

**ЛЕКСИЧНІ ЗМІНИ У ПЕРШІЙ (1952) ТА ОСТАННІЙ (2021) РІЗДВЯНИХ
ПРОМОВАХ КОРОЛЕВИ ЄЛИЗАВЕТИ ІІ: КОРПУСНИЙ АНАЛІЗ**

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**VOCABULARY CHANGE IN THE FIRST (1952) AND THE LAST (2021) CHRISTMAS
ADDRESSES OF QUEEN ELIZABETH II: A CORPUS ANALYSIS**

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Стаття присвячена порівняльному корпусному аналізу першої (1952) та останньої (2021) різдвяних промов королеви Єлизавети ІІ. Метою даної роботи є проведення унікального аналізу різдвяних звернень Королеви за допомогою потужного програмного забезпечення Voyant Tool, яке забезпечує багаторівневе дослідження тексту, включаючи такі інструменти, як аналіз частотності слів, колокацій, трендів, а також створення хмар слів. Програмне забезпечення Voyant Tools, яке використовується для аналізу, дозволяє глибоко дослідити мовні конструкції, виявити основні лексичні зміни. Це дослідження є продовженням попередньої роботи (Онищенко, 2024), де досліджувались усі різдвяні промови Королеви. Результати свідчать про поступовий перехід від формального, урочистого мовлення до більш особистого, емоційного стилю. Отримані дані ілюструють еволюцію публічного дискурсу монарха в контексті змін соціальних і культурних очікувань.

Ключові слова: корпусний аналіз, лексичні зміни, корпус текстів, різдвяні промови, корпусна лінгвістика, Королева Єлизавета ІІ.

The article focuses on the comparative corpus analysis of the first (1952) and last (2021) Christmas speeches of Queen Elizabeth II. The aim of this work is to conduct a unique analysis of the Queen's Christmas addresses using the powerful Voyant Tool software, which provides a multi-level textual analysis, including tools such as word frequency analysis, collocation analysis, trend analysis, and word cloud creation. The Voyant Tools software used for the analysis allows for an in-depth study of language structures and the identification of major lexical changes. This study is a continuation of the previous work (Onyshchenko, 2024), which examined all of the Queen's Christmas speeches. The results show a gradual shift from formal,

solemn speech to a more personal, emotional style. The data illustrate the evolution of the monarch's public discourse in the context of changing social and cultural expectations.

Key words: *corpus analysis, lexical changes, corpus of texts, Christmas speeches, corpus linguistics, Queen Elizabeth II.*

Introduction. Corpus linguistics is one of the most promising areas of modern linguistics. It has opened up a new field for language learning: instead of intuitive observation, it uses statistical analysis and instead of individual examples, it uses systematic data. The essence of corpus linguistics is the study of language based on large collections of real texts, known as corpora, which make it possible not only to record language units but also to examine their usage patterns in context. This approach greatly expands the possibilities of language analysis.

Corpus linguistics developed in the 60s and 80s of the twentieth century, at a time of rapid technological progress, when ‘technical communications’ began to completely change existence of all humanity and research in the Humanities (Zyngier et al. 2008; Chesnokova 2016; van Peer and Chesnokova 2017). Therefore, its emergence revolutionized linguistic research.

One of the most famous and important corpora of our time is the British National Corpus (BNC), which contains over 100 million words and covers a wide range of written and spoken sources of modern British English. The BNC has become a kind of benchmark for corpus construction, and it is often used to study modern word usage, grammar and language collocations. Its breadth and diversity provide reliable language slices that are extremely useful for both academic research and practical applications in automatic text processing. Another influential example of corpora is the International Corpus of English (ICE), which covers different varieties of English from more than 20 English-speaking countries. The ICE is invaluable for the comparative analysis of national standards, dialects and language norms in a globalized context. This corpus is widely used in numerous intercultural linguistic studies, particularly in the field of linguistic variation, grammatical differences and stylistic trends in the world's English-speaking countries.

Additionally, corpus linguistics has begun to be actively used not only within traditional linguistics. Its methods have become important for other fields, for instance, sociolinguistics or the analysis of historical language changes. For example, the development of computational linguistics has significantly advanced natural language processing systems, where large corpora help improve machine translation and automatic text generation. Speech recognition is also worth mentioning: corpora are used to improve the accuracy of voice assistants, automatic transcription programs, and real-time translation tools (Jurafsky and Martin 2020).

The relevance of the topic of lexical changes in the first (1952) and last (2021)

Christmas speeches of Queen Elizabeth II is that it will allow for a unique analysis and reveal the linguistic transformations that took place over a period of almost 70 years. After all, it is the Queen's first and last greetings that outline the period of her reign, which is now one of the longest in the history of the British monarchy. This selection of speeches allows tracing of the development of vocabulary, rhetoric, and thematic emphasis without scattering them throughout the corpus. Therefore, it is important to analyze the first and last addresses in order to trace the main linguistic and rhetorical shifts within a historically coherent period — from the post-war era to the COVID-19 pandemic. The uniqueness of the study is that corpus analysis and its interpretation are not fully automated processes. Thus, it requires the participation of a researcher who is able to analyze the result correctly and identify lexical changes.

The research tool employed is Voyant Tools software which allows for multilevel text analysis, including such tools as word frequency analysis, collocation analysis, and the creation of word clouds and their trends. These features allow for a more detailed and visual analysis of language changes. This makes it a powerful tool for tracking rhetorical strategies and semantic changes. In addition, Voyant Tools allows researchers to identify phrases and multilingual expressions (n-grams) that offer a deeper understanding of repetitive speech patterns. This functionality is particularly useful for tracking phraseological evolution within a particular corpus over a long period.

Problem Statement. For decades, Queen Elizabeth II's Christmas speeches have served as a powerful means of communication between the monarch and society. Although the Queen has adhered to certain norms in her annual address, the content of her greetings has changed under the influence of historical events and public sentiment. At the same time, there are still no comprehensive corpus studies that focus exclusively on comparing the first and last speeches as boundary points in her rhetorical practice. The research question is to investigate the lexical changes between the first (1952) and last (2021) Christmas speeches of Queen Elizabeth II using corpus analysis. This approach allows us to identify key linguistic shifts, particularly in vocabulary, themes, rhetorical emphasis and the structure of the addresses. It also contributes to a better understanding of the dynamics of the monarchy's public discourse against a background of historical change.

Analysis of the latest research and publications. Recent scholarship has increasingly applied corpus linguistic methods to the study of Queen Elizabeth II's public discourse. For example, Lin Shao (2024) conducted a functional discourse analysis of the Queen's 2020 Christmas speech using Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics framework. The study examined how the Queen used language to garner public support during the COVID-19 pandemic, focusing on the three metafunctions of language: ideational, interpersonal, and textual. This research demonstrates

the applicability of Systemic Functional Linguistics to the analysis of political discourse and highlights the Queen's strategic use of language to connect with her audience.

Purpose. The article aims to explore the lexical features and shifts between the first Christmas greeting (1952) and the last Christmas greeting (2021) of Queen Elizabeth II over nearly 70 years, using corpus analysis tools.

Results.

Summary tool. The Summary tool, applied to the first and last speeches, will allow researchers to clearly trace the quantitative linguistic changes that occurred during the Queen's reign. In particular, it will reveal precise differences in vocabulary density, readability index, and sentence length, highlighting measurable aspects of how her communication has developed structurally. These numerical indicators provide a solid basis for detecting a shift towards clearer sentence structures and richer vocabulary.

This corpus has 1 document with 689 total words and 309 unique word forms. Created now.

Vocabulary Density: 0.448

Readability Index: 7.977

Average Words Per Sentence: 28.7

Figure 1.1 Summary tool. First Christmas greeting (1952)

The linguistic parameters of the first speech give a clear picture of the style of royal speech in the mid-20th century, characterized by long sentence structures and moderate vocabulary complexity.

This corpus has 1 document with 695 total words and 342 unique word forms. Created now.

Vocabulary Density: 0.492

Readability Index: 9.396

Average Words Per Sentence: 24.8

Figure 1.2 Summary tool. Last Christmas greeting (2021)

The linguistic parameters demonstrate an increased lexical density and a decrease in sentence length.

A comparison of the first and last Christmas greetings shows that the total length of both speeches remained almost the same (689 words in 1952 and 695 words in 2021), but the number of unique words increased significantly from 309 to 342. Accordingly, the lexical density has also increased (from 0.448 to 0.492), indicating a significant enrichment of the vocabulary and a wider choice of vocabulary in the latter speech. The readability index has also changed from 7.977 to 9.396, indicating that the Queen's speech has become more complex as a result of almost 70 years.

Figure 2.2 Word cloud. Last Christmas greeting (2021)

In the last Christmas speech, the most frequently used words are *christmas*, *family*, *happiness*, *generation*, *children*, *joy*, *Commonwealth*, *celebrate*, *chance*, *traditions*. These words reflect a more emotional vocabulary and highlight the main themes of the time, such as closeness, shared experience, optimism and personal connection.

The first thing that can be noticed when comparing these two word clouds is the formal vocabulary of the first Christmas speech (1952). It has a distinct presence of verbs with high formality *shall*, *pray*, *speaking*, which indicates the formal tone of the address, typical for that time. In the last Christmas speech (2021), this formality has noticeably decreased, but more informal and emotional lexical items appear instead *enjoy*, *celebrate*, *happiness*, *joy*.

Additionally, in the first speech, words *strength*, *spirit*, *affection*, *promises*, and *immense* reflect a ceremonial and dignified tone, characteristic of traditional royal addresses. In the last speech, the emphasis shifts to specific concepts related to life and human relationships, such as *families*, *children*, *eldest*, *son*, *generation*, *child*. This indicates a greater personalization of the rhetoric.

Furthermore, a remarkable change can be observed in the use of the word *commonwealth*: while in 1952 it appeared with words *empire* and *nations*, which emphasized its political and institutional connotation, in 2021 it is used in a more emotional context alongside *happiness*, *joy*, and *chance*.

Finally, the appearance of words related to intergenerational relations *generation*, *eldest*, *young*, *baton* in the last speech indicates that the Queen deliberately emphasized the theme of continuity and the importance of passing on experience and traditions to future generations, which was practically absent in the first speech.

Collocation link. The application of collocation link analysis to the first and last Christmas speeches will allow us to better understand not just what words the Queen used, but how the context of their use changed throughout the entire period of her reign. This unique approach will help to trace the change in the relationships between keywords, which will allow us to understand which concepts have become less formal over time and have acquired personal or emotional meaning. The analysis of collocations reveals not only superficial changes in vocabulary, but also the transformation of the very ideas and values that were put into speeches at the beginning and end of the Queen's reign.

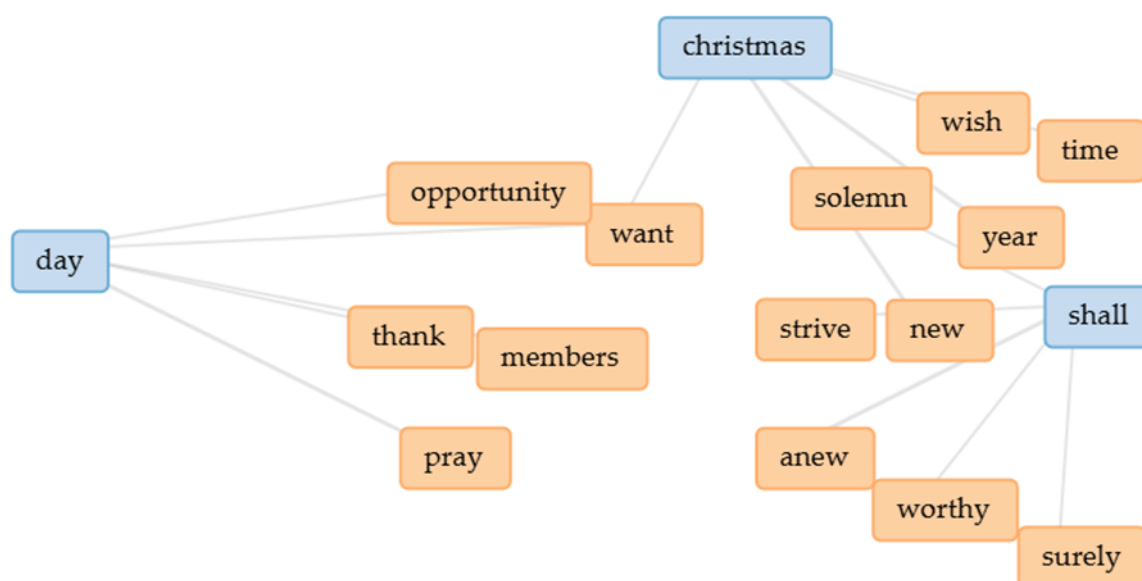


Figure 3.1 Collocation link. First Christmas greeting (1952)

In the first speech, the main words have the following collocations: the word *christmas* is associated with the words *solemn*, *wish* and *year*. The word *shall* is combined with *new*, *worthy* and *surely*. The word *day* has connections with the *opportunity*, *thank* and *pray*.

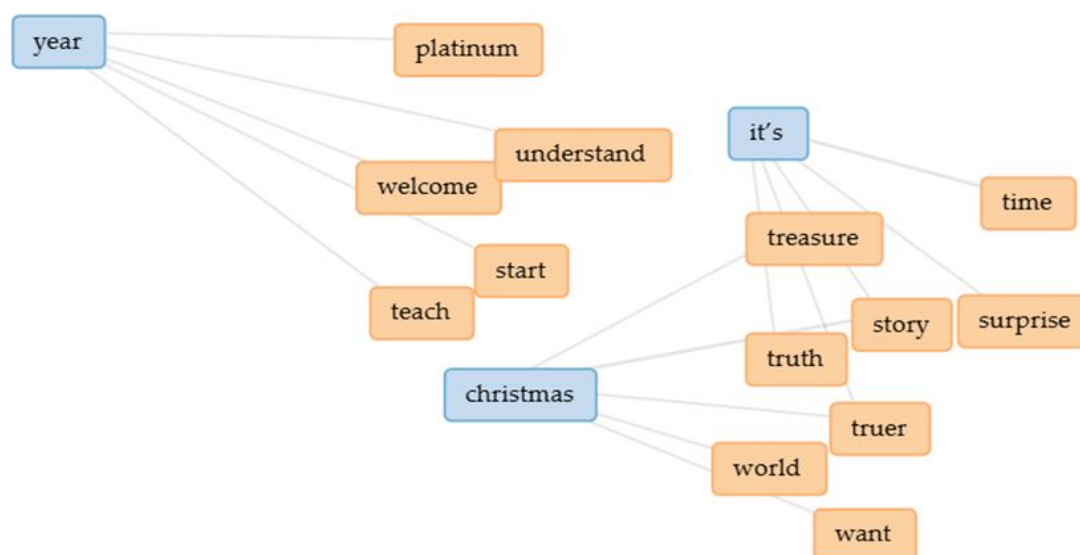


Figure 3.2 Collocation link. Last Christmas greeting (2021)

The last speech shows a change in the collocation relations of the main words: the word *christmas* is most often used together with *world*, *want* and *story*. The word *year* is combined with *platinum*, *welcome* and *teach*. The word *it's* is combined with *treasure*, *truth* and *surprise*.

In the first Christmas speech (1952), it can be noticed that the word *christmas* is

related to the words *solemn*, *wish*, *year*, and these words emphasize the official and serious nature of the address, showing the formality of the greeting and the tribute to traditions.

Additionally, the word *shall* is associated with *anew*, *worthy*, *surely*, which again indicates a pronounced formality associated with duty and confidence in the future. These collocations give the speech the character of a solemn promise, which reinforces its monarchical tone. The word *day*, associated with *opportunity*, *thank*, *pray*, gives the speech an element of spirituality and gratitude, emphasizing the religious context of the speech, which is typical of the postwar years.

In the last Christmas speech (2021), the connections become noticeably less formal and take on an emotional colour. The word *christmas* has collocations with *world*, *want*, *story*, which emphasize global realities and personal desires, demonstrating the Queen's openness to the audience. The collocations of the word *year*—*platinum*, *welcome*, *teach*—have a jubilee context and show a focus on the transfer of knowledge and experience. The collocations of the *it's* with the words *treasure*, *time*, *surprise* indicate sincerity and openness of the statement, which shows that the Queen tried to speak as honestly and openly as possible with her people.

Trends. Trend analysis is an important stage of corpus research, as it allows us to identify the pattern of use of some words over time. In summary, analysing trends allows us to determine which words appeared more frequently on various dates, which trends remained stable, and which ones disappeared or acquired new meaning. The graphical depiction of trends is in the form of a line graph, where each word is displayed in a different colour to make the data easier to understand visually. The lines connecting the dots show the variation in the frequency of these words over time. Each point on the graph corresponds to the relative frequency of a word in a particular corpus, and the flow of the lines helps to trace the overall dynamics of change.

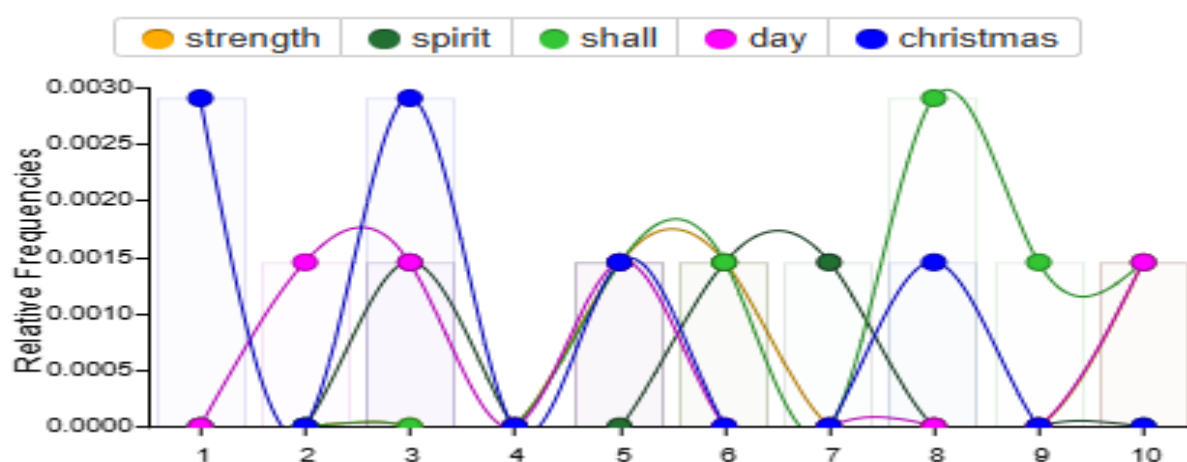


Figure 4.1 Trends. First Christmas greeting (1952)

In the trends graph for the first Christmas speech, it is clearly visible that the

word *christmas* has the highest frequency. The word *shall* demonstrates a notable presence across the text. All other words—*day*, *strength*, *spirit*, and *pray*—occur in relatively similar proportions without significant peaks.

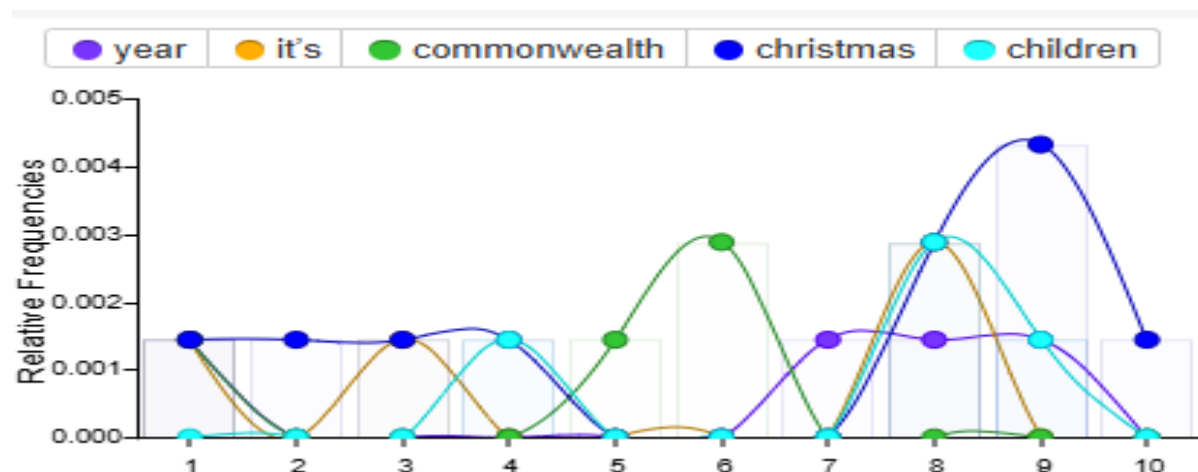


Figure 4.2 Trends. Last Christmas greeting (2021)

In the trends graph for the last Christmas speech, the word *christmas* has the highest frequency. The words *commonwealth* and *children* demonstrate a similar level of occurrence. All other words—*year*, *celebrate*, *joy*, and *it's*—appear with relatively equal frequency.

Comparing the trends of the first and last Christmas greetings, it is noticeable that the word *christmas* dominates the 1952 speech, with two clear peaks at the beginning and near the middle of the text. This emphasises the importance of Christmas as the framing theme of the speech. The word *shall* also stands out for its high frequency in the central part of the speech. Its meaning conveys formality and obligation, in keeping with the tone of the address during the post-war reconstruction period. The word *day* shows a clear stability in the middle of the speech. *Strength* and *spirit* appear with less regularity and are concentrated closer to the middle of the speech, proclaiming the ideas of internal resilience and national unity. The word *pray* is present evenly, without peaks, indicating the significant religiousness of the speech.

In the 2021 speech, the word *christmas* also retains the highest frequency, but unlike the 1952 speech, it peaks closer to the end, which creates an emotional intensification of the ending. *Children* and *commonwealth* have a similar level of frequency, but perform different functions: the former emphasizes the focus on family values, while the latter retains a reference to traditional monarchical themes. The word *joy* is one of the most emotionally colored words, and its appearance towards the end of the speech creates a sense of closure on a positive note. Furthermore, the word *it's* was introduced, which is a shortened form and indicates a more conversational style.

Celebrate and *year* show a gradual increase in frequency in the second half of the speech, reflecting the emphasis on summarizing and hoping for the future.

Overall, the trends show a gradual shift from the monarch's formal speech to an emotional and personal style.

Conclusions and further research prospects. A comparative corpus analysis of Queen Elizabeth II's first (1952) and last (2021) Christmas speeches reveals clear lexical changes that reflect the evolution of the monarch's rhetoric over nearly 70 years. The 1952 speech was dominated by formal and declarative vocabulary—*shall, strength, spirit, pray*—emphasising themes of duty, unity, and national resilience. In contrast, the 2021 speech was dominated by emotional words—*children, joy, celebrate, it's*—indicating a shift towards warmer language. Collocation and trend analysis also confirmed changes in lexical emphasis, showing a shift from abstract to more personal discourse. Further research could include analyzing the entire corpus of the Queen's Christmas speeches, comparing clearly defined periods.

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