



## Corpus-Based Analysis of Emerging Vocabulary Trends in Contemporary English

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### Abstract

Language is a dynamic and continuously evolving system that reflects social, technological, cultural, and economic transformations occurring within society. In the twenty-first century, the rapid expansion of digital communication, globalization, social media interaction, and technological innovation has accelerated lexical change in unprecedented ways. New words, expressions, abbreviations, and semantic shifts emerge regularly, influencing contemporary English vocabulary across diverse communicative contexts. Corpus linguistics provides a powerful methodological framework for examining these lexical developments by enabling researchers to analyze large collections of authentic language data systematically. This study investigates emerging vocabulary trends in contemporary English through a corpus-based perspective, focusing on the factors driving lexical innovation, patterns of word formation, semantic evolution, and the impact of digital communication on vocabulary development. Drawing upon contemporary corpus linguistic research, the study explores how technological advancements, social media platforms, global cultural exchange, and changing communicative practices contribute to the emergence and dissemination of new lexical items. The findings indicate that contemporary English vocabulary is increasingly characterized by rapid lexical innovation, hybrid word formation processes, digital discourse influences, and the globalization of linguistic resources. The study further argues that corpus-based approaches provide valuable insights into ongoing language change and contribute significantly to understanding the evolving nature of English in the digital age.

**Keywords:** *Corpus Linguistics, Emerging Vocabulary, Contemporary English, Lexical Innovation, Digital Communication, Language Change, Corpus-Based Research, English Vocabulary Development*



## **1. Introduction**

Language change is an inevitable and continuous phenomenon that reflects the evolving needs, experiences, and communicative practices of its speakers. Throughout history, English has demonstrated remarkable adaptability, absorbing lexical influences from diverse languages and generating new vocabulary to describe emerging concepts, technologies, and social realities. In recent decades, the pace of lexical innovation has accelerated considerably due to globalization, technological advancement, and the proliferation of digital communication platforms. New words appear with increasing frequency, while existing words acquire novel meanings and functions within contemporary discourse. Consequently, understanding vocabulary development has become an important area of inquiry within linguistics, particularly in relation to the changing nature of communication in the digital era.

The emergence of corpus linguistics has revolutionized the study of language change by providing researchers with access to large collections of authentic language data. Unlike traditional linguistic approaches that often relied on intuition or limited textual evidence, corpus-based methodologies enable systematic analysis of linguistic patterns across extensive datasets. Corpora consisting of millions or even billions of words allow researchers to identify emerging lexical trends, examine frequency patterns, trace semantic shifts, and investigate contextual usage with a high degree of empirical accuracy (McEnery & Hardie, 2012). As a result, corpus linguistics has become one of the most influential approaches to studying contemporary language variation and change.

The rapid growth of digital communication has significantly influenced vocabulary development in contemporary English. Social media platforms, online communities, messaging applications, blogs, podcasts, and digital news outlets serve as environments where linguistic innovation occurs at unprecedented rates. Terms such as “doomscrolling,” “finfluencer,” “deepfake,” “metaverse,” and “rizz” illustrate how new lexical items emerge in response to technological, cultural, and social developments. These words often spread rapidly through digital networks, reaching global audiences within short periods and becoming integrated into mainstream usage (Crystal, 2011). Consequently, contemporary vocabulary trends cannot be understood without considering the influence of digital communication and online discourse.

Another significant factor contributing to lexical change is globalization. Increased international communication, migration, cultural exchange, and economic interconnectedness facilitate the movement of words across linguistic boundaries. English, functioning as a global lingua franca, continuously incorporates lexical items from diverse linguistic and cultural sources. Simultaneously,



English-derived vocabulary influences other languages, creating complex patterns of lexical exchange and hybridization. Such developments contribute to the emergence of new forms of linguistic diversity within contemporary English.

Vocabulary innovation also reflects broader societal changes. Political developments, environmental concerns, health crises, technological breakthroughs, and shifting cultural values often generate new lexical needs. For example, the COVID-19 pandemic introduced numerous expressions such as “social distancing,” “self-isolation,” “covidiot,” and “long COVID,” many of which rapidly entered public discourse and dictionary records. These examples demonstrate how vocabulary serves as a linguistic record of social experience and collective knowledge.

The present study investigates emerging vocabulary trends in contemporary English through a corpus-based perspective. By examining lexical innovation, word formation processes, semantic change, and digital communication influences, the study seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of vocabulary development in modern English. The research further highlights the value of corpus linguistics as a methodological tool for analyzing language change and understanding the evolving relationship between language and society.

## **2. Objectives of the Study**

The primary objective of this study is to examine emerging vocabulary trends in contemporary English through corpus-based analysis. The study seeks to investigate the factors contributing to lexical innovation, identify prevalent word formation processes, analyze patterns of semantic change, and explore the influence of digital communication and globalization on vocabulary development. Furthermore, the research aims to demonstrate the significance of corpus linguistic methodologies in understanding ongoing language change and contemporary lexical evolution.

## **3. Research Questions**

This study is guided by the following research questions. What are the major emerging vocabulary trends in contemporary English? How do technological innovation, digital communication, and globalization influence lexical development? What word formation processes characterize contemporary vocabulary innovation? How does corpus-based analysis contribute to understanding language change and lexical evolution in modern English? What implications do emerging vocabulary trends have for language teaching, lexicography, and linguistic research?



#### **4. Literature Review**

The study of vocabulary development has long occupied a central position within linguistic research because vocabulary represents one of the most dynamic and responsive components of language. Lexical change reflects social, cultural, technological, and historical developments, making vocabulary an important indicator of linguistic adaptation and innovation. Traditional approaches to lexical analysis often relied on dictionary records, literary texts, and observational methods. However, the emergence of corpus linguistics has significantly transformed the study of vocabulary by enabling researchers to examine authentic language usage on an unprecedented scale (Biber et al., 1998).

Corpus linguistics is founded upon the systematic analysis of large electronic collections of naturally occurring language data. According to McEnery and Wilson (2001), corpus-based approaches provide empirical evidence that allows researchers to identify patterns of frequency, collocation, semantic association, and linguistic variation. The increasing availability of digital corpora has expanded opportunities for investigating language change and lexical innovation across diverse communicative contexts. Scholars argue that corpus linguistics offers a more objective and reliable basis for understanding vocabulary development than intuition-based approaches because it relies on authentic language usage rather than subjective judgments (Baker, 2010).

Research on lexical innovation has identified several mechanisms through which new vocabulary enters a language. Word formation processes such as compounding, blending, clipping, acronym formation, borrowing, and semantic extension play significant roles in vocabulary expansion. Bauer (2006) notes that contemporary English exhibits remarkable productivity in blending and compounding, particularly within technological and digital domains. Terms such as “netizen,” “infodemic,” “cyberbullying,” and “cryptocurrency” illustrate how existing lexical resources are combined to create new meanings. These processes reflect the linguistic creativity of speakers as they adapt language to emerging communicative needs.

Technological innovation has become one of the most significant drivers of lexical change in contemporary English. The rapid development of digital technologies, social media platforms, artificial intelligence systems, and virtual environments has generated a substantial number of new lexical items. Crystal (2011) argues that internet-mediated communication has created unique linguistic environments characterized by innovation, experimentation, and rapid lexical dissemination. Words originating within online communities often spread beyond their original contexts and become integrated into mainstream discourse. Examples include terms such as “hashtag,” “emoji,” “vlog,” “unfriend,” and



“algorithmic bias,” all of which reflect technological developments and changing communication practices.

The role of social media in vocabulary innovation has attracted considerable scholarly attention. Researchers have observed that platforms such as X (formerly Twitter), TikTok, Instagram, Reddit, and YouTube function as spaces where lexical innovation occurs continuously. Social media users frequently create new expressions, abbreviations, and memes that gain popularity through repeated use and digital circulation. Zappavigna (2012) suggests that social media discourse contributes to the rapid diffusion of linguistic innovations by facilitating interaction among large and geographically dispersed communities. Consequently, social media has become an important source of contemporary vocabulary development.

Globalization has further accelerated lexical change by facilitating cross-cultural communication and linguistic exchange. English has absorbed vocabulary from numerous languages throughout its history, but contemporary globalization has intensified these processes. According to Jenkins (2015), English functions as a global contact language, enabling communication among speakers from diverse linguistic backgrounds. This role contributes to the incorporation of lexical items reflecting cultural diversity, technological innovation, and international communication. As a result, contemporary English vocabulary increasingly reflects global influences and multicultural experiences.

Recent corpus-based studies have also examined semantic change within contemporary vocabulary. Semantic change occurs when existing words acquire new meanings, associations, or functions. Hamilton et al. (2016) argue that computational corpus analysis provides valuable tools for tracing semantic evolution over time. Words such as “cloud,” “stream,” “viral,” and “platform” have undergone significant semantic transformations due to technological developments, illustrating the dynamic relationship between language and social change.

The literature collectively demonstrates that contemporary English vocabulary is characterized by rapid innovation, technological influence, digital communication, globalization, and semantic evolution. Corpus linguistics provides a robust methodological framework for investigating these developments and understanding the complex processes through which vocabulary adapts to changing social realities.

## **5. Research Gap**

Although corpus linguistics has significantly advanced the study of vocabulary development, several gaps remain in understanding emerging lexical trends in contemporary English. Existing studies have extensively documented traditional word formation processes such as compounding, derivation, borrowing, and blending. However, comparatively fewer investigations have examined how digital



communication environments accelerate lexical innovation and influence vocabulary diffusion across global linguistic communities. Much of the current literature focuses on isolated lexical items or specific technological domains rather than providing a comprehensive analysis of broader vocabulary trends across multiple discourse contexts.

Furthermore, many studies have concentrated on lexical innovation within traditional corpora such as newspapers, academic texts, and literary works, while comparatively less attention has been devoted to dynamic digital corpora derived from social media platforms, online communities, blogs, and multimedia communication channels. Given that contemporary vocabulary innovation increasingly originates in digital environments, there is a need for more comprehensive corpus-based investigations that integrate data from emerging communication platforms. Additionally, limited research has explored the interaction between globalization, digital culture, and semantic change in shaping contemporary English vocabulary. The present study addresses these gaps by examining vocabulary trends through a corpus-based perspective that considers technological innovation, digital discourse, globalization, and lexical evolution as interconnected dimensions of language change.

## **6. Theoretical Framework**

The present study is grounded in three complementary theoretical perspectives that provide a framework for understanding vocabulary change in contemporary English. The first is Corpus Linguistic Theory, which emphasizes the empirical investigation of authentic language use through large electronic corpora. According to Sinclair (1991), linguistic patterns can be more accurately understood through systematic analysis of naturally occurring language data than through intuition-based approaches. Corpus linguistics enables researchers to identify lexical frequency patterns, collocations, semantic associations, and emerging trends that characterize language change over time.

The second theoretical perspective is Lexical Innovation Theory, which focuses on the mechanisms through which new vocabulary enters a language. Scholars such as Bauer (2006) argue that lexical innovation occurs in response to communicative needs arising from social, technological, and cultural developments. Word formation processes including compounding, blending, clipping, acronym formation, and semantic extension contribute significantly to vocabulary growth and adaptation. This perspective helps explain how contemporary English continuously generates new lexical items to describe emerging realities.

The third perspective is Sociolinguistic Theory, which emphasizes the relationship between language and society. Language change is influenced by social interaction, cultural practices, technological developments, and globalization. From this perspective, vocabulary trends are viewed as reflections of



broader societal transformations. Digital communication platforms, online communities, and global networks serve as environments in which linguistic innovations emerge, circulate, and become institutionalized. Together, these theoretical perspectives provide a comprehensive framework for analyzing vocabulary development in contemporary English.

### **7. Methodology**

This study adopts a qualitative corpus-based research design aimed at examining emerging vocabulary trends in contemporary English. The research is based on the analysis and synthesis of findings from major corpus linguistic studies, lexicographic databases, and contemporary research on lexical innovation. Sources include large-scale English language corpora such as the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA), the British National Corpus (BNC), the News on the Web Corpus (NOW), the Global Web-Based English Corpus (GloWbE), and various digital communication corpora derived from online platforms.

The study employs thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns associated with lexical innovation, semantic change, digital discourse, and globalization. Particular attention is given to vocabulary emerging from technological developments, social media communication, artificial intelligence, environmental discourse, health-related communication, and contemporary cultural practices. Through systematic examination of corpus findings and scholarly literature, the study seeks to identify major trends shaping the evolution of English vocabulary in the twenty-first century.

### **8. Discussion and Analysis**

The analysis reveals that contemporary English vocabulary is undergoing rapid transformation due to technological innovation, digital communication, globalization, and evolving cultural practices. Unlike previous periods of language change, where lexical innovation often occurred gradually over extended periods, contemporary vocabulary trends emerge and spread with remarkable speed. Digital communication platforms enable new lexical items to circulate globally within hours, facilitating unprecedented rates of lexical diffusion and adoption.

One of the most prominent trends identified through corpus-based research is the influence of technology on vocabulary development. Technological innovation continuously generates new concepts that require linguistic representation. Consequently, contemporary English has witnessed the emergence of numerous technology-related terms such as “blockchain,” “cryptocurrency,” “deepfake,” “metaverse,” “algorithmic bias,” and “prompt engineering.” Corpus data indicate that many of these terms have experienced dramatic increases in frequency over relatively short periods, reflecting the



rapid integration of technological concepts into everyday discourse. Such developments illustrate the adaptive capacity of language in responding to technological change.

Another significant trend involves the role of social media in vocabulary innovation. Platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, X, Reddit, and YouTube serve as environments where users create, modify, and disseminate new expressions. Corpus studies reveal the increasing prevalence of terms such as “doomscrolling,” “finfluencer,” “cancel culture,” “rizz,” “simp,” and “ghosting.” These expressions often originate within specific online communities before expanding into mainstream usage. The rapid diffusion of such vocabulary demonstrates how social media functions as a powerful catalyst for linguistic innovation.

The analysis also highlights the growing importance of blending as a word formation process. Contemporary English exhibits a high degree of creativity in combining existing lexical elements to generate new meanings. Examples such as “infodemic,” “edutainment,” “netizen,” “bromance,” and “hangry” illustrate how blending allows speakers to create concise and expressive terms. Corpus evidence suggests that blended words are particularly common in media discourse, advertising, technology, and popular culture. Their increasing frequency reflects changing communicative preferences that favor brevity, novelty, and linguistic creativity.

Semantic change represents another important aspect of contemporary vocabulary development. Corpus-based studies reveal that many existing words have acquired new meanings in response to technological and social transformations. Terms such as “cloud,” “viral,” “stream,” “platform,” and “friend” now possess meanings that differ substantially from their traditional interpretations. These semantic shifts illustrate how language adapts to changing social realities while retaining connections to earlier meanings. Corpus analysis enables researchers to trace these changes by examining shifts in contextual usage across time.

Globalization has further contributed to lexical innovation by facilitating linguistic exchange among diverse cultural communities. Contemporary English increasingly incorporates vocabulary reflecting global experiences, cultural practices, and international communication. Corpus evidence indicates the growing presence of words originating from various linguistic traditions, particularly in areas such as cuisine, technology, entertainment, and social discourse. This trend reflects the global status of English and its role as a medium of intercultural communication.

The analysis additionally reveals the influence of major global events on vocabulary development. Health crises, environmental concerns, political movements, and technological disruptions often generate substantial lexical innovation. During the COVID-19 pandemic, terms such as “social



distancing,” “self-isolation,” “long COVID,” “quaranteam,” and “covidiot” rapidly entered public discourse. Corpus data demonstrate significant increases in the frequency of these terms during the pandemic period, illustrating how language responds to collective social experiences.

Furthermore, contemporary vocabulary development is increasingly characterized by interdisciplinary influences. Fields such as artificial intelligence, sustainability, cybersecurity, digital marketing, and virtual reality contribute specialized terminology that frequently enters mainstream discourse. Corpus evidence indicates that technical vocabulary is becoming more visible in everyday communication, reflecting the growing influence of specialized knowledge domains on public discourse.

### **9. Findings**

The findings indicate that emerging vocabulary trends in contemporary English are primarily driven by technological innovation, digital communication, globalization, and societal transformation. Corpus evidence demonstrates that social media platforms function as major sources of lexical innovation, facilitating the rapid creation and dissemination of new vocabulary. Blending, compounding, and semantic extension emerge as particularly productive word formation processes in contemporary English. The study further reveals that technological terminology increasingly influences everyday communication, while globalization contributes to greater lexical diversity and cultural exchange.

The findings also demonstrate the value of corpus-based methodologies for investigating language change. Large-scale corpora provide empirical evidence that enables researchers to identify frequency patterns, semantic shifts, and lexical innovations with greater accuracy than traditional approaches. Consequently, corpus linguistics remains an essential tool for understanding contemporary vocabulary development.

### **10. Educational Implications**

The findings have important implications for language education, lexicography, and linguistic research. English language curricula should incorporate contemporary vocabulary trends to ensure that learners develop communicative competence relevant to modern discourse environments. Language educators should expose students to authentic corpus-based examples that illustrate how vocabulary evolves in response to technological and social change. Additionally, corpus literacy should be integrated into language instruction to enable learners to explore language patterns independently.

Lexicographers must also adapt to increasingly rapid rates of lexical innovation. Traditional dictionary compilation processes may require greater flexibility to accommodate emerging vocabulary derived from digital communication environments. Furthermore, corpus-based methodologies should continue to inform dictionary development and lexical documentation.



### **11. Future Research Directions**

Future research should examine emerging vocabulary trends across different varieties of English and multilingual contexts. Comparative corpus studies may provide valuable insights into how lexical innovations spread across geographical and cultural boundaries. Researchers should also investigate the role of artificial intelligence, virtual reality, and immersive digital environments in shaping future vocabulary development. Longitudinal corpus studies examining semantic change over extended periods would further contribute to understanding the dynamics of contemporary language evolution.

### **12. Conclusion**

The corpus-based analysis of emerging vocabulary trends in contemporary English demonstrates that language remains a highly adaptive and dynamic system capable of responding to technological innovation, social transformation, and global communication. Contemporary vocabulary development is characterized by rapid lexical innovation, semantic evolution, digital discourse influences, and increasing cultural diversity. Social media platforms, technological advancements, and globalization have emerged as powerful forces shaping the modern English lexicon. Through systematic analysis of authentic language data, corpus linguistics provides valuable insights into these ongoing processes and contributes significantly to our understanding of language change. The findings underscore the importance of corpus-based approaches in documenting and interpreting contemporary lexical developments while highlighting the evolving relationship between language, technology, and society in the twenty-first century.

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