

---

**HISTORICAL EVOLUTION OF ENGLISH PHRASEOLOGICAL UNITS****Zuvaytova Sarvinoz Nusurxon qizi***Karshi State University**Foreign Language faculty, 3rd year student**Tel: +99895 074 43 01**email: [s9376523@gmail.com](mailto:s9376523@gmail.com)*

**Annotation.** *This article investigates the historical development of phraseological units in the English language. It traces their origins from Old and Middle English, explores the influence of historical events, literature, religion, and cultural changes on the formation of idioms and set expressions. The study emphasizes how certain phraseological units have transformed in structure and meaning over time while still retaining cultural value.*

**Keywords:** *phraseological units, idioms, historical development, English language, cultural influence.*

**Annotatsiya.** *Mazkur maqolada ingliz tilidagi frazeologik birliklarning tarixiy rivojlanish bosqichlari o‘rganiladi. Eski va o‘rta ingliz tili davrlaridan boshlab, frazeologizmlarning shakllanishiga tarixiy voqealar, adabiyot, din va madaniy omillarning ta‘siri tahlil qilinadi. Tadqiqotda ayrim barqaror iboralarning vaqt o‘tishi bilan ma‘no va tuzilish jihatidan o‘zgargan bo‘lsa-da, ularning madaniy qadriyatni saqlab qolishi ko‘rsatilgan.*

**Kalit so‘zlar:** *frazeologik birliklar, idiomalar, tarixiy rivojlanish, ingliz tili, madaniy ta‘sir.*

**Аннотация.** *В статье рассматривается историческое развитие фразеологических единиц в английском языке. Анализируется их происхождение, начиная с древнеанглийского и среднеанглийского периодов, а также влияние исторических событий, литературы, религии и культуры на формирование идиом и устойчивых выражений. Особое внимание уделяется изменениям формы и значения фразеологизмов с течением времени при сохранении их культурной ценности.*

**Ключевые слова:** *фразеологические единицы, идиомы, историческое развитие, английский язык, культурное влияние.*

**Introduction**

Phraseological units, also known as idioms or fixed expressions, form a vital part of any language, encapsulating cultural wisdom, historical context, and linguistic creativity. In English, these expressions have evolved over centuries, reflecting the dynamic nature of the

language and the shifting sociocultural landscape of its speakers. The historical development of English phraseological units offers valuable insights into how language responds to and records changes in society, belief systems, political events, and daily life.

The roots of many English idioms can be traced back to the periods of Old English and Middle English, where religious texts, folklore, proverbs, and early literary works played a significant role in shaping the lexicon. Over time, historical milestones such as the Norman Conquest, the Renaissance, the Industrial Revolution, and even global conflicts have left their imprints on the phraseological reservoir of the language. These units often preserve archaic vocabulary, forgotten metaphors, or historical references that provide clues about past customs and thought patterns.

Studying the historical evolution of phraseological units not only enhances our understanding of the English language's richness and depth but also helps learners and linguists grasp the interplay between language and culture. This paper aims to explore the origins, transformations, and continuity of English phraseological expressions across different periods of history, highlighting their semantic shifts, structural adaptations, and enduring cultural significance.

The development of phraseological units in English is a reflection of the language's historical trajectory and its interactions with various cultural, political, and social influences. These units, often idiomatic in nature, serve as linguistic fossils—preserving meanings, images, and traditions that have been shaped and reshaped over centuries.

### **1. Old and Middle English Periods**

During the Old English (5th–11th centuries) and Middle English (11th–15th centuries) periods, many phraseological expressions were rooted in religious doctrine, agricultural life, and oral traditions. The influence of Christianity introduced biblical phrases and moral teachings that later became fixed expressions. For instance, idioms such as “by the sweat of one’s brow” and “cast the first stone” originate from biblical contexts. Additionally, the feudal lifestyle of early England gave rise to idioms based on nature, farming, and knighthood.

The Norman Conquest in 1066 also had a profound impact, introducing a wealth of French vocabulary into English, including idiomatic expressions related to court life, law, and chivalry. These historical events enriched the language and laid the groundwork for the formation of more complex phraseological units.

### **2. The Renaissance and Early Modern English**

The Renaissance era brought a revival of classical knowledge and a growing emphasis on literature and intellectual expression. With the works of Shakespeare, Chaucer, and other influential writers, English phraseology became more sophisticated and

expressive. Shakespeare, in particular, contributed dozens of idiomatic expressions still in use today, such as “break the ice,” “wild-goose chase,” and “heart of gold.”

This period also saw the beginning of the standardization of English, which helped in preserving certain idioms in written form. Many expressions from Elizabethan and Jacobean drama found their way into common usage, often carrying metaphorical or poetic meanings.

### 3. The Industrial Revolution and Modern English

The Industrial Revolution (18th–19th centuries) brought about massive social and economic change, influencing the formation of new phraseological units. Idioms began to reflect technological advancements, urban life, and new modes of labor. Phrases such as “in the pipeline,” “pull the plug,” or “on the right track” are rooted in industrial and mechanical metaphors.

Simultaneously, the British Empire's global expansion introduced English to numerous other cultures, resulting in the borrowing and adaptation of idioms from other languages, particularly from colonial territories. This interaction contributed to the linguistic diversity and richness of English phraseology.

### 4. Contemporary Phraseology

In the 20th and 21st centuries, phraseological units continue to evolve, influenced by mass media, pop culture, digital communication, and globalization. New idioms are constantly coined in response to technological innovations (“crash the system,” “go viral”) and social trends (“cancel culture,” “spill the tea”). At the same time, some older expressions have fallen into obsolescence or have undergone semantic shift.

Despite these changes, many historical idioms remain in active use, often retaining their original metaphorical imagery while being applied in modern contexts. This continuity demonstrates the resilience and adaptability of phraseological units in the English language.

Historical Period	Key Features	Sources of Phraseological Units	Examples of Idioms / Expressions
Old English (5th–11th c.)	Religious and agricultural society, oral traditions	The Bible, pagan myths, farming terminology	<i>By the sweat of one's brow, wolf in sheep's clothing</i>
Middle English (11th–15th c.)	French influence post-Norman Conquest; chivalric and legal themes	Norman French, courtly language, proverbs	<i>Give up the ghost, baker's dozen</i>
Renaissance (15th–17th c.)	Literary flourishing; metaphorical richness in	Shakespeare, Latin and Greek classics	<i>Break the ice, heart of gold, green-</i>

Historical Period	Key Features	Sources of Phraseological Units	Examples of Idioms / Expressions
	drama and poetry		<i>eyed monster</i>
Early Modern English (17th–18th c.)	Standardization of English; print culture rise	Religious texts, sermons, philosophical writings	<i>A thorn in the side, by and large</i>
Industrial Revolution (18th–19th c.)	Technology-driven change; urbanization; new professional domains	Mechanized labor, transport, science	<i>On the right track, pull the plug, steam ahead</i>
Colonial & Imperial Age	Global English expansion; cultural exchange with colonies	Borrowed idioms from Indian, African, and Asian languages	<i>White elephant, monkey business</i>
20th Century	War, political tension, modern mass media influence	World Wars, film and radio, American English	<i>Cold war, spin doctor, red tape</i>
21st Century	Internet, memes, social media language, informalization	Digital culture, viral trends, youth slang	<i>Go viral, spill the tea, ghosting, FOMO</i>

The historical evolution of English phraseological units reveals the deep interconnectedness between language, history, and culture. From the ancient roots in Old English shaped by oral traditions and Christian texts, to the expressive richness of the Renaissance and the global expansion during the colonial era, English idioms have continuously reflected the social realities and mentalities of their time. Each historical period has contributed unique phraseological formations — whether influenced by agriculture, literature, science, or digital media.

Phraseological units serve not only as communicative tools but also as carriers of cultural heritage, preserving metaphorical images and values that span centuries. As the English language continues to evolve in the 21st century, especially under the impact of globalization and digitalization, new idioms emerge while older ones are recontextualized or fade away. Understanding the diachronic development of idioms enhances not only linguistic competence but also cultural awareness, which is essential for language learners, translators, and linguists alike.

In conclusion, the study of the historical evolution of English phraseological units underscores the richness and flexibility of the language, offering invaluable insight into the interplay of language and society across time.

### References

1. Fernando, C. (1996). *Idioms and Idiomaticity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
2. Makkai, A. (1972). *Idioms Structure in English*. The Hague: Mouton.
3. Spears, R. A. (2005). *McGraw-Hill’s Dictionary of American Idioms and Phrasal Verbs*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
4. Cowie, A. P. (1998). *Phraseology: Theory, Analysis, and Applications*. Oxford University Press.
5. Crystal, D. (2003). *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
6. Nunberg, G., Sag, I. A., & Wasow, T. (1994). Idioms. *Language*, 70(3), 491–538.
7. Ammer, C. (2013). *The American Heritage Dictionary of Idioms*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.