THE MOST FREQUENTLY USED VERBS IN MODERN ENGLISH

НАЙЧАСТОТНІШІ ДІЄСЛОВА У СУЧАСНІЙ АНГЛІЙСЬКІ МОВІ

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The Big data era presupposes new approaches to linguistic analysis, focusing on the need for processing vast amounts of information and offering new insights into language. The emerging language processing technologies shed light on natural language use. Almost all modern linguistic research is data-informed. Data analysis in linguistics is more comprehensive and balanced, can show what is common and typical, and provide accurate statistics.

Electronic corpora, as balanced and representative collections of texts, are by far the largest linguistic databases. If intuitions and introspections are generally decontextualized, corpora provide real linguistic context. Another advantage of applying the corpus approach is the opportunity to obtain frequencies and statistics readily. It can provide illuminating insights into the authentic use of particular linguistic units.

This study aims to conduct a corpus-based analysis and identify the most frequently occurring verbs in modern English. This corpus evidence can further inform English language teaching, lexicography, and lay the foundations for a robust linguistic analysis of the vocabulary, grammar, and pragmatics involving these verbs.

The data for this research has been collected from the English language corpora which represent the major varieties of English: the British National Corpus (BNC) [6], The Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) [7], and the Strathy Corpus of Canadian English [8].

As the corpora under analysis have different sizes, the relative (normalized) frequencies of verbs have been identified, namely, the frequencies of tokens per million. Based on this statistic, the rankings of the top frequency verbs have been built and compared. The top 10 verbs in the corpora are presented in Table 1.

Table 1
Top 10 verbs in the COCA, BNC, Strathy

rank	COCA	BNC	Strathy
	Lemma Per mil	Lemma Per mil	Lemma Per mil
1	BE 32,622.71	BE 42,277	BE 34,919.16
2	HAVE 10,588.23	HAVE 13,655	HAVE 6,040.93
3	DO 8,244.70	DO 5,594	SAY 4,414.73
4	SAY 4,125.20	WILL 3,357	DO 3,440.64
5	GO 3,571.65	SAY 3,344	WILL 3,352.76
6	GET 3,371.14	WOULD 2,904	WOULD 2,617.53
7	CAN 3,113.52	CAN 2,672	CAN 2,167.87
8	KNOW 2,781.03	GET 2,210	GO 1,993.24
9	WILL 2,391.52	MAKE 2,165	MAKE 1,773.44
10	WOULD 2,365.91	GO 2,078	USE 1,657.29

The corpus data suggests that the most frequent verbs in English are mostly functional verbs *to be, to have* and *to do*. Generally, it is consistent with Zipf's Law; the highest positions typically occupy delexical units. English auxiliaries are delexical functional units. Nonetheless, the verbs such as *to be* exhibit a number of usages and are particularly polysemous in English (see the discussion of all the nuances of the semantics of *to be* in D. Crystal [3]). D. Crystal distinguishes circumstantial *be* ("how are you?"), numerical *be* ("two and two is four"), quotative *be* ("so I was like, 'wow'"), ludic *be* ("oh no he isn't!"), and other meanings [3].

The top list also features so-called 'light verbs' with broad semantics: *to make, to get*, which participate in a number of patterns; modal auxiliaries *will, would, can*, showing some variation in the studied corpora. Furthermore, the top positions (3-5) are occupied by the verb of speaking *to say* and the verb of movement *to go*. The cognitive verb *to know* is in the top 10 BNC list, whereas the verb *to use* is found only on the Strathy top 10 verbs list. Some implications of corpus statistics have been mentioned before by D. Mindt [5], who noticed that the order of the modal auxiliaries in school textbooks needs to consider its high frequency of use and significance and, as a result, should be reviewed.

The variation in the use of verbs has several dimensions. Verbs also vary in distribution across different text types, genres and registers. A detailed study of the dimensions of variation and their implications can be found in D. Biber (1988) [2]. The corpora consist of sections corresponding to different registers and genres, thus enabling comparative statistic analysis: Spoken, Fiction, Newspapers, Magazines, Blogs, Academic, Non-academic, Miscellaneous.

The corpus evidence suggests that the biggest verb saturation (number of verbs per million) is found in the Fiction section of all the corpora under scrutiny: virtually every fifth word in fiction is a verb (See Table 2).

Table 2

English verbs in Fiction sections of the corpora

	Corpus	Raw frequency	Frequency PM	% PM
1	The BNC	3,563,454	223,985.42	22.4
2	The COCA	24,756,440	209,229.24	20.2
3	The Strathy	772,575	207,279.37	20.7

Obviously, the use of verbs in fiction is stylistically loaded and often testifies to the verbosity of the genre.

However, the highest degree of variation across all the sections in the corpora under study show the verbs in the academic register. Among the top 10 verbs in the COCA is *to study* (rank 6). Other academic register-specific verbs are *provide*, *include*, *must*, *suggest*, *require*, create, *base*, *consider*, *learn*, *identify,* etc. A corpus-driven study of the verbs used by English learners in academic discourse and its comparison with the use of academic verbs by native speakers has been conducted by S. Granger and M. Paquot (2009) [4]. Nowadays, one can find corpus-informed lists of academic English verbs and use them in academic writing [1].

To conclude, the most frequently used verbs in English show less variation than the less frequently used verbs. Obviously, it is lexical verbs that reveal register- and genre-specific variation and are of particular interest. Their use, though widely studied, with the advance and constant development of corpus tools and techniques, still leaves much room for scrutiny.

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PROSODIC MARKERS OF INDIAN SEAMEN' SPEECH BEHAVIOR

ПРОСОДИЧНІ МАРКЕРИ МОВЛЕННЄВОЇ ПОВЕДІНКИ ІНДІЙСЬКИХ МОРЯКІВ

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За нашого часу англійська мова є головним засобом міжнародного спілкування. Вчені-лінгвісти приділяють цьому питанню величезну увагу. У роботах Д. Крістала, МакАртура, Траджила, Кіркпатріка та багатьох інших відзначається, що кількість англомовних у світі сягає майже двох мільярдів людей [2; 3; 5; 9]. До них відносяться не тільки носії національних варіантів Канади, Австралії, Нової Зеландії, Великої Британії, США, але також й ті, хто користується англійською як другою або як іноземною мовою.

Як зазначає британський лінгвіст Д. Крістал, у країнах, де англійська мова є однією з офіційних мов і має широкий вжиток, функціонує як друга, кількість англомовних значно перевищує кількість тих, для кого вона є рідною. При цьому кількість мовців англійською буде тільки збільшуватись через стрімкий приріст населення [2, с. 85]. Цей факт є характерною особливістю Індії, де англійська мова є офіційно другою.