What’s the history of these words and phrases? What do they tell us about changes in American culture and society?

- pothole (1826)
- ranch (1830)
- Christmas tree (1837)
- tenderfoot (1849)
- blue jeans (1855)
- caboose (1861)
- showboat (1869)
- Chatauqua (1873)
- bandwagon (1881)
- cold feet (1894)
- phony (1900)
- melting pot (1907)
- jazz (1913)
- T-shirt (1919)
- motel (1925)
- jalopy (1929)
- groovy (1937)
- teenager (1938)
- gizmo (1942)
- baby-sit (1947)
- Ms. (1952)
- brinksmanship (1956)
- carpool (1962)
- sexism (1969)
- couch potato (1975)
- geek (1978)
- yuppie (1984)
- virtual reality (1987)
- go postal (1994)
- Ebonics (1997)
- TEOTWAWKI (2000)
- tweetup (2008)

Use the two largest corpora of American English to study language change:

- 400 million word Corpus of Historical American English (COHA), 1810-2009
- 410 million word Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA), 1990-2009

We’ll also use (lots!) the new Google Books interface (ngrams.googlelabs.com)

Finally, we’ll use the new 25 million word Corpus of General Conference talks (1850s-2000s), to look at changes in LDS discourse

Carry out projects that can be turned into ORCA grants, or research that can be presented at linguistics conferences

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We’ll look at morphological, syntactic, and semantic change during the last 200 years of American English, answering many questions like the following:

(Morphology) Is the –ess feminine suffix (stewardess, authoress, etc) increasing or decreasing? Since when? And why?

(Grammar: prescriptive) What’s happened with who/whom, can/may, split infinitives (to boldly go), and preposition stranding (someone to talk to) in the 1900s? When have the major changes occurred, and why?

(Syntax) When, how, and why have the following changed: be like (he’s like, I’m not going), so not ADJ (she’s so not interested in him), complementation (began to notice / noticing), end up V-ing?

(Semantics) When did the following words change meaning, and why: lame, hot, gay, green, strike, web

(Cultural shifts) How are we using the following in the last 30-40 years, compared to their use before that time: woman, race, God, nature, science, mind, family