


Chapter 10

Unraveling Contemporary Language Changes in Online Communication Through Corpus Linguistics

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the integration of technology in education, reshaping teaching and learning methodologies globally. This chapter explores the correlation between technology-infused education post-pandemic and the evolving language usage in online communication. Through corpus linguistics and language evolution theories, the authors investigate the nuances of this linguistic transformation and its implications for educational practices. Learners now require digital literacy alongside traditional literacy skills, navigating a digital learning environment characterized by informality and interactivity. Corpus linguistics reveals lexical, syntactic, and socio-cultural changes shaping contemporary communication in virtual learning environments. Understanding these language dynamics is crucial for educators as they navigate the digital age, reflecting the intricate interplay between technology, culture, and cognition.

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INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has catalyzed a significant transformation in education, compelling institutions globally to swiftly embrace technology-infused teaching and learning methods. Though initially driven by necessity, this shift has prompted inquiries into how language adapts within the digital sphere, particularly in online communication. Corpus linguistics, the study of language as expressed in corpora (bodies of text), offers powerful tools to analyze language patterns in vast datasets. However, it is important to note that corpus linguistics is not a monolithic, consensually agreed set of methods and procedures for exploring language. Differences exist within corpus linguistics that separate and subcategorize varying approaches to the use of corpus data. These approaches can be broadly categorized into qualitative and quantitative methodologies, each with its strengths and limitations. By employing the frameworks of corpus linguistics and language evolution theories (Biber et al. 1998; McEnery & Hardie 2011; Bybee 2010; Flowerdew 2012; Kirby 2017), this paper aims to unveil the nuances of this linguistic metamorphosis and its ramifications for educational approaches. This study not only focuses on the shifts in language but also on how these shifts affect different stakeholders in the education sector, from students and educators to policymakers. While the integration of technology in education is not novel, the pandemic has accelerated its adoption at an unprecedented pace. Virtual classrooms, online learning platforms, and digital collaboration tools have become essential components of the educational landscape. This rapid digitalization has not only transformed the methodologies of teaching and learning but has also ushered in a distinctive mode of communication characterized by conciseness, informality, and interactivity. Understanding these changes is crucial for educators as they strive to engage students in digital environments and foster critical digital literacy skills.

The proliferation of information-based and intelligent educational applications has underscored the need for digital transformation (Feng et al. 2019; Wang and Li 2023). Learners are now tasked with not only mastering conventional literacy skills but also cultivating a broader capacity to comprehend, assess, integrate, apply, and generate knowledge through digital technologies. This is essential for acquiring professional knowledge, enhancing professional competencies, and facilitating continuous learning, lifelong learning, and innovation in the digital age. Consequently, digital learners must employ Internet+ thinking and leverage the inherent attributes of digital technology—namely contemporaneity, openness, and innovation—to navigate the learning process and develop requisite digital competencies or digital literacy for effective learning. Although digital literacy lacks a precise definition, it entails the adept utilization of digital technology tools and methods to swiftly access information and acquire comprehensive skills and cultural literacy for evaluating,

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