

RESEARCH ARTICLE**Emerging Expressions in Contemporary English: A Study of Linguistic Innovations
(2015–2025)**

Bujji Babu Velagaleti

Assistant Professor of English

DVR & Dr HS MIC College of Technology, Kanchikacherla

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Abstract

The past decade has witnessed a linguistic revolution in English, largely driven by social media, technological innovation, and evolving cultural paradigms. This paper investigates the latest expressions—slang, neologisms, acronyms, and repurposed words—that have entered mainstream usage between 2015 and 2025. By examining sources such as digital communication platforms, dictionaries, and academic discourse, this study analyzes how new expressions reflect societal change and shape communication.

Keywords: neologisms, contemporary English, internet slang, sociolinguistics, language change**1. Introduction**

Language is dynamic and constantly evolving. Over the past decade, English has been particularly susceptible to rapid lexical innovation due to globalization, meme culture, and technological advancements. This paper focuses on expressions that emerged or gained popularity from 2015 to 2025, reflecting shifting cultural, political, and technological landscapes.

2. Methodology

Data was collected from:

- Oxford English Dictionary's new entries from 2015–2025
- Online platforms (Twitter, TikTok, Reddit)
- Pop culture media (Netflix series, YouTube, podcasts)
- Linguistic studies and corpora

A qualitative analysis was conducted on expressions that:

- Entered common usage
- Signified sociocultural trends
- Were accepted in digital or academic spaces

3. Categories of New Expressions**3.1. Slang and Informal Neologisms**

- **Ghosting** (suddenly cutting off communication)
 - **Flex** (to show off)
 - **Sus** (short for suspicious; popularized by the game *Among Us*)
 - **Slay** (to succeed exceptionally)
 - **Rizz** (charisma or charm, 2022–2023 TikTok origin)
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RESEARCH ARTICLE**3.2. Internet-Born Acronyms and Abbreviations**

- **FOMO** – Fear of Missing Out
- **YOLO** – You Only Live Once
- **NSFW** – Not Safe For Work
- **GOAT** – Greatest of All Time
- **ICMYI** – In Case You Missed It

3.3. Repurposed Words

- **Tea** (meaning gossip or truth, as in “spill the tea”)
- **Cancel** (as in cancel culture—publicly withdrawing support)
- **Thirsty** (desperate for attention or affection)
- **Dead** (used figuratively, e.g., “I’m dead” to mean extreme amusement)

3.4. Expressions Shaped by Technology and AI**3.4. Expressions Shaped by Technology and AI**

Technological advancement—especially in artificial intelligence, social media algorithms, and virtual environments—has directly influenced the development of new English expressions. Many of these terms reflect society's attempts to understand, critique, or adapt to the fast-evolving digital world. These expressions are no longer confined to tech circles; they have entered mainstream conversations, media, education, and even policy discussions.

3.4.1. Deepfake

- **Meaning:** AI-generated synthetic media that convincingly mimics real people's faces, voices, or actions.
- **Usage:** “That video of the politician might be a deepfake—it looks real, but something's off.”
- **Context:** This term gained widespread attention around 2018 and has become a symbol of both technological innovation and ethical concern in digital media.

3.4.2. Doomscrolling

- **Meaning:** The act of endlessly scrolling through bad news on social media or the internet, often leading to anxiety or depression.
- **Usage:** “I stayed up all night doomscrolling about the climate crisis.”
- **Context:** Coined around 2020, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, this term captures a common digital behavior associated with information overload.

3.4.3. Algorithm Bias

- **Meaning:** The phenomenon where AI or machine learning systems reflect human prejudices or systemic inequality present in the training data.
- **Usage:** “The job screening software showed algorithm bias—it filtered out female applicants disproportionately.”
- **Context:** This phrase has become common in discussions on ethics in AI, fairness in data, and digital inclusion.

3.4.4. Botfarm

- **Meaning:** A group of automated accounts (bots) used to spread misinformation, amplify posts, or manipulate online discourse.
- **Usage:** “That trending hashtag might be the result of a botfarm campaign.”
- **Context:** With concerns over digital propaganda and election manipulation, this term has become crucial in cybersecurity and media literacy.

3.4.5. Metaverse

- **Meaning:** A collective virtual shared space, often incorporating augmented reality (AR), virtual reality (VR), and blockchain.

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- **Usage:** “He bought digital real estate in the metaverse.”
- **Context:** Popularized by Meta (formerly Facebook) in the early 2020s, this term describes the envisioned next stage of the internet and social interaction.

3.4.6. Prompt Engineering

- **Meaning:** The skill or practice of crafting effective inputs (prompts) to guide AI-generated content or outputs.
- **Usage:** “She’s learning prompt engineering to fine-tune her results in ChatGPT.”
- **Context:** As generative AI tools like ChatGPT and DALL-E rose in popularity, this term emerged as a valuable skillset.

3.4.7. Digital Detox

- **Meaning:** A deliberate break from screens, apps, or internet use for mental well-being.
- **Usage:** “I’m taking a digital detox this weekend—no phone, no social media.”
- **Context:** Reflecting rising concern about digital addiction, this term has gained popularity in mental health and lifestyle discussions.

3.4.8. AI Anxiety

- **Meaning:** A growing fear or uncertainty about the role of artificial intelligence in society and the future of jobs, ethics, and control.
- **Usage:** “With all the layoffs due to automation, AI anxiety is spreading in the workforce.”
- **Context:** While not always a formal dictionary term, it is used increasingly in journalism and social commentary.

These expressions do more than describe new inventions—they reflect societal reactions to change, often oscillating between fascination and fear. They also signal the need for digital literacy as a core component of modern communication.

3.5. Social and Cultural Influences

- **Woke** (aware of social injustice; later politicized)
- **Gaslighting** (manipulating someone psychologically)
- **Toxic positivity**
- **Clapback** (a witty retort to criticism)

4. Impact on Communication and Identity

The rise of new expressions in English from 2015 to 2025 has significantly reshaped how people interact and construct their social identities. These linguistic innovations—especially those born in digital spaces—do more than convey meaning; they create group belonging, express nuanced emotions, and reflect shifting societal values.

4.1. Digital Inclusivity and Community Building

New expressions like *"rizz," "tea,"* or *"slay"* often emerge in online communities such as TikTok, Twitter (X), and Reddit, serving as linguistic markers of group identity. When users adopt these expressions, they signal participation in a cultural moment or subculture, whether Gen Z humor, LGBTQ+ communities, or fandoms. Language becomes a tool of inclusion: knowing the "right" terms shows you're part of the in-group.

4.2. Self-Representation and Empowerment

Expressions like *"woke," "gaslighting," "toxic,"* and *"clapback"* have empowered users to talk openly about politics, mental health, and personal boundaries. These terms have enhanced users' ability to articulate experiences related to social justice, emotional trauma, or digital harassment, thereby reinforcing identity and self-awareness in contemporary discourse.

4.3. Emotional Efficiency and Humor

Shortened expressions or internet slang like *"mood," "dead"* (meaning "laughing hard"), or *"no cap"* (meaning "no lie") allow for rapid, emotionally charged communication. These expressions condense complex feelings into compact, humorous forms, making them ideal for social media posts, memes, and text messaging.

RESEARCH ARTICLE**4.4. Global Spread and Hybrid Identity**

As these expressions spread across platforms and countries, English speakers around the world adopt them, often blending them with local languages. This hybridization influences global youth identity, especially in urban centers, where language becomes a mix of local dialects and global digital English. For example, Indian, Nigerian, or Filipino users may use “ghosting” or “cancelled” in contexts deeply rooted in their cultural values.

4.5. Generational and Cultural Gaps

While these expressions foster strong identification among younger users, they can create gaps in communication with older generations or non-native speakers. Terms like “sus” or “vibe check” may seem obscure or frivolous to those unfamiliar with their context, leading to misunderstandings or communication breakdowns.

4.6. Shaping Norms and Values

The prevalence of terms like “consent,” “boundaries,” and “self-care” in everyday language reflects a cultural shift toward emotional intelligence, personal well-being, and respect for individual identity. Such terms are no longer confined to academic or therapeutic spaces—they are part of daily digital conversation.

5. Criticism and Resistance

Some critics argue that these expressions:

- Erode grammatical integrity
- Create in-group/out-group dynamics
- Lose meaning through overuse
- Are often misunderstood by non-native speakers

Yet, others view them as signs of a vibrant, adaptive language responsive to cultural shifts.

6. Conclusion

The emergence of new expressions in English over the past decade illustrates the language’s responsiveness to societal, technological, and cultural stimuli. These linguistic changes are not mere trends; they signal transformations in human interaction, thought, and identity in the digital age.

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