



"A Diachronic Study of Morphological Change in Language: The Influence of Sociolinguistic Factors in English Language"

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Abstract:

A thorough diachronic analysis of morphological changes in the English language is presented in this paper, with an emphasis on the impact of several sociolinguistic elements. Language development is shaped by a complex interplay of social, cultural, historical, and technological variables. This research sheds light on word frequency changes, semantic shifts, the emergence of new words, and the loss of archaic terms. In order to do this, a large and varied corpus was assembled, which included written and spoken texts from various historical eras, geographical locations, and sociolinguistic contexts. These texts included literary works, newspapers, private letters, spoken discourse transcripts, and online texts from blogs, social media, and forums. The research used both quantitative and qualitative techniques to pinpoint notable vocabulary changes and looked at the connections between particular investigated the connections between the noted changes and particular sociolinguistic variables, such as gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic class, and geographic region. The study provided a clearer knowledge of how various social processes contribute to the molding of the language by revealing links between sociolinguistic characteristics and the evolution of the English vocabulary.

Keywords- *Diachronic, Morphological, sociolinguistic, English Language*



Introduction

Language is a dynamic, ever-evolving phenomenon that captures the complex interactions of several social, cultural, and historical elements. The English language has changed significantly over the ages, with its lexicon continuously adjusting to reflect shifts in society. It is important for linguists as well as historians, sociologists, and anthropologists to comprehend these vocabulary alterations in order to better understand the intricate web of human civilization. This scholarly paper explores the diachronic examination of lexical changes in English, emphasizing the role of sociolinguistic variables. The study of language evolution throughout time is known as diachronic analysis, and it enables us to track the emergence and evolution of words and phrases. We investigate how societal processes, such as culture, education, technology, migration, and socioeconomic issues, impact language evolution via the lens of sociolinguistics.

Formulation of the problem

Studying language requires an understanding of its dynamic nature, especially with regard to its lexical inventory. Many variables have influenced the lexical development of the English language over time, reflecting the complexity of social, cultural, and historical settings. With a focus on the importance of sociolinguistic elements, this diachronic study attempts to investigate the mechanisms and driving forces underlying the lexical changes in the English language.

This study aims to clarify the complex patterns and trends that have influenced the evolution of the English vocabulary over time by investigating the connections between linguistic change and many social, cultural, and historical forces.

Connection

Understanding the diachronic evolution of the English language is crucial for a range of scientific and practical applications. Firstly, this analysis can contribute to linguistic theory by shedding light on the mechanisms and principles that govern language change, which in turn can inform our understanding of language as a cognitive and communicative system. Additionally, studying



the impact of sociolinguistic factors on lexical change provides insights into the complex relationships between language, culture, and society. Such knowledge is valuable in sociolinguistic research, cultural anthropology, and social history, as it helps to reveal the intricate ways in which language acts as a conduit and reflection of societal dynamics.

Important scientific or practical tasks

From a practical standpoint, understanding the causes and consequences of lexical changes is beneficial for educators and language policy makers, as it provides a solid foundation for making informed decisions about language instruction and policy. Furthermore, the findings of this study can be used to inform and enhance natural language processing algorithms and artificial intelligence systems that rely on lexical information to comprehend and generate human-like language. In summary, a diachronic analysis of lexical changes in the English language, with an emphasis on sociolinguistic factors, is of paramount importance for both theoretical and practical advancements in linguistics, cultural studies, education, and artificial intelligence.

Analysis

Researchers have recently shown a great deal of interest in sociolinguistic issues. Numerous publications have sparked the conversation and given us a starting point for comprehending the myriad facets of this intricate phenomenon. Prominent works in this field include. (2013) Aitchison, J. *Language change: advancement or regression?* Press of Cambridge University. [1] Lexical, morphological, and syntactic changes are only a few of the aspects of language change that are examined in Aitchison's groundbreaking work. It provides insightful information on the linguistic, psychological, and social factors that influence how language changes throughout time. Labov, W. (2001). *Principles of linguistic change: social factors.* Blackwell Publishers. [2] Labov's investigation into social factors affecting linguistic change presents an in-depth analysis of the role of social dynamics in shaping language. This work has been influential in shaping the field of sociolinguistics and emphasizing the importance of social factors in language change. Nevalainen, T., & Traugott, E. C. (2012). *The Oxford handbook of the history of English.*

Oxford University Press. [3] This comprehensive handbook offers a wide-ranging overview of the historical development of the English language. The collection of articles



highlights various aspects of language change, including lexical, grammatical, and phonological evolution. Wen, X., & Taylor, J. R. (Eds.). (2021). *The Routledge handbook of cognitive linguistics*. Routledge. [4] This extensive collection of research in historical linguistics addresses multiple aspects of language change and offers insights into the complex mechanisms underlying language evolution. The handbook emphasizes the importance of integrating sociolinguistic factors in understanding the diachronic development of languages. *Sociolinguistics: An introduction to language and society* (2021) by Peter Trudgill is a comprehensive overview of the field of sociolinguistics, with a focus on language change. [5] The book includes a chapter on lexical change, which discusses the various sociolinguistic factors that can influence the way that words are used and change over time.

The lexical semantics of language (with special reference to words) (2011) by Cliff Goddard examines the relationship between sociolinguistics and lexical semantics. [6] The work argues that social factors can influence the meaning of words, and that lexical semantics can be used to shed light on social processes. Selection of previously unsolved parts of the general problem. Despite the rich body of literature on diachronic lexical change and sociolinguistic factors, certain gaps and unresolved questions remain. This article is devoted to addressing the following previously unsolved parts of the general problem. 1. A comprehensive, data-driven analysis of lexical changes in the English language over an extended period, encompassing various sociolinguistic contexts, which would allow for a more robust understanding of the driving forces behind these changes.

2. An in-depth exploration of the relationships between specific sociolinguistic factors (such as social class, gender, ethnicity, and geographical region) and the lexical changes observed in the English language, which would provide a clearer picture of how these factors interact and influence language evolution.

3. The identification of emerging trends in lexical change, driven by recent sociocultural and technological developments (e.g., the influence of social media, global mobility, and language contact), which would enable researchers and educators to anticipate and respond to the future trajectory of English vocabulary. Presentation of the main material of the study In order to



achieve the objectives outlined in the purpose statement, the study was carried out in several stages, each contributing to a comprehensive understanding of diachronic lexical changes in the English language and the influence of sociolinguistic factors. Data collection and corpus compilation A diverse and extensive corpus was compiled, encompassing written and spoken texts from various historical periods, geographical regions, and sociolinguistic contexts. The corpus included literary works, newspapers, personal correspondence, transcripts of spoken discourse, and online texts (such as blogs, social media, and forums). This comprehensive collection enabled a robust analysis of the English lexicon's evolution over time. The diverse and extensive corpus compiled for this study comprised a range of written and spoken texts from various historical periods, geographical regions, and sociolinguistic contexts, ensuring a comprehensive representation of the English language's evolution.

Identification of lexical changes

Using a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods, the study identified significant lexical changes in the English language. These changes included the introduction of new words, the disappearance of archaic words, semantic shifts, and word frequency alterations. [7] The analysis revealed patterns and trends in lexical change, which were further examined in relation to sociolinguistic factors.

The following examples illustrate significant lexical changes in the English language, including the introduction of new words, the disappearance of archaic words, semantic shifts, and word frequency

alterations.

Introduction of new words:

- a. "Internet" – emerged with the advent of the World Wide Web in the early 1990s, and has since become an integral part of everyday language.
- b. "Selfie" – a term popularized in the 2010s, referring to a self-portrait photograph typically taken with a smartphone.



2. Disappearance of archaic words:

- a. “Hwæt” – an Old English word used as an interjection, meaning “listen” or “pay attention”. It has fallen out of use in modern English.
- b. “Thou” – an Early Modern English pronoun used to address someone in the second person singular, now replaced by “you” in contemporary usage.

3. Semantic shifts:

- a. “Nice” – originally derived from the Latin word “nescius,” meaning “ignorant.” In Middle English, “nice” meant “foolish” or “silly,” but over time, its meaning shifted to “pleasant” or “agreeable.”
- b. “Awful” – in Old English, “awful” meant “inspiring awe” or “full of awe,” with a positive connotation. Over time, its meaning has shifted to “very bad” or “unpleasant.”

4. Word frequency alterations:

- a. “Gay” – originally meant “happy” or “carefree” and was commonly used with this meaning. In the 20th century, its meaning shifted to primarily refer to homosexuality, and its use with the original meaning has become less frequent.
- b. “Telephone” – once a commonly used term for the device, it has been largely replaced by “phone” or “mobile” in everyday language, reflecting changes in technology and communication habits.



These examples showcase the diverse nature of lexical changes in the English language over time, reflecting shifts in culture, technology, and

social dynamics

Analysis of sociolinguistic factors

The study investigated the relationships between specific sociolinguistic factors (such as social class, gender, ethnicity, and geographical region) and the observed lexical changes. By employing various statistical and computational methods, the research uncovered correlations between sociolinguistic variables and the evolution of the English lexicon. This analysis provided insights into how different social dynamics contribute to the shaping of the language. Through meticulous statistical and computational analyses, the study revealed intricate patterns in the evolution of the English lexicon concerning sociolinguistic factors. The research not only identified correlations but also delved deeper into understanding the mechanisms through which social class, gender, ethnicity, and geographical region influence lexical changes. By employing advanced computational methods, the study was able to discern subtle nuances in language evolution, shedding light on the complex interrelationships between sociolinguistic variables and the development of the English language. The following examples demonstrate observed lexical changes in the English language and their relationships with specific sociolinguistic factors, such as social class, gender, ethnicity, and geographical region.

Social Class:

a. “Ain’t” – This contraction is often associated with lower social classes and informal speech. Its usage demonstrates how social class can influence lexical choices and the acceptance of nonstandard forms in a language.

b. “U” and “non-U” terms – In British English, certain words and expressions have historically been considered “U” (upper-class) or “non-U” (non-upper-class), reflecting the influence of social class on language. For example, “napkin” is considered “U,” while “serviette” is considered “non-U.”



Gender:

- a. “ e marital status.
- b. Gender-neutral language – The increasing use of gender-neutral pronouns such as “they” (singular) and terms like “firefighter” instead of “fireman” demonstrate the growing awareness of gender inclusivity in language.

Ethnicity:

- a. African American Vernacular English (AAVE) – The development and usage of AAVE showcase the impact of ethnicity on the English language, as African American communities have contributed unique lexical items and grammatical structures. Examples include “finna” (intending to) and “salty” (upset or angry).
- b. Borrowed words – Many English words have been borrowed from other languages due to contact with different ethnic groups, such as “kindergarten” from German, “salsa” from Spanish, and “yoga” from Sanskrit.

Geographical Region:

- a. American vs. British English – Regional variations in English have led to lexical differences, such as “trunk” (American English) vs. “boot” (British English) for the storage compartment in a car in British apartment for flate or residential place. Justification of the obtained scientific results The comprehensive diachronic analysis of lexical changes in the English language, combined with the investigation of sociolinguistic factors, led to several significant findings. The study provided empirical evidence demonstrating that social class, gender, ethnicity, and geographical region have a substantial impact on the evolution of the English lexicon. Furthermore, the research unveiled novel insights into the intricate relationships between language, culture, and society. By examining the influence of recent sociocultural and technological developments, the study highlighted the ongoing dynamism of the English language and its responsiveness to change. The identification of emerging trends in lexical



change, [9] driven by factors such as social media and global mobility, offers valuable information for researchers, educators, and language policy makers.

Conclusions

The diachronic analysis of lexical changes in the English language, with a focus on sociolinguistic factors, has yielded several key conclusions. Lexical changes in the English language are shaped by a complex interplay of social, cultural, historical, and technological factors. The study highlights the importance of considering sociolinguistic context when analysing language evolution. Specific sociolinguistic factors, such as social class, gender, ethnicity, and geographical region, significantly influence the development of the English lexicon. These factors contribute to the dynamic nature of the language, driving the introduction of new words, the disappearance of archaic words, semantic shifts, and word frequency alterations. The impact of recent sociocultural and technological developments on the English language is substantial. Factors such as social media, global mobility, and language contact play a critical role in shaping emerging trends in lexical change.

Prospects for further exploration

The findings of this study open up several avenues for further research and exploration. Examination of additional sociolinguistic factors. Further research could investigate the influence of other sociolinguistic factors, such as age, education, and occupation, on lexical changes in the English language. Comparative studies. Researchers could conduct similar diachronic analyses of lexical changes in other languages, allowing for cross-linguistic comparisons and a broader understanding of the role of sociolinguistic factors in language evolution. Longitudinal studies. Long-term research could track the ongoing lexical changes in the English language to better understand the effects of rapidly evolving sociocultural and technological landscapes on language development.

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