

## Abstract

The present thesis examines the historical development of selected idiomatic phrases, namely, *keep one's word*, *speak one's mind*, *lend a hand*, *bury the hatchet*, *rock the boat*, and *toe the line*. The study is based on data from the English Historical Book Collection, Parsed Corpus of Early English Correspondence, Corpus of Historical American English, and Hansard Corpus. The research focuses on the idioms' first occurrence in the corpora, development of construction, frequency, and possible passivization and internal modification instances. Additionally, the results on the expressions' syntactic flexibility are compared to the existing hypotheses of linguists, and its possible reasons and rules are investigated. It was found that some of the idioms had various forms, which alternated for a time before the norm was established. Some appear in different constructions in the 20<sup>th</sup> century still. Further, the syntactic flexibility seems to be greater than stated in the cited theoretical works. It is concluded that the idiom's ability to passivize or be internally modified might depend on its type, which is connected to its meaning and the meaning of its constituents, pragmatics, and even their age and established place in language, as some idioms show a growing flexibility.

**Key words:** diachronic corpus study, idioms, typology of idioms, syntactic flexibility of idioms, internal modification