) Presentation of more than one component within a proverb.**

In this case we consider the same elements which are reiterated as one element. The information is presented in the table.

	Quantity of proverbs
<b>1 component</b>	846
<b>2 components</b>	93
<b>3 components</b>	7
<b>4 components</b>	1

As can be seen, most proverbs (846) include only one component, e.g. *a bad broom leaves a dirty room*; *a bad thing never dies*; etc. In 93 proverbs there are 2 components: *it is bad to do evil, but worse to boast of it*; *good luck in cards, bad luck in marriage*; etc. Seven proverbs contain 3 components: *a bad custom is like a good cake*, *better broken than kept* and some others. At last, there exists one proverb comprising 4 components simultaneously: *praise makes good men better and bad men worse*.

What about the number of lexemes constituting the proverbs in question, it may vary from 3 (*good finds good, good wits jump, quietness is best*) to 29 (he that lets his horse drink at every lake and his wife go to every wake, shall never have a good horse, nor a good wife which is worse). But most often one can find proverbs, the number of words in which doesn't exceed 10 (*a good sailor may mistake in a dark night, man's best candle is his understanding, it is good to marry late or never*).

Now, let's consider the structural aspect of the proverbs with *good* and *bad*. Without knowing the structure of a PU it is impossible to study its semantics. It should be noted that the importance of researching structural peculiarities has been repeatedly emphasized in linguists' works.

From the point of view of syntax, a proverb is always a sentence. This is where its communicative essence lies, that is, ability to be an element of communication, of contacts, presupposing mutual exchange of utterances. It has a definite didactic aim, consisting in teaching, warning, etc. Unlike PU of other classes, proverbs often have a form of composite sentences. In context a proverb can be an independent sentence or a part of a composite one.

Proverbs can be presented by declarative, imperative and interrogative sentences. There are no exclamatory sentences among proverbs.

The material that we have analyzed allows to single out the following types of syntactic structures of proverbs as communicative PUs.

### **1. Declarative sentences.**

(a) Simple affirmative sentences. They include only one subject-predicate unit. Such sentences assert something about events, objects, people, their characteristics and interconnections. The proverbs, presented by simple affirmative sentences, constitute the majority of the phraseological material we work with.

In most cases the subject is a noun, with an attribute or without it: *Good words and ill deeds deceive wise men and fools; Bad luck often brings good luck; Truth hath a good face but bad clothes; Discretion is the better part of valour; The best remedy against an ill man, is much ground between; Bad words make a woman worse; A bad broom leaves a dirty room; A bad day has a good night; A bad excuse is better than none; Bad judges may soon mislead; Bad is the best; Bad money drives out good; Bad news travels fast; A bad padlock invites a picklock; A bad ploughman beats the boy; Bad priests bring the devil into the church; Bad wintering will tame both man and beast; Bad words find bad acceptance; A bad bush is better than no shelter; Attack is the best form of defence; In the deepest water is the best fishing; Men are best love furthest off; Sometimes the best gain is to lose; The best bred have the best portion; The best clothes may have a moth in it; The best fish swim near the bottom; The best ground is the dirtiest; The best horse needs breaking; The best is enemy of the good; The best mirror is an old friend; The best of friends must part; The best of the sport is to do the deed and say nothing; The best part is still behind; The best things are worst to come by; The best things in life are free; The best things may be abused; You are always best when asleep; The best cart may overthrow; All good things come to an end; Anger and haste hinder good counsel; An April cling is good for nothing; A broken latch lasts longer than a good one; A good cock may come out of a bad bag; Advantage is a better soldier than rashness; An apple may happen to be better given than eaten; A bare foot is better than none; A barley-corn is better than a diamond to a cock; A bean in liberty is better than a comfit in prison; A clout is better than a hole out; A civil denial is better than a rude grant; etc.*

In some cases the subject is expressed by the pronoun or the numeral: *Everything is good in its season; One good deed atones for a thousand bad ones.*

(b) Simple negative sentences. They are structurally similar to simple affirmative sentences but bear the opposite meaning. It should be remembered that not all ways of negation are exploited in English proverbs. For instance, there are no negative questions, the particle *not* isn't used in its contracted form (*doesn't, shan't, etc.*) The selection of proverbs in question is marked with predominant lexical but not grammatical way of expressing negation, that is, the

particle *not* is often replaced by lexical unit, implying negation implicitly. One of the most frequently used items of such a kind is the adverb *never*.

The subject of the proverbs which are simple negative sentences can be expressed by the pronoun or the noun with an attribute or without it: *One never loses by doing a good turn; A bad shearer never had a good sickle; A bad thing never dies; The bad worker never yet had a good tool; Busy-bodies never want a bad day; A good archer is not known by his arrows, but his aim; Bare words are no good bargain; A bittern makes no good hawk; A muzzled cat was never good mouser; Good counsel does no harm; Good counsel never comes amiss.*

(c) Complex sentences. Such sentences contain two or more subject-predicate units. The relation between the elements of a complex sentence is characterized by asymmetry, that is, inequality of the main and subordinate clauses from grammatical point of view. Proverbs with the structure of a complex sentence are the most widespread ones in the English language. Their typical trait is that the main clause is conditioned by the subordinate clause: *He's a good man whom fortune makes better; He is a good orator that convinces himself; He's born in a good hour who gets a good name; There is not always good cheer where the chimney smokes; It is a bad bargain where both are losers; It is a bad cloth that will take no colour; There's but bad choice where the whole stock is bad; When things are at the worst they will mend; Company's good if you are going to be hanged; If the counsel be good, no matter who gave it.*

(d) Compound sentences. Such sentences, unlike complex ones, are characterized by grammatical equality of constituting clauses. Among proverbs which are composite sentences there are compound sentences with different types of connections between their parts: *There is one good wife in the country, and every man thinks he has her; Corn in good years is hay, in ill years straw is corn.*

Among the proverbs presented by compound sentences we can find asyndetic sentences characterized by maximum laconism: *Cold of complexion, good of condition.*

## **2. Imperative sentences.**

Such proverbs express a kind of order. Structurally they can be:

(a) simple sentences: *Never be weary of well doing; Be not too bold with your betters;*

(b) complex sentences without negation: *Do good: thou doest it for yourself;*

(c) complex sentences with negation: *If you can't be good, be careful.*

## **3. Interrogative sentences.**

Among English proverbs there are very few interrogative sentences. These sentences, interrogative in form, are declarative in meaning, that is, they are rhetorical questions and need no answer: *Why should the devil have all the best tunes? All are good maids, but whence come the bad wives? Who knows who's a good maid? What's worse than ill luck? Who is worse shod than the shoemaker's wife? What good can it do an ass to be called a lion?*

The selection of proverbs we work with allows of distinguishing two more structural types.

### **1. Comparative sentences.**

(a) Comparative sentences in which a positive degree of an adjective is used. Such proverbs are not numerous, since the construction presupposes that the compared objects possess the equal degree of some quality: *As good do nothing as to no purpose; A change is as good as a rest; A change of work is as good as touch-pipe*; etc.

(b) Much more examples present the proverbs in which a comparative degree is used: *Like a collier's sack, bad without but worse within; Better a barn fitted than a bed; Better ride an ass that carries me, than a horse that throws me; A bad custom is like a good cake, better broken than kept; Better be beaten than be in bad company; It is better to be a beggar than a fool; Better a blush in the face, than a spot in the heart; Better a good keeper than a good winner; Better a mouse in the pot than no flesh at all; Better a witty fool than a foolish wit; Better an egg in peace than an ox in War; Better be a fool than a knave; Better be alone than in bad company; Better be half blind than have both eyes out; Better be ill spoken of by one before all, than by all before one; Better be the head of a lizard than the tail of a lion; Better be out of the world than out of the fashion; Better fill a glutton's belly than his eye; Better give than take; Better buy than borrow; Better kiss a knave than be troubled with him; Better one house spoiled than two; Better so than worse; Better the harm I know than I know not; Better then feet slip than the tongue; Better to be happy than wise; Better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all; Better to have than wish; Better to play with the ears than with the tongue; Better to be stung by a nettle, than prickt by a rose; Better untaught than ill taught; Better unborn than untaught; Better be a cock for a day than a hen for a year.*

### **2. Sentences of proportional agreement.**

They are formed with the help of comparative degrees of adjectives or adverbs: *The sooner, the better; The better workman, the worse husband; The properer man, the worse luck; The more knave, the better luck.*

So, the analysis of the structural organization of the communicative PUs with the components *good* and *bad* distinguishes between 5 structural types and 12 subtypes in ME.