ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to determine the adjectival collocates of the nouns [gay] and [lesbian] in American English and to find out the similarities and differences of the adjectival collocates of the nouns [gay] and [lesbian] from 1990-2015. This study uses the mixed method design, which consists of quantitative and qualitative approaches. The data are taken from Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA). The corpus contains more than 520 million words of texts that are equally divided among spoken, fictions, popular magazines, newspapers, talk shows, and academic texts. Since the words ‘gay’ and ‘lesbian’ become nouns in the 1990s and the availability data in the corpus is in 2015, the analysis of this study will cover 25 years time range that is divided into: 1990-1994, 1995-1999, 2000-2004, 2005-2009, and 2010-2015. The adjectives selected are those that occur more than once in the corpus. The data are analyzed using Stein’s (2004) theory of gay and lesbian history in America. This study reveals that there are similarities and differences in the adjectival collocates of [gay] and [lesbian] in the American English within and across periods. In across periods, the phrase denoting age i.e. ‘young gays’ appears consistently in all periods, while ‘older gays’ only appears from 2010 to 2015. In contrast, the adjectival collocates of [lesbian] show more dynamic variety as there is no constant adjective that is associated with the noun [lesbian] from time to time. This is due to the fact that the noun [lesbian] appears more often in literary works.

KEYWORDS: adjective; collocate; corpus linguistics; diachronic corpus.