CORPUS-ASSISTED COGNITIVE ANALYSIS OF EMERGING PERSONALITY VOCABULARY IN SOCIAL MEDIA

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Abstract

The rapid expansion of social media has significantly transformed the way individuals express personality, emotions, and identity. Platforms such as X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook have introduced a dynamic environment in which new personality-related vocabulary continuously emerges and evolves. Words such as authentic, toxic, introvert, woke, resilient, gaslighter, and people-pleaser have become increasingly common in online communication, reflecting changes in social attitudes and cultural values. This paper explores emerging personality vocabulary from the perspectives of Cognitive Linguistics and Corpus Linguistics. The study proposes a corpus-assisted framework for identifying, classifying, and interpreting newly popular personality expressions in English social media discourse. Drawing upon cognitive theories of categorization and conceptualization, the paper discusses how personality vocabulary represents changing social identities and conceptual structures. Corpus linguistic techniques, including frequency analysis, concordance, collocation, and semantic preference, are presented as effective tools for examining lexical patterns in large collections of social media texts. The study argues that combining cognitive linguistic theories with corpus-assisted methods provides a comprehensive understanding of how personality vocabulary develops in digital communication. The proposed framework contributes to contemporary linguistic research by highlighting the interaction between language, cognition, and online culture while offering practical implications for discourse analysis, lexicography, and language education.

Keywords: Corpus Linguistics, Cognitive Linguistics, Social Media, Personality Vocabulary, Digital Discourse, Lexical Innovation, Semantic Change.

Digital communication has reshaped language more rapidly than any previous technological innovation. The widespread use of social networking platforms has accelerated lexical innovation, enabling new words and expressions to spread globally within a short period. As millions of users interact daily through online platforms, language becomes increasingly dynamic, adaptive, and socially influenced. One of the most noticeable areas of lexical change concerns personality vocabulary, which reflects how individuals describe themselves and evaluate others.

Personality vocabulary consists of lexical items used to characterize individual behavior, attitudes, emotions, and psychological traits. Traditional adjectives such as kind, honest, ambitious, and confident continue to play an important role in communication. However, digital environments have introduced numerous emerging expressions including toxic, cringe, woke, emotionally unavailable, manipulative, soft-spoken, and people-pleaser. These expressions often extend beyond their literal meanings to represent complex cultural concepts shared within online communities.

The increasing popularity of these expressions raises important linguistic questions. How do new personality words emerge? Why do certain expressions rapidly gain acceptance while others disappear? What cognitive mechanisms support the interpretation of these lexical innovations? How does social media influence conceptual representations of personality?

To answer these questions, modern linguistics increasingly combines Corpus Linguistics with Cognitive Linguistics. Corpus Linguistics provides objective evidence regarding language use through large collections of authentic texts, whereas Cognitive Linguistics explains how language reflects human conceptualization and categorization. Together, these approaches enable researchers to investigate both quantitative patterns and conceptual meanings of emerging vocabulary.

The present paper examines the role of corpus-assisted cognitive analysis in understanding the development of personality vocabulary in contemporary social media discourse. It argues that lexical innovation is not merely a linguistic phenomenon but also a reflection of changing cultural values and cognitive processes.

Personality vocabulary has long attracted attention in linguistics, psychology, and communication studies. These lexical items describe relatively stable human characteristics while simultaneously reflecting social evaluation and cultural expectations. Traditionally, personality descriptors included adjectives such as generous, selfish, optimistic, and responsible. However, technological development and digital interaction have significantly expanded this lexical field.

Social media encourages creativity, brevity, and emotional expression, creating favorable conditions for lexical innovation. Expressions such as gaslighter, doomscroller, main character, pick-me, and people-pleaser have entered everyday communication despite being relatively unknown a decade ago. Many of these expressions originate in online communities before gradually becoming part of mainstream vocabulary.

Semantic change frequently accompanies lexical innovation. Existing words often acquire new meanings within digital discourse. For example, the adjective toxic originally referred primarily to poisonous substances but now commonly describes harmful relationships, personalities, and workplace environments. Similarly, triggered has shifted from a clinical psychological term to a broader description of emotional reactions in online communication. These developments demonstrate that personality vocabulary continuously adapts to changing communicative needs.

Cognitive Linguistics views language as a reflection of human conceptual organization rather than an independent system of grammatical rules. According to Lakoff (1987), categories are structured around prototypes rather than fixed definitions. Consequently, personality vocabulary represents conceptual categories shaped by social experience, cultural values, and individual perception.

Conceptual metaphor also contributes to personality descriptions. Expressions such as cold person, warm personality, bright student, or toxic friend illustrate how abstract personality concepts are understood through metaphorical mappings from physical experience. These metaphorical structures become increasingly productive within social media communication, where concise yet expressive language is preferred.

Online communication additionally encourages conceptual blending, allowing users to combine existing concepts into innovative personality labels. Such creativity explains the rapid emergence of hybrid expressions that characterize modern digital discourse.

Corpus Linguistics provides powerful methods for examining naturally occurring language. Rather than relying on intuition, researchers analyze large electronic corpora containing authentic texts. Frequency analysis identifies commonly occurring words, concordance analysis examines contextual usage, collocation analysis reveals lexical associations, and semantic preference identifies recurring conceptual environments.

The availability of digital text has greatly expanded corpus-based research on online communication. Social media corpora allow researchers to observe lexical innovation almost immediately after new expressions emerge. Consequently, corpus-assisted approaches have become increasingly valuable for investigating language change, discourse patterns, and evolving vocabulary.

When integrated with cognitive linguistic theories, corpus methods provide both quantitative evidence and conceptual explanation, enabling researchers to understand not only how frequently emerging personality vocabulary occurs but also why these expressions become cognitively meaningful within online communities.

This study adopts a qualitative and corpus-assisted cognitive approach to investigate emerging personality vocabulary in English social media discourse. Rather than relying solely on intuition, the study proposes the use of authentic social media texts to identify lexical innovations describing personality traits and behavioral characteristics.

The corpus is assumed to consist of publicly available posts collected from major social media platforms, including X (formerly Twitter), Reddit, Instagram, and TikTok. These platforms were selected because they represent diverse communicative environments in which new lexical items rapidly emerge and spread. The corpus should ideally contain posts published within the last five years to ensure that the vocabulary reflects contemporary digital communication.

After data collection, personality-related lexical items are identified manually and verified through corpus analysis software such as AntConc or Sketch Engine. The analysis focuses on words and expressions that describe individual characteristics, interpersonal behavior, emotional tendencies, or social identity.

The identified vocabulary is categorized into the following conceptual groups:

- Positive personality vocabulary
- Negative personality vocabulary
- Emotional personality descriptors
- Social identity expressions
- Internet-specific personality labels

Corpus-assisted techniques include:

- Frequency analysis, to identify the most common emerging personality terms;
- Concordance analysis, to examine contextual usage;
- Collocation analysis, to identify words frequently occurring together;
- Semantic preference analysis, to determine recurring conceptual patterns.

The cognitive analysis interprets these findings by examining how language users conceptualize personality in digital environments. Special attention is given to metaphorical extensions, prototype effects, and semantic shifts that characterize contemporary online communication.

The increasing use of social media has accelerated lexical innovation at an unprecedented rate. Personality vocabulary, in particular, reflects changing social values, interpersonal relationships, and cultural identities. Unlike traditional personality descriptors found in dictionaries, many contemporary expressions originate within online communities before spreading into mainstream communication.

One noticeable tendency is the emergence of identity-based vocabulary. Expressions such as people-pleaser, overthinker, introvert, extrovert, sigma, and alpha function not merely as descriptive labels but also as markers of self-identity. Users frequently employ these expressions to categorize themselves or others, demonstrating the role of language in constructing online identities.

Another significant development concerns the semantic expansion of existing vocabulary. The adjective toxic illustrates this process particularly well. Historically associated with poisonous substances, it has acquired new metaphorical meanings describing harmful personalities, unhealthy relationships, or negative social environments. Similar semantic extensions can be observed in words such as triggered, cringe, and delusional, whose contemporary meanings differ considerably from their traditional definitions.

From a cognitive linguistic perspective, these developments illustrate how conceptual categories continuously evolve through social interaction. Human cognition naturally organizes experiences into prototypes rather than rigid categories. Consequently, emerging personality vocabulary often reflects socially shared conceptual models instead of formal psychological classifications.

Corpus-assisted analysis enables researchers to observe these developments objectively. Frequency analysis reveals which expressions become widespread, while concordance analysis demonstrates how meanings vary according to communicative context. Collocation analysis further illustrates the conceptual relationships between personality vocabulary and surrounding lexical items.

For example, the adjective authentic frequently collocates with words such as creator, content, voice, and identity, suggesting that authenticity has become closely associated with digital self-presentation. Conversely, expressions such as toxic, manipulative, and narcissistic commonly occur alongside words including relationship, behavior, environment, and workplace, reflecting contemporary discussions concerning interpersonal psychology.

Social media also promotes lexical creativity through humor, irony, and meme culture. Newly created expressions often spread rapidly because they efficiently communicate complex social meanings in a concise form. This phenomenon demonstrates that language change is increasingly influenced by digital interaction rather than traditional institutional communication.

The relationship between cognition and culture becomes particularly evident when comparing personality vocabulary across different linguistic communities. Although English expressions

frequently become globally recognizable through digital platforms, individual cultures continue to interpret personality concepts according to their own social values. Consequently, corpus-assisted cognitive analysis provides valuable insights into both universal and culture-specific conceptualizations of personality.

The findings discussed in this conceptual study indicate that personality vocabulary in social media represents an evolving cognitive system shaped by communication practices, technological innovation, and cultural interaction. Future empirical research involving multilingual corpora would provide additional evidence regarding lexical variation across languages and online communities.

Conclusion

The emergence of new personality vocabulary on social media reflects the dynamic relationship between language, cognition, and digital culture. Online communication has transformed not only the speed at which lexical innovations spread but also the conceptual frameworks through which individuals describe personality, identity, and social behavior.

This paper has demonstrated that a corpus-assisted cognitive approach provides an effective framework for investigating emerging personality vocabulary. Corpus Linguistics contributes objective quantitative evidence regarding lexical frequency, contextual usage, and collocational behavior, while Cognitive Linguistics explains how these lexical innovations reflect conceptual categorization, metaphorical thinking, and cultural knowledge.

The discussion suggests that many contemporary personality expressions extend beyond traditional dictionary definitions to represent socially negotiated meanings within digital communities. Social media users actively construct new conceptual categories that influence interpersonal communication and identity formation. These developments illustrate that language is not a static system but a continuously evolving reflection of human cognition and social experience.

Future research should analyze larger multilingual social media corpora and compare emerging personality vocabulary across different languages and cultural contexts. Integrating computational corpus methods with cognitive semantic analysis will enhance our understanding of lexical innovation and contribute to broader research in discourse analysis, digital communication, sociolinguistics, and artificial intelligence. Such investigations may also support lexicographers, educators, and language learners by documenting the rapid evolution of vocabulary in the digital age.

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