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About *Schwa*

We are an academic journal produced by the students of Brigham Young University. Our mission is to increase the amount and accessibility of linguistic scholarship—especially for those without graduate school experience—while simultaneously training editors and designers in the ways of modern publishing. Some of our articles are strictly theoretical and academic. Others are less technical and more personal in nature. Experiments, surveys, corpus analyses, and essays are all acceptable. We have published on all the following subdisciplines of linguistics and more:

- Phonetics, the perception and production of speech sounds
- Phonology, the system of speech sounds used in a given context
- Semantics, the meaning constructs of words and sentences
- Syntax, the structure of permissible and meaningful sentences
- Pragmatics, real-world language use and other speech-related actions
- Sociolinguistics, language variation based on sociological factors
- Psycholinguistics, the cognitive tasks necessary for language
- Fieldwork notes from living in a foreign language-speaking community
- Forensics linguistics, the role of language in law

We are always accepting submissions. Articles on any language are welcome, including cross-linguistic studies, but they must be written in English.

Our staff includes both editors and graphic designers. We extend an open invitation for new staff members. Go to our website at schwa.byu.edu to submit an article or join our staff.

Editor's Note

Life is made up of beginnings and ends. Last year, I became editor in chief of *Schwa*. It was a beginning—an adventure, a journey, a learning curve. Three semesters later, I am reaching an end—not only with *Schwa* but with college. If there is one thing I've learned over the course of my bachelor's degree, it is that language is always evolving. As long as we keep speaking and writing, our language will continue on.

I am grateful for this final semester to grapple with language and produce this journal. I am grateful for all of the students who embarked on this journey with me. I am grateful for the ones who joined along the way. I am grateful for Isabel and Rachel, my fabulous managing editors. Without you, this journal wouldn't be published. I am grateful for every one of my senior and staff editors and for the time and attention you've put into *Schwa*.

We are all grateful for the students who were brave enough to share their work with us. Without them, we would go nowhere, always spinning our tires without any traction. Their effective communication and collaboration are greatly appreciated. Their time and attention don't go unnoticed.

We're grateful to the Department of Linguistics and to our faculty advisor, Dr. Dirk Elzinga. We are provided with an environment to explore and grow, and it wouldn't be possible without them. We are all better editors and students for it.

Last but certainly not least, we are grateful for you, our reader. Thank you for reading this journal and learning more about the ins and outs of language. Please enjoy issue 29 of *Schwa: Language and Linguistics.*

Abby Ellis
Editor in Chief

An Exploration of Passive Voice in Mystery Fiction

Abigail Christensen

The use of passive voice is often frowned upon in academic or professional writing. This article examines the ways passive voice can be used effectively, particularly in mystery fiction. The author focuses on Agatha Christie's popular novel Murder on the Orient Express *in an attempt to better understand passive voice's place in writing. Using this specific novel as a guide, the article explores the ways passive voice draws attention to evidence, controls the narrative, and develops characters' psyches.*

For years, many have regarded the use of passive voice as less effective than active voice. Passive voice has been said to be "weaker and more cumbersome than the more energetic, more compact active voice" (Gopen, 2014, p. 1). Despite these claims against its use, passive voice can be extremely effective in certain forms of writing, including mystery novels. This genre of fiction requires the unique building of suspense, the presentation of evidence, and the expression of many unknowns. One mystery author who clearly demonstrates her ability to utilize the passive voice to enhance her writing is Agatha Christie. Her choice of voicing in the novel *Murder on the Orient Express* has various impacts on her audience and demonstrates that passive voice is not always detrimental to a written work.

Christie's works utilize passive voice more than other novels in various genres. According to Prosecraft, a linguistic literary database that has been taken down by the creator since this article was written, 8.88 percent of *Murder on the Orient Express* is written in passive voice, placing it in the seventy-fifth percentile of all the works in the database. Christie's works are consistently in the seventy-fifth to ninety-ninth percentile range of this metric, with several of her novels having over 10 percent of the writing in passive voice. By contrast, J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit*, which was written in the same decade as many of Christie's works, only contains 7.39 percent passive voice, placing it at just the thirty-third percentile, and Charlotte Bronte's romance novel *Jane Eyre* hovers around 6.5 percent passive voice; however, *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, a mystery novel written by Arthur Conan Doyle, has 8.71 percent passive voice, much closer (seventy-first percentile) to the commonality of passive voice in Christie's works. Thus, there is a clear pattern in which mystery novels, and Agatha Christie's novels in particular, utilize passive voice far more than other novels of different genres. This trend exists for a multitude of reasons, as mystery authors like Christie use passive voice in order to convey unique elements of crime writing including drawing attention to evidence, controlling the narrative, and developing characters' psyches.

Attention to Evidence

In *Murder on the Orient Express*, passive voice is especially prevalent in sections that deal primarily with the description of the murder. One such portion is when Poirot, the detective in the story, examines

the crime scene. Christie sets the scene by stating that "the window was pushed down," "the blind was drawn up," "[fingerprints] have been wiped," and "a pipe . . . dropped most conveniently," along with other key descriptions (Christie, 1934, pp. 67–70). Each of these descriptions is written in passive rather than active voice. This choice was made because, due to the nature of the crime, the characters and audience do not know who performed these deeds. In situations like this, where the agent is not known, passive voice is useful because it draws attention to the action that was done rather than to the doer (Dawson, 1987, p. 1). In Christie's novel, the reader does not and is not expected to know who affected the scene in this way, so it would not be logical for her to present the details in active voice. An active voice construction in this situation would consist of pronouns such as "someone," and this voicing would highlight the unknown murderer rather than encouraging the reader to take note of various important details surrounding the crime. By utilizing passive voice instead, Christie draws the reader's attention to the finer details of the room and allows them to consider the scene, an important element of mystery novels.

Similarly, as Poirot interrogates each passenger, he begins by describing the situation to them in passive voice. He makes statements such as "your master has been murdered" to one of the victim's servants and goes on to talk about, in passive voice, important clues that were found (Christie, 1934, p. 105). By relaying the death of Ratchett to others in passive form, Poirot ensures that they immediately recognize who died. It allows the other characters to focus on the victim rather than the unknown murderer's identity, thus allowing them to each process the critical information first. In this situation involving the death of a fellow passenger, it is logical for them to learn who is dead before beginning to speculate who the murderer may be. Furthermore, Poirot is able to describe the situation in a more neutral way, neither accusing nor absolving any individual from blame. This encourages the reader to keep an open mind in this early stage of the novel and gather important information rather than guess who the murderer is. Thus, the passive voice is a more effective choice in this instance.

Control Over the Narrative

In addition to conversations amongst the passengers, Christie utilizes passive voice in Poirot's several summaries of the crime and evidence as a whole that are placed throughout the book for the benefit of the reader. These sections are heavy with passive voice as they account for the facts of the case, and they often express other pertinent information through the inclusion of adverbials. For example, Poirot states that "Cassetti was stabbed twelve times last night" and "the crime was committed at a quarter past one" (Christie, 1934, pp. 196–197). These and similar constructions are written in passive voice and do not include an agent. The purpose of these statements is to remind the reader of the case's facts in detail, and Christie accomplishes this goal through the passive construction. It allows her to highlight the crime and victim as well as adding additional information through adverbials (i.e., "twelve times last night" and "at a quarter past one"). The use of passive voice enables her to provide the reader with all necessary information concisely without muddling the evidence with generic words (like "someone" or "an unknown individual"), which would serve no purpose other than to repeatedly remind the reader of what they already know: that the murderer's identity is a mystery. Presenting the information in this way limits confusion, and the reader is able to quickly take note of the facts of the case and begin to form theories in their own minds.

The presentation of evidence in these same sections is also laden with passive voice, but these sentences often do include an agent and the reasoning behind their inclusion differs. For example, Poirot recalls that "this [time] is supported by the evidence of the watch, by the evidence of Mrs. Hubbard, and by the evidence of the German woman" (Christie, 1934, p. 197). This sentence is written in passive voice, and thus brings the reader's attention in part to the evidence or claim presented (in this case, the theory that the crime was committed at 1:25 a.m.). However, unlike previous examples, this sentence does include several agents: the evidence of the watch, Mrs. Hubbard, and the German woman. Passive construction in which there is a "by" phrase is often used to present new information in relation to the subject (Pullum, 2014, p. 64), so using passive voice in this situation allows Christie to highlight each individual piece of evidence that supports the claim. The readers may not have easily recognized the link between these various sources, but passive voice allows Christie to express and emphasize this connection, thus making a stronger case for

the claim's validity. By placing this sentence shortly after earlier ones in which no agent was given, Christie accentuates the fact that this theory does have support when compared to theories in which no agent was provided. The use of active voice would mitigate the effect of listing multiple sources, and more focus would be placed on those sources rather than the theory being posed. Thus, even when the agent is known, maintaining passive voice and including relevant agents allow the readers to subconsciously contrast the knowns and unknowns. They are better able to follow the logic of the case and Poirot's thoughts about it, therefore creating a more engaging read.

Revelations About Characters' Psyche

Passive voice is also very prevalent when discussing an earlier case in which Ratchett, the murder victim, was the perpetrator: the kidnapping and killing of Daisy Armstrong, a young girl with whom many of the passengers have a personal connection. When questioning them, Poirot repeatedly describes the events with passive phrases such as "[Daisy] was kidnapped and killed" (Christie, 1934, p. 158). Again, this use of passive voice serves to draw attention to the victim of the crime. According to Gopen's article, the audience tends to hone in on the subject of a sentence and assume that it is that entity's story (Gopen, 2014, p. 16). At this point in the novel, Poirot suspects that Ratchett's murderer is connected to the Armstrong case in some way but is unsure which of the passengers had personal ties to the Armstrongs. In addition, Ratchett had changed his name and was somewhat unrecognizable as the kidnapper from years ago. By using passive voice when mentioning the details of the Armstrong case to his subjects, Poirot places emphasis on Daisy while omitting her killer, thus maintaining the secrecy of Ratchett's identity. This deliberate form of questioning also allows him (and the reader) to gauge the emotional reaction of each passenger and draw conclusions about their familiarity with the Armstrongs and the kidnapping case. The passengers are forced to focus on Daisy, and those who knew her would likely have a stronger reaction to the information presented in this way as opposed to active voice, where the little girl would become the object.

The discussion of this case by other passengers, however, incorporates a different style of voicing that alludes to their feelings regarding the matter. According to Sepehri et al. (2022), the use

of passive voice increases the psychological distance between the subject and the event. It causes the reader or listener to lessen the blame of the perpetrator of a crime and separates the two (Sepehri et al., 2022, p. 6). In *Murder on the Orient Express,* many of the characters were closely involved in the Armstrong case and feel strongly about it, and their emotions are expressed through the voicing of their statements. For instance, when discussing the case, the aunt of Daisy Armstrong exclaims, "This man who was killed is the man who murdered my baby niece, who killed my sister, who broke my brother-in-law's heart" (Christie, 1934, p. 270). In this sentence, she uses both active and passive voice, and a closer consideration of these choices reveals much about her thoughts and feelings. She begins by describing Ratchett's death in passive voice when she refers to him as "the man who was killed". By relaying the event in this manner, she creates a distance between Ratchett and his brutal murder, revealing her lack of concern about it. By contrast, when she begins speaking about Ratchett's actions towards her family, she switches into active voice. This shift puts a greater sense of blame on Ratchett and clearly conveys his responsibility for these horrific acts. Daisy's aunt opts to emphasize Ratchett's terrible deeds while simultaneously taking the focus off of his death, a choice that reveals her thoughts and feelings toward the victim.

Christie uses passive and active voice as a way to develop the aunt's character and hint at her opinions regarding the various crimes that took place. The deliberate voicing used in such interactions also reveals subtle details to the reader and allows them to begin formulating their own theories regarding the identity of the murderer. Understanding characters is vital to a mystery reader, especially when the novel is psychological like Christie's, and the use of passive voice enables her readers to do so. Eliot Singer (1984) stated that Christie's mysteries are so satisfying in part because she "controverts the reader's mind" through her writing (p. 160). She utilizes various techniques, including voicing, to lead the reader's thoughts in a particular direction so that they do not discover the murderer's identity too easily, thus maintaining their attention throughout the novel.

Conclusion

Mystery novels are so enthralling because they allow the reader to fully engage in the story, and the author is faced with the task of keeping the reader guessing throughout the novel along with providing enough details for a satisfying conclusion (Goldman, 2011, pp. 264–265). Making use of both active and passive voice allows authors, particularly Christie, to do just that. As demonstrated in the previously discussed examples, the choice of voicing greatly impacts which pieces of evidence the reader focuses on, which theories they consider plausible, and which characters they suspect. Christie was a master of utilizing passive voice to create many thrilling stories, including *Murder on the Orient Express,* and her works demonstrate the many benefits of including passive voice in writing.

Therefore, despite common thought and prescribed teachings, writing in the passive voice can be an extremely powerful tool, particularly for mystery or crime authors. It allows them to lead the reader on a suspenseful, directed journey while still providing them with the opportunity of puzzling out the story in their own mind. Contrasts in voicing can emphasize certain points, and passive voice in dialogue can convey much about a character's thoughts, opinions, and emotions. Active voice and passive voice both have their uses, and a good writer is able to utilize both in ways that strengthen their works exponentially.

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Evaluating Values

Prescriptive Rules in the Absence of Judgment Claims

Joshua Topham

Prescriptivists rely on judgment claims to encourage people to adhere to their prescriptions. Sometimes, those judgment claims call into question the intelligence of the user of the proscribed form instead of the proscribed form's lack of clarity or precision. With results from a survey, this article shows that in the absence of user-oriented judgment claims, individuals are generally unwilling to alter their behavior to adhere to lesser-known prescriptions. The respondents answered questions surrounding the word impact; their answers indicated they would not change their behavior even when they were informed of the prescribed rule without a judgment claim. While small in scale, this study begins to demonstrate the reliance of prescriptivism on judgment claims.

Prescriptivists often rely on judgment claims to encourage people to adhere to their prescriptions. Sometimes, those judgment claims are relatively explicit, like when Garner states without equivocation, "Standard English is worth trying to attain: without it, you won't be taken seriously. Many people, especially educated people, will regard you with condescension, amusement, and contempt; they'll consider you vulgar, uneducated, rustic, and possibly even disgusting; you might well arouse fury, pity, or scorn" (Garner, 2016). On other occasions, prescriptivists are more subtle with their claims, like when Bernstein advises "careful" writers to reject using the phrase "consensus of opinion" as they "would any other wasteful redundancy" (Bernstein, 1965). Some judgment claims serve to perpetuate problematic stereotypes, such as the view that Southerners are uneducated because they say "y'all." Notably, those judgment claims focus on judging the *user* of the proscribed form—not the proscribed form itself. I will refer to such claims in this paper as "user-oriented judgment claims." Judgment claims become problematic when they are user oriented. There are several highly plausible arguments to be made against the use of certain proscribed forms. Perhaps a proscribed form is convoluted, imprecise, or sexist. Thus, there are legitimate arguments to be made in favor of using prescribed forms; however, the scope of this article is the use of judgment claims that focus on the user of a proscribed form, not the proscribed form itself. This focus on the user makes the claim both misrepresentative and problematic: misrepresentative because the use of a proscribed form has little to do with intelligence (and much more to do with environment), and problematic because these claims perpetuate harmful stereotypes.

Judgment claims are ubiquitous in usage guides and in prescriptivists' pedagogical practices in general (Chapman, 2016). This begs the question: are these judgment claims essential to the pedagogical nature of prescriptivism? In other words, without such claims, would usage prescriptions retain their force? In some cases, when prescriptivists cannot make legitimate, non-user-oriented appeals, they rely instead on problematic claims invoking people's intelligence or abilities. Does this mean that for such prescriptions, prescriptivists must exploit people's intellectual or social insecurities to encourage adherence to their prescriptions? This study does not aim to prove that point conclusively, but it does attempt to shed light on the issue and forward the conversation. My hypothesis, before conducting the research for this paper,

was that judgment claims are in fact essential to the pedagogical nature of prescriptivism; without them, individuals are left without enough incentive to alter their behavior. When neither user-oriented judgment nor any claim regarding the inherent merits of using a prescribed form are made, people will not feel compelled to cease their use of a proscribed form.

In this article, I will (1) summarize previous research on prescriptivism, its motives, and its implications, (2) demonstrate that the research question I pose—whether usage prescriptions retain their force in the absence of user-oriented judgment claims—is yet unanswered, and (3) present data that begins to answer that question.

Literature Review

Don Chapman's commentary on prescriptivism was crucial to my understanding of the pedagogical nature of prescriptivism (Chapman, 2016). In his article, he argues that tradition plays a role in validating prescriptive rules. Specifically, he states that "one of the most important beliefs passed on in the prescriptive tradition is that there are rewards for following prescriptive rules." He continues by stipulating that those rewards "stem from the assumption that those who follow these rules in speech or writing are superior in intelligence, diligence, skill, and so forth." Thus, according to Chapman, one may reap rewards from adhering to prescriptive tradition but risk receiving negative judgment if they use proscribed forms. Sometimes rewards are truly laudable, such as when avoiding a proscribed form can lead to greater clarity or precision. Other times rewards are superficial, like the notion that avoiding a proscribed form can cause one to elude perceptions of ignorance. Chapman focuses on some hyper-standard usage issues—proscribed forms that, while considered standard by most, may upset the most traditional prescriptivists. He calls these rules "SNOOTy." Often, these rules are lesser known because they do not yield any tangible benefit (e.g., they do not lead to greater clarity in communication). Thus, for many SNOOTy rules, user-oriented judgment claims must be made. To try to mitigate the chances that my subjects had already heard judgment claims about the usage issues presented to them, I also rely on lesser-known, SNOOTy rules.

Chapman's claims are easily verified by usage guides. He cites guides like the one written by Ebbitt and Ebbitt, in which the pair

makes such claims as, "Some of those who know better regard anyone who says or writes 'between you and I' as only half-educated" (Ebbitt and Ebbitt, 1990). The assumption underlying this claim is that a dichotomy exists in language: one can either adhere to the usage rule and potentially be recognized as intelligent or ignore the usage rule and be judged as "half-educated."

Such claims also abound in *Garner's Modern English Usage* (2016). In his entry for "theirselves," Garner remarks that "though common in the speech of the uneducated, [theirselves] is poor English." While somewhat subtle, his claim is that using *theirselves* in speech signals a lack of education. If one would like to avoid such a signal, one must adhere to his prescription. Garner's claims are not about achieving clarity in communication; they are about avoiding being perceived as uneducated. Thus, at least for SNOOTy rules, prescriptive justifications tend to be user oriented, which demonstrates a reliance on such claims for the pedagogical practices of prescriptivists. It also begs the question: in the absence of such claims, would users feel obligated to use the prescribed form?

Methods

To understand whether people care about prescriptive rules in the absence of any judgment claim, I administered a survey in which respondents were presented with a lesser-known usage issue in a disinterested way, asked whether they knew about the rule, and then asked whether they were likely to change their behavior in any way to adhere to the rule. In other words, users were presented with a usage rule with no judgment claim attached to it. Then, they were asked whether they would adhere to the prescribed form.

Demographic Information

To get this survey out to respondents, I posted it on social media, sent it to friends and family members, and had others send it to their contacts. Though the sample was not entirely randomized, the survey received forty-six responses from varying demographic backgrounds. Of those forty-six, there were a few more men than women, with one respondent opting not to divulge their gender. A large majority (forty-one) had received a university education or were currently enrolled in a university.

The youngest respondent was fifteen; the oldest was fifty-six. A sizable majority (forty-two) were between eighteen and twenty-seven years old. This led me to believe that most respondents were currently enrolled in university classes at the time of the survey's administration.

Questions Respondents Were Asked

Aside from demographic questions, which asked about their age, education, and gender, respondents were presented with specific usage issues. To maximize the possibility that respondents had seen no judgment claims attached to the issues before being presented with them for this study, I relied on rules that Chapman might call SNOOTy. The rules I used also applied to words that are very commonly misused (according to prescriptivists), so it is unlikely that any merited judgment claim (such as one in which a prescriptivist claims that better clarity could be achieved by avoiding the proscribed form) could be made. Thus, for these rules, prescriptivists must either make a user-oriented judgment claim or some appeal to the preservation of language.

One such rule stipulates that the word *impact* should be used only as a noun; thus, statements in which *impact* is used as a verb would be considered proscribed, at least by SNOOTy people. Respondents were presented with this issue in the following way, "Did you know that some people believe that the word *impact* should never be used as a verb? (So, saying something like 'your speech impacted me' would be incorrect according to them.)" In the question, I carefully avoided using loaded terms that could imply judgment. I wanted to be sure they understood how "some people" felt about the proscribed form, but also wanted to avoid any claim that their "intelligence, diligence, skill, and so forth" would be perceived inferior if they used the word in the proscribed way (Chapman, 2016). Additionally, I wanted respondents to have a clear understanding of what the word *impact* might look like when it is used as a verb, so I included a parenthetical example. Along with the presentation of the usage issue, respondents were asked if they were familiar with the prescription.

Next, respondents were asked how often they heard or used the word *impact* as a verb. Following that question, they were asked how likely they were to alter their everyday behavior because of their knowledge of how some people felt about the proscribed form.

After being asked about whether they would alter their casual speech, respondents were asked if they would use *impact* as a verb in "a church talk or presentation at work/school." My aim with this question was to see whether people's behavior would change in a more formal setting. If, for example, respondents would be more likely to alter their behavior in situations in which they felt their intellectual competence would be especially scrutinized, that information would indicate that user-oriented judgment claims are so culturally ingrained that they need not be made explicitly.

Finally, respondents were asked how likely they were, having now learned the usage rule, to correct a friend or colleague who uses *impact* as a verb. This question was included to gauge the effect of learning a usage rule. If participants were likely to correct colleagues, that would indicate that they would not only be willing to alter their own behavior, but also attempt to alter the behavior of others. Following this, subjects were asked the same questions but about using *contact* as a verb.

Results

As expected, respondents were overwhelmingly unaware of the prescriptive rules regarding the words *impact* and *contact*. Only ten people were aware of *impact*'s prescription; only three were aware of *contact*'s. For both words, sizable majorities reported hearing or reading the word in question used in a proscribed way often (forty-one for both *impact* and *contact*—nearly ninety percent).

After being apprised of the rule regarding using *impact* as a verb, eighty percent of respondents reported that their behavior would not change in casual speech (see figure 1) or in more formal settings (see figure 2). The fact that the numbers remained the same indicates that respondents are unlikely to change their behavior when apprised of a usage issue with no judgment claim attached to it in any situation. In other words, respondents are very unlikely to adhere to prescriptive rules that do not yield any tangible communicative benefits if their intelligence or skillfulness is not called into question.

When asked how likely they were to correct a friend or colleague's proscribed use of *impact*, eighty percent responded that they were either unlikely or somewhat unlikely to do so. Subjects responded very similarly to questions regarding *contact*'s use as a verb.

Figure 1

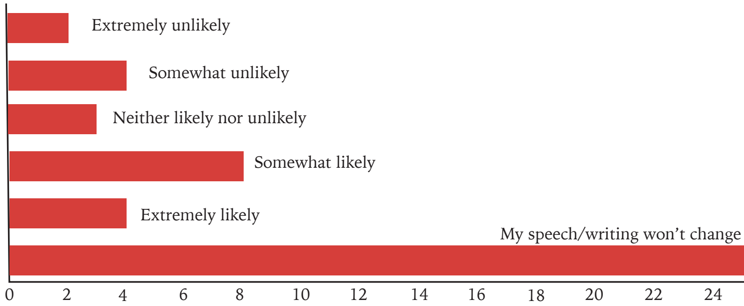
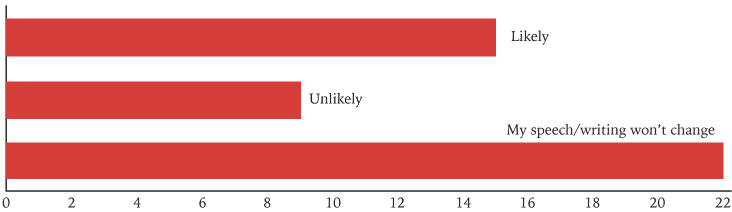


Figure 2



Discussion

Respondents reported being very unlikely to change their behavior when presented with a prescriptive rule when no judgment claim was attached to it. Further research is needed to specifically determine whether college-aged people are generally unlikely to change their behavior to adhere to usage issues—it is possible that the sample I used is not representative of the population generally. However, one might also make the argument that college students are among the most incentivized people to adhere to prescriptive rules; after all, they are frequently required to write papers that are subjected to (sometimes) harsh scrutiny. That a sizable majority of respondents are unlikely to change their behavior lends credence to my initial hypothesis: judgment claims are essential to the pedagogical nature of prescriptivism. Without them, people lack the incentive to use prescribed forms. In this case, when no legitimate non-user-oriented judgment claim can be made, one is left to wonder how else prescriptivists could

incentivize adherence to their prescriptions. Impact and contact are so frequently "misused" that their proscribed forms are very readily understood. When *impact* or *contact* are used as verbs, their meanings are clear. Thus, no legitimate non-user-oriented judgment claim can be made. One will not in truth achieve greater clarity by avoiding *impact*'s use as a verb, for example. Thus, if prescriptivists are to hold on to this rule, what claim could they make to incentivize others to adhere to it?

The data from this study suggests that without judgment claims, the usage issues presented to respondents lacked any pedagogical force. Otherwise, respondents likely would have shown more willingness to adhere to them.

This information reveals much about prescriptivism. When prescriptivists do not make claims regarding people's "intelligence, diligence, skill, and so forth," their claims seem to lack the force to alter behavior—at least in cases when no legitimate non-user-oriented judgment claim can be made. That people's intelligence is not determined by adherence to usage issues is clear (Chapman, 2016). Rather, adherence to prescriptive rules likely has more to do with one's evaluation of the rule in question. If they value that rule, they are likely to adhere to it; if they do not, they likely will not adhere to it—in either case, neither intelligence nor skill are implicated. Thus, prescriptivists sometimes exacerbate untrue perceptions to preserve their movement. While it may be true that someone who uses a proscribed form can be "perceived" as unintelligent, their use of a proscribed form in itself demonstrates no such thing. Such perceptions were not created in a vacuum; prescriptivists likely played a role in their inception as well as their perpetuation. Those perceptions can be problematic for those receiving negative judgment; for example, a Southerner might use "y'all" in everyday speech, and, because of the false notions perpetuated by prescriptivists, be stereotyped by their peers. This is not to say that judgment claims would not exist without prescriptivists perpetuating them. Judgment claims and the social hierarchies they support likely have deeper social roots than those that stem from usage guides and grammars. However, prescriptivists have played a role—albeit a small one—in the dissemination of potentially problematic user-oriented judgment claims, and that is worth noting.

Conclusion

As was previously stated, this study is not conclusive. Further research is necessary to determine whether user-oriented judgment claims are enough on their own to persuade an individual to alter their behavior. One potential way of studying this would be to administer two separate surveys to two respective groups. One group would be presented with a usage issue without any judgment claim attached; the other group would be presented with the same usage issue—but a user-oriented judgment claim would be attached. Then, they would be asked about their behavior.

Judgment claims are widespread for both grammarians and lay people. When they do not make such claims, people are left with no incentive to alter their behavior and adhere to prescriptive rules. The data presented in this study reinforces this notion: when apprised of a usage issue with no judgment claim attached to it, a large majority of respondents reported being unlikely to change their behavior.

Because adherence to usage rules does not actually indicate one's intelligence (or skillfulness, or any of the other common claims), prescriptivists are relying on untrue—and potentially problematic—perceptions that they themselves have played a role in both creating and perpetuating when they make user-oriented judgment claims. While it is unlikely that prescriptivists can rid society of negative judgment claims coming in response to the use of proscribed forms, they certainly can stop perpetuating and reinforcing such user-oriented judgment claims themselves. There are plenty of arguments prescriptivists can make that do not call into question intelligence or skill; for example, they could make arguments in favor of clarity, precision, inclusivity, and other writing conventions (a good number of prescriptivists make these user-neutral arguments sometimes, but other times rely on user-oriented judgment claims). The conclusion of this study might be persuasive to prescriptivists who make user-oriented judgment claims: when no legitimate user-neutral judgment claim can be made, it is unlikely that people will adhere to a prescriptive rule.

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The Reintegration of Navajo Language Learning in Navajo Communities

Leah Gaush

Colonization and genocide in the Americas pressures and endangers countless Native American languages. Diné bizaad*, the Navajo language, is an Athebaskan indigenous language spoken primarily in the southwestern United States. During the boarding school era, Navajo was literally beaten and starved out of young native speakers. The resulting trauma led to the decline of cultural and linguistic knowledge among young Navajos, but communities have recently begun to revitalize and reintegrate their ancestral language in schools and families in various ways. The Navajo hope these efforts will improve their youth's education, health, and sense of self-worth. Ultimately, securing the Navajo language may secure the tribe's future in the modern world.*

L*eah Gaush yinishyé. Bilagáana nishli. Lithuanian báshíshchíín. 'Ashįįʼhí dine'é dashicheii. Bééshbich'ahii dashinálí.* (My name is Leah Gaush. I am of the Anglo people. I am born for the Lithuanian people. My maternal grandfather is from the Salt clan. My paternal grandfather is from the German people).

As a Navajo Native American woman living in the twenty-first century, I constantly struggle to educate people that Native American communities still exist and thrive in the United States. There is a similar struggle when discussing indigenous languages. Are they really dying out? Some are. Due to the effects of colonialism, like land seizure, racist legislature, and cultural assimilation, languages like Apalachee, Mandan, Wichita, and about one hundred others have died out. The language of my people, Navajo, or *Diné bizaad*, has faced almost as many obstacles as its people. Although it is categorized as threatened (Eberhard et al., 2022), through the efforts and resilience of its people, the language is here to stay. This review will examine the history of the Navajo language, the reintegration of language instruction in Navajo communities, and the perspectives of Navajo youth during this point in their language history.

History of the Language

Diné bizaad dates back to the early history of the Navajo people themselves. Since much of Navajo culture, identity, and legend is passed down orally, it makes sense that the language had its origin with the people. Like many indigenous tribes in America, the Navajo have a sacred creation story, *Diné Bahane'*, that is learned and told by elders during the winter season. Along with the creation story, there are other myths or legends told during the winter that hold cultural value. These stories are almost always told in *Diné bizaad*, although there have been modern English adaptations told verbally or written down. Because speaking was the primary method of learning *Diné bizaad*, there are no precolonial records of a written language. The first people to attempt to write the language were seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Christian missionaries and colonial military officers. Its current alphabet was created in the 1930s by William Morgan Sr. (*Tsi'naajinii* clan, born for *Haltsooi* clan), a Navajo linguist.

Among the most impactful eras in *Diné bizaad* (and other indigenous language) history is the boarding school era. Carlisle Industrial Indian School in Pennsylvania was the first

US federally-run Native American boarding school founded in 1879. Among the indigenous tribal children sent to—or forced to attend—boarding schools throughout the US were Navajo children. Benjamin Damon, George S. Watchman, and Stailey Norcross (their Anglicized names) were three Navajo who attended the Carlisle School. They are pictured in figure 1: first in 1882 on the left and again in 1884 on the right. Richard H. Pratt, who developed and proposed the idea of Indian boarding schools, coined the phrase "kill the Indian, save the man." This phrase extended to the general attitude toward indigenous languages in these schools and across the country. Native American culture, tradition, and religion were widely misunderstood, which left many Americans believing just about anything frontiersmen said about them. Boarding schools were viewed by Whites as a way to civilize, assimilate, and provide a better future for young Natives within White society. The first boarding school opened specifically for Navajos was the Fort Defiance in 1882 (Spolsky, 2002). Here, children were routinely and severely punished for speaking their native tongue, even though most did not know any other way to communicate. "Navajos were told by white educators that, in order to be successful, they would have to forget their language and culture and adopt American ways." Furthermore, "They were warned that if they taught their children to speak Navajo, the children would have a harder time learning in school, and would therefore be at a disadvantage" (Alvord & Van Pelt, 1999).

Figure 1

After nearly one hundred years in which youth were forbidden to speak Navajo, the effects of language trauma were far-reaching. "Great numbers of our peoples were brainwashed and traumatized into keeping their ancestral languages from next generations" (McKenzie, 2022). I have witnessed this in my own family. My grandfather, Chee Yazzie Julian, was sent to the Intermountain Indian School in Utah, where he learned the trade of upholstery. Because of the traumatic experiences he had faced at school and the great distance from the school to his hometown in the Navajo Nation, he never spoke *Diné bizaad* to his children or grandchildren. I am the first Navajo grandchild of Chee's to become even somewhat proficient in our language through my own pursuits and education.

Today, even many elders who never experienced language trauma have difficulties trying to teach it to their children. In an interview about Navajo storytelling, Henry Begay, a father and revered storyteller, said, "I try to teach my sons Navajo stories but can't do justice to them in English, and they do not know much Navajo. I'm very limited in what I can share with them" (Eder, 2007). Parent interactions like Henry's are not uncommon throughout the Navajo Nation. This clear gap in language proficiency and fluency creates a gap in cultural knowledge as well.

During the boarding school era, most instructors and teachers at the schools admitted they had no training in educating Native American children. The Navajo Nation sought to remedy that in their own plans to educate rising generations of Navajo youth. To start, the Navajo Nation Education Policy of 1984 included a charge to maintain *Diné bizaad* through bilingual teaching in schools (Spolsky, 2002). According to Eder (2007), "Bilingual education was first introduced in Navajo Nation schools during the Johnson administration in the 1960s." In the late 1980s and early 1990s, Navajo Community College (now Diné College) started preparing its teachers with a background in Navajo culture (Eder, 2007). Although there was little unification or consistency across emerging schools, these beginning efforts set the stage for an era of native language reintegration.

Reintegration

Language reintegration is the process of revitalizing language use and proficiency within a community through education or other means. For many Native American communities, including

Navajo ones, reintegration is an act of reclamation and indigenous self-governance. For the Navajo people, reintegration has taken on many forms in response to various issues within the community.

Reintegrating Navajo language learning is important as time has shown there is an increasing number of Navajo children growing up without speaking or knowing *Diné bizaad*. Eder reported that a study done in 2001 “found that 60 percent of pre-school children did not know Navajo.” Time has also proved that generational trauma affects language use. Our grandparents’ generation experienced the trauma of not being allowed to speak Navajo, and a large part of our parents’ generation experienced the trauma of never being taught the language. Now, “Younger generations . . . suffer from cultural guilt and shame” (McKenzie, 2022) when they speak Navajo as well as when they don’t. Table 1 shows data from a study conducted at a Navajo immersion school, *Tsehootsooi Dine Bi’olta’*, in which they asked students and parents to share their perspectives on the current state of *Diné bizaad* (Johnson & Legatz, 2006). Further discussion on the perspectives and experiences of youth will be discussed in the following section.

Not only is generational trauma taking effect, but so is English language dominance. One researcher asserts that “English language mass media has probably posed a more potent threat to tribal languages and cultures than English-only schooling in day and boarding schools” (Reyhner, 2018). Growing up, I had never seen or heard of a Navajo movie star, politician, writer, artist,

Table 1

Percentage of Parents and Students Agreeing to Survey Items

Item	Younger Students (n=619)	Older Students (n=1,116)	Parents (n=1,098)
Diné Language loss is in effect	-	63%	85%
Diné language/culture should be in school	85%	70%	82%
Diné language/culture is important today	79%	59%	79%
I am proficient in the Diné language	51%	8%	42%
I will assist in Diné language transmission	-	87%	51%

Note: “Younger students” are students in grades K-3 while “Older students” are students in grades 4-12. Due to complexity of item, younger students weren’t asked about language loss and were asked if they spoke Diné in place of proficiency. Only older students were asked about language transmission.

or singer. The majority of what invades the media is not Native, let alone Navajo. Many Navajos view English as a "business language" or a necessary survival tool in a world run by English speakers (McCarty et al., 2006). Although this sentiment is valid, it may also damage traditional language reintegration efforts.

Other opinions about English and *Diné bizaad* may be damaging to reintegration efforts. Depending on who you talk to, beliefs vary widely. Some Navajos believe that schools should teach their children the language. Others consciously decide not to teach Navajo to their children so they will have access to better opportunities through English. Some hold onto a traditional teaching which states that "the language will take care of itself." Navajo youth largely experience "linguistic insecurity . . . especially in the face of elder speakers' purism and criticism." Many elders feel no pressure to revitalize the language since most of their peers are fluent speakers (House, 2003). Although these beliefs are more widespread than can be seen from outside the Navajo community, the majority of Navajos experience a sense of concern for the future of their language and their children. Eder (2007) notes that "young people [are] getting unbalanced and [don't] know which way to go." Since *hózhǫ́*, a principle of harmony and balance, is so important to Navajos, the display of imbalance in their youth is disturbing (Eder, 2007).

To combat this imbalance in Navajo communities, "additional layers of support," or approaches to reintegration, began to be established to maintain the learning of *Diné bizaad* (McKenzie, 2022). "As early as the 1970s, the Rock Point School Board responded to [issues of imbalance] by establishing a Navajo-English bilingual education program" (Holm & Holm, 1990). In 2016, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) released a report confirming the benefits of bilingual education, stating, "At least six years of mother tongue education should be provided in ethnically diverse communities." This would ensure students were first proficient in their native tongue before expecting them to be proficient in a foreign one. This report further states that this policy will help decrease the number of students falling behind in schools.

Other schools, like Diné immersion schools (more accurately "Diné-medium"), are another approach to reintegration. *Tsehootsooi Dine Bi'olta'* was established in 1986 as a Diné-medium school. It opened with just a kindergarten, adding a grade every year until

they reach K-12 status. Parents enrolled their children here in hopes of establishing Diné as their child's primary language instead of English. Because of such large parental support, the school became an integration of community ownership and involvement as well as traditional language (Johnson & Legatz, 2006).

Still, there are large groups of parents and grandparents who don't approve of such public and institutional methods of reintegration. They believe the teaching of Navajo language and culture should be conducted in a more sacred and personal way and that school is not the appropriate context for this kind of teaching. A more traditional model of learning, called *Sa'ąh Naagháí Bik'eh Hózhóón*, roughly translated to "long life and happiness way," may be a solution to some Navajos' opposition to language integration in schools. It consists of four steps, beginning with nitsáhákees, or "careful thought." Then comes planning, action, and review of action. Careful thought to formulate an effective way of teaching *Diné bizaad* in specific communities may be the way to meet the needs of youth while staying true to older ancestral traditions and sacredness (House, 2003).

Effects on Youth

The needs of Navajo youth vary from region to region. Those living on Navajo land in so-called Arizona may differ from those living in so-called New Mexico. In order to best address the needs of the youth in the reintegration of *Diné bizaad*, we must have conversations with them. Like their elders, they have conflicting perspectives on their language and this particular point in their language history.

For many youth, knowing and learning their language helps them preserve their cultural identity and sense of self. A Navajo high school student said in an interview that *Diné bizaad* gives him the ability to make positive change "in this colonial world" (McCarty et al., 2006). Many youth also find healing in speaking Navajo. They see much of the pain and anguish their parents and grandparents experience, and they don't want that for themselves. "By having connection to their Indigenous languages, people better understand who they are, which can promote better health. . . . Language is medicine. In this sense our languages can *literally* heal us" (McKenzie, 2022). I have experienced this sense of healing as I've begun learning Navajo. It's a feeling that's hard

to describe to others not in the same situation, but I feel a closeness to my true self when I learn and speak my language.

Learning Navajo also brings a sense of cohesion to the community. “Stories are told to teach children how to live well, which means understanding the Navajo worldview, which in turn means understanding one’s purpose in life” (Eder, 2007). In order to bridge the gap in understanding between older and younger generations, language learning and proficiency is essential. Sam, a seventeen-year-old Navajo and Apache, said, “You have to know your own language to succeed.” For him, knowing Navajo contributes to his studies and his goal to become a doctor. Being linguistically close to his roots helps him feel like he can make more of a change in others’ lives (McCarty et al., 2006).

Some Navajo youth say that kids nowadays don’t care about the language anymore. Jamie, who grew up in a border town and speaks primarily English, agrees. These Navajo youth think it’s just something of the past (McCarty et al., 2006). He and numerous others report that kids are ashamed or embarrassed to speak it in and outside of schools. Some of that feeling comes from the pressure to sound perfect, but some of it comes from the mindset that being or acting “White” is better. Other youth in the Navajo Nation disregard their language because they feel it should be their parents’ duty to teach them. Despite differences in perspective, one thing remains constant in the minds of Navajo youth: the language is being lost.

Conclusion

Diné bizaad is a language with a long history. Despite what it and its speakers have gone through, it isn’t extinct, but it is in danger of dying out. Deliberate attacks have been made on the language, most notably during the boarding school era, which we can still feel the effects of today. In hopes of mitigating and even reversing these effects, the Navajo Nation and its people are taking steps to reintegrate language learning into their communities. Though they are met with some opposition from elders and youth, there has been a steady increase in desire to learn *Diné bizaad*. Within my own family, more and more grandchildren are taking an interest in learning our language. Whatever the motivation and whatever the effort, the future of *Diné bizaad* is bright because our people seek balance and have always sought to be resilient.

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Is Today's Usage All Well and Good?

Aubrey Pierson

This article explores practical usage, rule adherence, and societal perceptions of the usage of good *and* well. *To investigate this usage, sixteen sentences from the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) were gathered, with four sentences each representing* good *prescription,* good *proscription,* well *prescription, and* well *proscription. An acceptability survey reveals distinctions in usage awareness, favoring prescriptive forms over proscriptive ones. Notably, there is a much greater discrepancy between* well*'s acceptability scores. This article implies potential insights for native and non-native English speakers, enhancing communication and alleviating concerns about linguistic judgment.*

Most people have had their grammar corrected many times throughout their lives, and the usage of *good* vs. *well* is frequently a repeat offender. Clearly, learning the difference between the two terms can help speakers avoid derision. Any Google search of "good vs. well" will return almost innumerable results of online usage guides and blogs explaining the difference in one way or another, offering tips and tricks for remembering the rules. Grammarly, Merriam-Webster, and Purdue Owl, as well as print sources such as *Garner's Modern American Usage*, all claim that this pair is commonly misused, but that incorrect usage of each term is nonstandard and will invite judgment (Garner, 2022; Grammarly, 2020; Merriam-Webster, 2023; Purdue Owl, 2022). The idea that only a few people follow the rules is contrasted with the claim that proscripted (traditionally incorrect) use will place you in a minority. This contradiction is—at best—poorly addressed, while some sources don't mention it at all. Disregarding personal thoughts on the divide, it's evident that there is a difference in how the two terms are treated. To examine this difference, I designed a survey to see how the terms are actually used, if they always follow the stated rules, and if some misuses are more scorned than others.

Overview

Before getting into survey results, it is prudent to remind ourselves of the official rules. According to Grammarly, the general rules can be distilled into one simple sentence. "*Good* modifies a person, place, or thing," and so it is an adjective, while "*well* modifies an action" and is an adverb (Grammarly, 2020; emphasis added). So, saying that the day is "going well," is equal to one "having a good day" (Grammarly, 2020). Seems simple enough, right? However, this rule fails to account for when *well* can be used as an adjective or for when *good* can be used with linking verbs. If used to talk about someone's health or wellbeing, the adjective form of well is prescribed. For example, a friend quickly recovering from their accident is said to be *doing well*, not *doing good*. Last are the rules surrounding linking verbs. Linking verbs (such as *feel*, *seem*, *look*, *appear*, *smell*, *taste*, and *sound*) can be used with adjectives and therefore should be used with *good* (Grammarly, 2020). Thus, flowers smell good but do not smell well. Using the adverb changes the sentence's meaning and shifts the verb type away from linking. Other usage guides all say similar

things with little variation. Purdue does add, “many people confuse this distinction in conversation, and that’s okay,” but they do not clarify which uses can be accepted, or under what circumstances those conditions are revoked.

These rules, while complicated, don’t explain why the two are so often confused for each other. The 1989 version of *Webster’s Dictionary of English Usage* goes into some detail about the mystery. The first prescriptive claim stating that *well* should be used in reference to health was recorded in 1906 by Vizetelly; prior to that date it was not an issue (Merriam-Webster, 1989). As Merriam-Webster says, “We do not know where Vizetelly got the idea” (1989, 480). But because the matter was introduced, it became a topic of much debate. The “years of disagreement” resulted in settling on “some differentiation” between the two as predicate adjectives (Merriam-Webster, 1989, 480). These differences broadly follow the previously stated rules, though they were not as strongly imposed.

Survey Creation and Data Collection

Many people find modern *good/well* usage just as muddy as the convoluted origins of their distinction. So how are *good* and *well* used today? Does the average person innately prefer usage matching the prescriptive rules that have been laid out? I conducted a study of 148 people designed to answer these questions. The survey employed a self-selection sampling method, and each participant was asked to pass it on to as many people as possible. All survey respondents were presented with sixteen sentences in a random order. Four used *good* correctly, four used *good* incorrectly, four used *well* correctly, and four used *well* incorrectly. The participants rated each sentence on a scale of one (horrendous) to seven (flawless). With this preliminary data, it will be possible to determine how the various uses are received.

Nearly all of the examples were naturally occurring and found through the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA); however, one sentence was pulled from Grammarly’s page, and one sentence was fabricated by me. These two sentences were pulled from another source because I had difficulty finding sentences that used a proscribed *well*. This says a lot in and of itself, but for the sake of the survey, I decided to treat each sentence the same and tell each participant that they were all natural.

Each survey began with the following message: "Thank you for being willing to take this survey!! It should take about 5 minutes. The next few pages will be demographic questions—please answer honestly!" Participants then filled out the following: where they are from, their gender and age, whether they had attended or are attending college (and if so, what major), and if English was their native language. I ultimately made the decision to remove their data if English wasn't their first language, because it increased the likelihood that they learned these rules in a more academic setting, rather than from the people around them. This left me with 144 respondents. The other questions were an attempt to see how representative my results could be. Because this study was a quick one, I was not able to achieve as much variety as I wished. Of the respondents, 35.42 percent were from Idaho (my home state), 18.75 percent from Utah, and 7.64 percent from California. These are not the only states I collected results from, but together they do make up over sixty percent of my data. Obviously, the west is overrepresented. Females also are overrepresented at seventy-four percent, and sixty percent of respondents are between eighteen and twenty-four years old. It is likely that these groups are so disproportionate because these are the categories that many of my friends and I fit into.

Table 1.

Example sentences alongside their averaged acceptability score (Table by author).

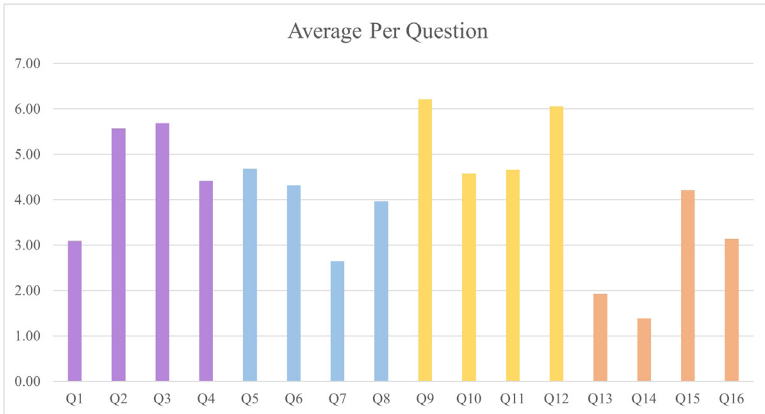
Question	*Example given*	*Average*
Q1	"One of our last conversations we had that was good was that he wants to get a nose job."	3.09
Q2	"If you spill a stranger's drink by accident, it is good manners (and prudent) to offer to buy another."	5.56
Q3	"There are lots of good people doing good things."	5.68
Q4	"That's right, I do look good, don't forget."	4.42
Q5	"You did good. That wasn't so bad now, was it?"	4.68
Q6	"Hello, James, how are you doing?" "I'm doing good."	4.31
Q7	"Someone say that Landor did good logos."	2.64
Q8	"Frankly, that foundation is supposed to do good."	3.97
Q9	"How are you doing, my friend?" "Very well, thank you!"	6.22
Q10	"With a guy like him who knows his body so well, you have to appreciate that he knows what he's talking about."	4.57
Q11	"Dave was all right. He was well. That was what mattered."	4.66
Q12	"Librarians need to be well prepared for any changes."	6.06
Q13	"They are having a well day."	1.92
Q14	"This is well lasagna."	1.38
Q15	"Can chemistry tell us which ingredients taste well together?"	4.21
Q16	"Three men, all dressed in ill-fitting fatigues. They do not look or smell well."	3.14

Once those questions were out of the way, a new text box came up, announcing that "the following sentences are naturally occurring," and asking the participants to "please rate how grammatically acceptable each sentence is." Then the questions were displayed in a random order, each time asking for a rating between one (this is horrendous) and seven (this is flawless). The questions and average response for each can be seen in table 1. Average responses were calculated by Microsoft Excel's mean function.

The colors of table 1 represent the divide between good prescription, good proscription, well prescription, and well proscription. The average of each section came out to 4.96, 3.90, 5.38, and 2.66 respectively. These statistics are interesting, as they clearly show that most people are aware of and prefer some difference between the two words. The proscriptive use section scored worse than the prescriptive use for both terms. However, this category averaging loses some of the nuance presented by each question. Figure 1 is a graph of the averages for each question. In this bar graph, it is easier to see how much the average varies from question to question. Once again, the sentences were presented to surveyors in a random order to minimize comparison bias as much as possible.

Figure 1.

Average acceptability score per question (Graph by author)



It is important to note that, unavoidably, some uses would be rated higher if they were used in a different sentence or context. Participants were not told to judge based on *good* and *well*, but because every sentence contained one or the other, most of

them picked up on that anyway. In the comments section at the end of the survey, one person commented, "Some of my ratings were about *well* vs. *good*. I gave a little leeway (an extra point) for accepted common usage, even if wasn't grammatically correct (e.g., 'I'm doing good')." I tried to ensure that other than the terms being tested, the grammar of each example was correct. In some naturally used sentences, using *good* instead of *well* (and vice versa) can create a different but also grammatically correct meaning. I did everything in my power to make sure that the sentences I chose for this survey couldn't reasonably be taken any other way than the category they were chosen for.

Data Analysis and Application

This survey's results are important to all speakers of the English language. I know many people who stress over being judged as unintelligent because their usage is "clearly nonstandard [or] even substandard," as Garner puts it (Garner, 2022, 511). The reality is, while there is a difference between when each term should be used, most people are much more forgiving than usage guides would lead you to believe. The acceptability score of seven (which is flawless) was given 406 times, while one (this is horrendous) was assigned only 361 times. That means that out of the 2,304 acceptability scores collected, eighteen percent of the time, people saw absolutely no issue with the sentence. A surprising eighty-nine of those times were from proscribed sentences.

Another similar study with a wider scale could be used to help teach English to speakers of other languages. Examples of different uses for each word, paired with how acceptable each version is, could aid both teachers and students in deciding what they should focus on. Spending time deciphering why "This is well lasagna" (the lowest ranking sentence at 1.38) and "Very well, thank you!" (the highest ranking sentence at 6.22) are so different can prove the importance of distinction in similar contexts the learners might encounter. At the same time, learning that "That's right, I do look good, don't forget" (a prescribed use of good) and "I'm doing good" (a proscribed use of good) had similar scores of 4.42 and 4.31 can provide both hope and guidance on how to sound natural in the target language.

The history of *good* vs. *well* is long, but this survey still has something to add to the usage debates. According to the data, most people have a better idea of when well is used prescriptively

than when it is used proscriptively. These scores had the highest disparity, with prescriptive use averaging 5.38 and proscriptive use averaging 2.66. This study proves that while the usage of *good* and *well* does not always follow the stated rules, some uses are less acceptable than others. Closely examining the acceptability scores for each use can relieve stress and aid in native-like language production.

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The Effect of Age on People's Acceptance of Emergent Slang Forms

Luke Beckstrand

This study examines the effect of age on people's acceptance of two slang forms that have emerged in the last few decades: verbing nouns and acronymic speech. Surveys collected data from the public (primarily in Utah, USA) asking questions about participants' opinions on these slang forms, as well as asking how often they might use specific forms in their own speech. The data concludes that younger generations are more prone to accept these two emergent forms than are older generations, with verbing nouns standing out as more acceptable than acronymic speech on every level.

Language is constantly in flux. From the fiery and exciting slang forms that explode for a few years before quickly fading (LaFrance, 2016), to actual syntactic and morphological changes that stick with a language and become the new norm (Nerlich, 1989), the words people use and the way they go about using them change in virtually every generation. What was "rad" for one generation might be "lit" for another. This process includes emergent linguistic forms outside of simple slang, as actual lexical meaning can change—for example, while the verb *lay* once could only be used as a transitive verb, it has now become virtually interchangeable with the verb *lie*. Though such emergent forms of speech can be frowned upon (Shariatmadari, 2019), many researchers are proponents of slang, reporting that it is a part of dynamic, healthy language (Laing, 2021).

The linguistic field is rife with differing opinions and arguments surrounding new slang terms and emergent forms of speech, as well as what causes some of these changes. Most studies agree that the overwhelming surge of recent slang has come directly from advances in technology. While most of these studies are centered on social media (Eisenstein et al., 2014), others discuss trends in television shows, popular music lyrics, and modern attitudes towards sex and sexuality, citing each as a source of new linguistic forms (Levey, 2008). While some authors argue that the professionality of language matters less than our ability to connect as humans through communication of any kind (Rickerson & Hilton, 2006), stricter grammarians suggest that some linguistic forms, regardless of the public's acceptance of them, should be avoided to protect traditional grammar usage (Morton, 2021). In his usage guide Modern English Usage, Bryan Garner postulates that once a linguistic form is embraced by the public, sooner or later even the grammarians and dictionaries will accept it (Garner, 2022). Garner proposes the five stages of language change, stating that new linguistic forms generally begin as "rejected" (stage 1), but can potentially progress through "widely shunned" (stage 2), "widespread but disapproved" (stage 3), "ubiquitous but unprofessional" (stage 4) to "fully accepted" (stage 5). This doesn't happen to every emergent form, and, as mentioned earlier, some forms can become more popular for a time before fading again.

Whatever conclusions professional grammarians come to about emergent forms of speech do not affect the public's view of the same issues. How do people who have not dedicated themselves

to this field of study perceive and judge some of the emerging slang forms? Do they use slang? Avoid it? Judge it? Research suggests that many people are extremely resistant to language change and slang (Garner, 2022), especially older generations (Adrienne, 2016). These judgments of language have led to many arguments. Some prescriptivists ardently declare that slang and "teen-speech" are ruining English (Shariatmadari, 2019), and yet with just a little more careful study, we can see this is not the case (Adrienne, 2016). But what is it that drives people to believe slang and emergent linguistic change is degrading language? What factors influence these opinions?

In this mystery we have the subject of this article. There is a noticeable gap in existing research around the topic of people's opinions about language change and what factors may influence that opinion. The focus of this article and the study I conducted for it is to endeavor to fill this gap. Once we understand who holds negative beliefs about language change, we will be a step closer to understanding why they think the way that they do. This will hopefully help us discover a way to quell their worries while also validating their desire to preserve our language. I believe this can be a valuable pursuit to aid us as we frame future studies and research in the field of language change and linguistic evolution. The better we understand what a healthy language looks like, the better we will be able to effectively preserve our language without endangering any beneficial growth.

I focused my study on the public's opinion (their judgment or acceptance) about a few selected emergent slang forms, specifically the increasingly common habits of "verbing" nouns and using acronyms in speech. Verbing nouns has always been common in language, but has become ever more frequent in our modern day and age, especially as our society continually values "to-the-point" communication. Skipping straight to the point is at the heart of verbing nouns: "being an adult is hard" is replaced with "adulting is hard," and "I can't do math" turns into "I can't math." The other slang form analyzed in this paper, acronymic speech, involves using an acronym in spoken conversation, such as saying "lol," "brb," or "btw" aloud to your friends. While some people think these constructions are more efficient, others call them lazy. I hypothesize that resistance to these slang forms will be directly correlated with an individual's age. This hypothesis is mainly based on personal experience in casual conversation with people, as well as the common stereotype that slang is used

mostly by the young (LaFrance, 2016; Shariatmadari, 2019). This hypothesis has led to my specific research question, which is: "What is the effect of age on a person's acceptance and/or judgment of verbing nouns and using acronymic speech?"

Methods

My primary method of discovering the public's opinion, judgment, and acceptance of verbing nouns and acronymic speech was through surveys. I created a Qualtrics survey that was used to qualitatively measure people's level of acceptance of the emergent slang forms. I needed a wide variety of answers and participants in order to get a clean view of the public's opinion, so this survey was posted to social media, where I asked that my friends repost it to give me as many responses as possible.

I categorized my participants into five age groups—thirteen to eighteen, nineteen to twenty-five, twenty-six to thirty-five, thirty-six to forty-six, and forty-seven and up. Categorizing the ages into groups made it far simpler to apply the data onto a graph after receiving the survey responses. I chose these five age divisions to represent distinct stages of life: the first group, thirteen to eighteen, represents teenagers, those who are stereotypically in the thick of using the most slang in their day-to-day conversations. Those in the nineteen to twenty-five group are young adults, college students, those entering the workforce, and those who are just getting married. They were recently teenagers but may no longer feel as strong a pressure to "fit in" or find an "in-group," which has stereotypically been one of the major sources of slang. The twenty-six to thirty-five group may be young parents, while the thirty-six to forty-six will be more experienced parents, and forty-seven and up can include grandparents, empty nesters, and all the rest.

In the survey, I asked each of the participants a variety of questions, including their personal opinion of the linguistic forms chosen (verbing nouns and acronymic speech). I asked whether they believed these things were "correct" or "incorrect" in speech, and what they believed the public's view was on the matter. Their answers were given on a scale from one to five, following Garner's five stages of language change, such that if a person gave a one in a response, it was understood that the linguistic form in question was "completely rejected," whereas if they gave a five, we could know that it was "totally accepted." With a total of thirty-one data

sets, I weighed the statistics against each other to find the mean of the data in each category. Having received no survey responses from the age group thirteen to eighteen, this point was omitted from the graph. With the remaining four data points, I was able to create a graph to clearly show the acceptance and judgments of the emergent linguistic forms for each category of people.

The survey began with five preliminary questions, including information about gender, age, education level, place of birth, and whether or not English was the participant's native language. Five questions about verbing nouns followed: three multiple choice (with five options), one scale of one to five, and one free response. Five questions about acronymic speech then followed in the same format. Some of these questions asked the participant directly how they felt about the item at hand, such as: "How do you feel about verbing nouns?" The rest of the questions were indirect, asking things such as: "Which of the following would you say is the most professional?" and then the options included various sentences with different amounts of verbing nouns. From these kinds of questions, I was able to see if the participants believed that verbing nouns was seen as unprofessional or not. There were also a few questions asking what the participants themselves would say under certain circumstances, such as: "If you were asked the following question in a casual setting, how would you respond?"

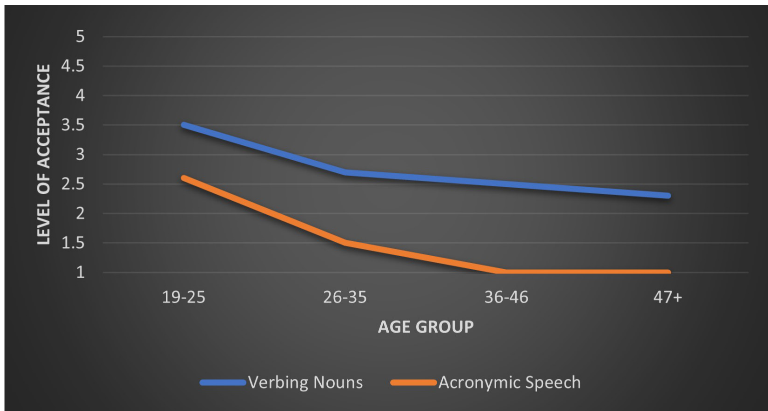
Understanding people's views on what is considered professional or casual was one aspect of my study that helped me interpret the public's perspectives on my chosen slang forms, especially when I apply them to Garner's five stages of language change. If most people completely shun a slang term, not even accepting it as casual, it would be "widely shunned" (stage 2); however, if many people accept it as a term but consider it unprofessional, it would be "ubiquitous but unprofessional" (stage 4), which is considerably closer to stage 5, "fully accepted."

Variables that go unaccounted for in my study will include the participants' gender and place of birth (though gathered, this data would not be part of my results), as well as education and field of study (a mechanical engineer may feel differently about things than would a humanities linguistics major, despite their age and level of education being the same). Still, from these data points (age and acceptance), I was able to make a comprehensive graph to explain the results.

Results and Discussion

The preliminary findings support my hypothesis. As seen below in table 1, the older a person is, the less acceptance they have for the linguistic changes. The y-axis of the table represents the person's level of acceptance and the x-axis their age. It is clear that verbing nouns is generally more accepted than acronymic speech, and the decline of acceptance for acronymic speech is sharper than it was for verbing nouns. By the age group thirty-six to forty-six, the acceptance of acronymic speech reaches level 1, "complete rejection," and remains at this level for the following age group of forty-seven and up.

Table 1



Verbed nouns, on the other hand, are much more commonly used, even by older generations. There were certainly some outliers in the data (one forty-seven-year-old who put verbing nouns at level 4, and one twenty-two-year-old who put it at 1), but generally the survey results were consistent. There are nineteen to twenty-five-year-olds who verb nouns all the time and are comfortable with it, while older generations use it occasionally, but are typically less accepting of it. The nouns verbed are also widely varied. Some of the survey results indicated that many people feel that verbing nouns is efficient, or that they feel it is easier to convey certain emotions and thoughts by doing so. Other survey responses indicated that some respondents felt verbing nouns was lazy. I personally wonder if verbing nouns is simply syntactically easier than some alternatives. Whatever the reason, the data is clear and strongly confirms my hypothesis: there is a negative

correlation between age and acceptance of verbing nouns. The older a person is, the less accepting they are of this form.

While the data on verbing nouns is helpfully straightforward, the data surrounding acronymic speech proved more complicated. Figure 1 shows that acronymic speech is generally unpopular, and increasingly so with age, but I must clarify the nature of these results. This data shows specifically the results of people's acceptance of speaking acronymic slang aloud, such as "lol" or "brb." Many of my participants made it abundantly clear that they do use acronyms frequently, every day, even more than they verb nouns, but only under two circumstances: 1) using acronyms as names for organizations or terms at work (like NASA, NATO, etc.) and 2) using acronyms while playing games, especially video games (AC, HP, DM, THAC0, etc.). Also, while the age group nineteen to twenty-five shows an approximate level of acceptance (2.5) of acronymic speech, this data may be skewed. Nearly all of the survey responses from that age group specified that the only acronym they use on a regular basis is "lol." Many people gave survey responses saying that they don't use acronyms very often, except for "lol," which they use excessively every day. Therefore, the data on acronymic speech may not be reliable. Further research, with a more specific research question and a more carefully detailed survey, would need to be employed to discover more about the nature of acronymic speech and whether or not it even is an emergent slang form.

Conclusion

This study has been illuminating on numerous accounts. Language really is changing, and this study supports my hypothesis that older generations resist language change more than younger generations. The data forces me to wonder if acronymic speech really is an emergent linguistic change, and I recognize now that I failed to sufficiently define "acronymic speech" as I conducted my research. Another study about acronymic speech would be prudent, taking into account the variables of organization names, gaming terms, and whether or not "lol" is an outlier amongst a more widely shunned linguistic movement. However, we can know for certain that older generations support verbing nouns much less than younger generations.

Future studies must be conducted to further the corpus of research about this topic. There are a host of other emergent

slang forms that could be studied, and I hypothesize that the negative correlation with age found for verbing nouns and acronymic speech is generalizable to all slang and linguistic change. Interestingly, my study did illuminate part of why older generations dislike linguistic change, concluding that this dislike is mostly due to the belief that slang is lazy. This topic could also merit its own research: Is lazy language a bad thing? Does laziness lead to efficient communication, or would it lead to the degradation of our language that some people fear? Finding answers to these questions would not only be fascinating, but also helpful in broadening the perspective of linguistic research as a whole, as well as helping us understand the true influence of language change. I hypothesize that language change is an advantage to the health of all language, as supported by Laing (2021), but there is a persisting need for more research to help expand our comprehension of what makes a healthy, dynamic language, as well as where the line should fall between preserving our language and accepting linguistic evolution.

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Appendix

Questions Included in Survey

1. Are you a Native English speaker?

   Yes or No

2. What is your gender?

   Male, Female, Non-binary/third gender, prefer not to say

3. How old are you?

   13–18, 19–25, 26–35, 36–46, 47+

4. In which state were you born?

   All fifty states were presented as options.

5. What is your level of education?

   High School Diploma, Some College, Associate's Degree, Bachelor's Degree, Master's Degree, PhD. Trade School Certification, Other, None of the Above

6. In your opinion, how acceptable is it to verb nouns in society? ('I dislike adulting')

   Unacceptable, only under specific circumstances, neutral, acceptance as slang, acceptable everywhere (including professionally)

7. How do you personally feel about verbing nouns?

   Dislike a great deal, dislike somewhat, neither like nor dislike, like somewhat, like a great deal

8. Please rate the following phrases on a scale from 1–10 (based on whether or not you would use them in casual speech). 1 meaning you would never use it and 10 meaning you use it every day.

   "I can't math", "I dislike adulting" "I'm friending him" "Stop try-harding, you're going to burn yourself out"

9. How would you rewrite the following sentence without verbing any nouns:

   "I'm tired of friending girls who just end up friend-zoning me."

10. Which of the following do you believe is the source of the modern trend of 'verbing' nouns in American English?

    Laziness, Efficiency, Popularity, Phonological Ease

11. How do you personally feel about using acronyms in speech? (saying aloud things like 'lol' or 'brb')

    Dislike a great deal, dislike somewhat, don't really care, somewhat like, like a great deal

12. Pretend you are speaking to your boss at work. Which of the following do you personally believe is the most professional:

    I apologize, I hadn't given it any thought. You have my apologies, I failed to even consider the possibility. Sorry, I didn't even think of that lol.

13. Your friend asks if you want to come to Swig with them. You can and want to go, but need to go to the bathroom first. Which of the following would most likely be your reply:

    Alright, let's go. Let me go to the bathroom first. I'll be right back! Ok, let's go. Let me go to the bathroom first. I'll be right back! Ok, I'm in. Let me go to the bathroom first. Brb!

14. Let's say an important senator is speaking publicly. Which of the following is the most professional:

    Thanks to our generous benefactors, NATO and NASA, we will have the opportunity to work on this project and complete it ASAP. Thanks to various generous benefactors, we will have the opportunity to work on this project and complete it quickly. Thanks to our generous benefactors, NATO and NASA, we will have the opportunity to work on this project and complete it quickly.

15. Which of the following would you be most likely to say (aloud in a conversation):

    The US donates billions to NASA every year—I wish they'd donate some of that to me lol. The United States donates billions to the National Aeronautics and Space Administration every year—I wish they'd donate some of that to me. The US donates billions to NASA every year—I wish they'd donate some of that to me.

Female Fisherwoman

An Analysis of Gendered Job Titles Through the Fishing Industry

Erin Thorley

The purpose of this article is to examine which form of female fisherman is most appropriate for general use. Because the socioeconomic context of the fishing industry may be influenced less by the rapid changes associated with "woke culture," there has not been a mainstream, successful transformation of the typical, masculine form of the job title. A variety of usage guides are consulted, as well as the Corpus of Contemporary American English. Main categories of explored alternatives to female fisherman include prefixes, suffixes, and job titles without modifiers. While each form should be given consideration in context, a general rule could be to use the job title that the referents themselves prefer. In other cases, using a neutral, non-polarizing form may be the most effective.

Job titles matter. Research shows that "job titles . . . are more likely to trigger sex-type responses than are job descriptions" (Jessel and Beymer, 1992). Thus, the very name given to an occupation determines who is expected to fill it. Female university students have been discouraged from applying to jobs with masculine titles, and young girls have been "less interested in a typically male occupation when it was described in the masculine compared with the gender-fair form" (Hodel et al., 2017). These girls also "perceived women as less successful" than men. Gendered job titles impact generation after generation of boys and girls by communicating schemas of where in the workforce women belong and where they are less relevant. More than just a description of the world around us, language is a "subtle means of maintaining traditional gender arrangements. . . . Language contributes to the construction of reality." Some researchers even counsel educators to wait so that students are not introduced to "job titles too early in the career exploration process" (Jessel and Beymer, 1992). With delayed exposure to gendered job titles, children can keep their minds open and be less influenced by social pressures as they build schemas of how the world functions. It is no surprise that countries with high socioeconomic gender equality are also countries that use gender-neutral job titles (Hodel et al., 2017). Understanding methods to adopt gender-fair job titles is crucial in the study of gender equality.

Previous research has studied the effect of gender in job titles. However, this research focused on forms that are prevalent in Western and urban cultures, such as *chairman* and *policeman*. These areas experience "woke culture," which socializes individuals to make passionate judgments on linguistic forms and how they relate to gender equality. Less research has been performed on job titles in industries that are more rural and less relevant to upper- and middle-class academics. For example, *fisherman*. Perhaps because the fishing industry is so far removed from urban life, *fisherman* has yet to be replaced with a gender-neutral term. Sometimes *angler* is used instead, but angling refers to a specific fishing technique not used in commercial fishing. Because *fisherman* has been left almost untouched by woke culture, attitudes attached to various forms of fisherman may reflect subconscious attitudes about gender roles. Further understanding of how gendered job titles transform and how speakers react to their transformations will aid research about gender equality in society.

Because a fundamental consideration of this article is how the form fisherman ignores the participation of women in the fishing industry, *female fisherman* will often be used instead. It should be noted that neither of these forms is suggested as the correct or superior way to refer to women in the fishing industry; their merits should be evaluated equally to other forms that will be discussed. The remainder of this article will review historical transformations of and attitudes towards gendered job titles and apply these perspectives to various forms of *female fisherman*.

History

In modern Western settings, gendered discourse is often ineffective discourse because it has a way of "descending quickly into politics," whether explicitly by topic or implicitly by linguistic cues (The Chicago Manual of Style 5.251). These linguistic cues signal to the audience the underlying beliefs of the speaker or society in general. If the listener does not agree with these beliefs, bias often prevents full consideration of the speaker's message. The message, no matter how eloquently worded, becomes useless.

The popular "style guide" of contemporary Western societies is political correctness. The term *political correctness* has been in use since "the 1700s, but it was not until the 1980s that the idea came into vogue" (Garner, 2022). Originally, it was used as a "self-mocking oxymoron"; it was generally understood that *correctness* was incompatible with *political* because politics are objectively subjective (Garner, 2022). However, current understanding does not include this distinction. Now, politically correct style is demanded as a kind of passcode to enter public discourse. If language does not conform to political correctness, "contrarian views are excoriated [censured] for their very utterance" (Garner, 2022). And it's not only brash or offensive perspectives which are censored by political correctness. Even non offensive opinions are stifled "because the timid refuse to express an idea in any but the most [apologetic] way." Because of political correctness listeners block out messages that are packaged incorrectly, and speakers refrain from sharing ideas in the first place.

Discourse relating to gender is not spared from the demands of political correctness. In the 1980s, sexism became disturbingly apparent to many writers, who adopted and prescribed new language patterns to address it (Garner, 2022). In 1984, government officials in Australia announced that "drafting in 'masculine'

language may contribute to some extent to the perpetuation of a society in which men and women see women as lesser beings" (Garner, 2022). This perpetuation of an unjust society is a real and urgent reason to address linguistic gender inequality in a manner more informed and more appreciative than common, "salutary attempt[s] to be sensitive or inclusive" (Garner, 2022).

Prefixes

Identity-first and person-first language are often discussed in woke culture, typically in relation to people with disabilities. However, these approaches can also apply to how gender is represented in job titles. Identity-first language puts characteristics first, emphasizing community and belonging (e.g. *deaf people*). Forms which use prefixes are identity-first language, where the defining characteristic is introduced first. This can conceptually reduce the referent to that single characteristic, but it can also emphasize community membership (Person-First Language, 2017).

The Chicago Manual of Style says it is acceptable to use *woman* or *female* as a modifier coming before a noun. However, these forms "may strike some readers as being dismissive or derogatory" (The Chicago Manual of Style 5.259). For example, forms like "*woman doctor, female book-salesman,* or the Air Force's *female airman*" are deemed "jarring" and "condescending" (Garner, 2022). That being said, sometimes there are rhetorical benefits to using identity-first language, such as in the contexts of women's rights or gender stereotypes. In these cases,, "the adjectives *male* and *female* are typically the most serviceable choices" (The Chicago Manual of Style 5.259). The scientific connotation of *female* helps these forms to sound simply descriptive of actual referents. This objectivity lends to *female* being less marked than the other feminine prefixes.

As such, *lady fisherman* and woman fisherman should be avoided. Not only are they dismissive, they contradict themselves by combining a feminine prefix with a masculine suffix. Unfortunately, *female fisherman* also contradicts itself in this way, respectfully drawing attention to feminine identity, but maintaining a masculine form as the default. If identity-first language is being used specifically in the context of feminism, then a speaker should use *female fisher* (dropping the suffix *-man*).

Suffixes

Many of the job titles involved in discourse about politically correct job titles fall under the category of person-first language, which emphasizes broad commonalities and equality. Person-first varieties of *female fisherman* introduce the general occupation (fisher) before the specific quality of an individual (gender) ("Person-First Language, 2017).

Feminine Suffixes

Female suffixes like *-ess* and *-ette* are "mostly archaic in [American English]," often carrying a "derogatory tinge." For example, the form *-ette* is called "patronizing" (Garner, 2022). The suffix *-ess* carries a connotation of delicacy (as with *hostess* and *enchantress*) or sexuality and power (as with *mistress* and *temptress*) (Dictionary.com, n.d). Likewise, *-trix* is tainted by *dominatrix* and its obscene sexual connotation (Garner, 2022). Because of this, *-ette, -ess,* and *-trix* should be avoided. While *-woman* may still carry a connotation of insignificance similar to feminine prefixes (see previous section), that connotation does not appear to be as strong or as harsh as other feminine suffixes.

Two potential forms for *female fisherman* that use feminine suffixes are *fisheress* and *fisherwoman*. *Fisheress* should not be used because *-ess* suggests a level of delicacy that is not compatible with most schemas of the fishing industry. (The connotation of power that comes with *-ess* may be appropriate to describe women who fish if that power were not also associated with sexual control.) Comparatively, *fisherwoman* carries less baggage. It may even be equivalent to *fisherman*. When one woman in the fishing industry, Coco Faulk, was asked how she refers to herself, she responded, "Definitely fisherwoman" (Monterey, 2020). For her, the term is empowering and celebratory of her contributions to the fishing industry as an individual, not just as "the wife of a fisherman" (Monterey, 2020). On the other hand, Coco's daughter Valerie hesitates to adopt that term because "it doesn't roll off the tongue well and it often makes a statement she doesn't intend to" (Monterey, 2020). The simple insertion of *-wo-* between *fisher-* and *-man* communicates a lot about the speaker, connecting them to feminist opinions that they may or may not subscribe to. And Merriam-Webster specifically defines it as "a *woman* who fishes" (Merriam-Webster.com, 2023; emphasis added). Because it is a

gendered job title, *fisherwoman* is just as exclusionary to non-binary and male fishermen as fisherman is to non-binary and female fishermen.

Masculine Suffixes

More prevalent than feminine job titles are job titles ending in *-man*. *The Chicago Manual of Style* calls these suffixes "problematic" because, unlike female job titles, they have not always been intentionally used as a denotation of gender (5.257). Rather, masculine generics, which historically extend to a far broader linguistic field than job titles, "usually designate not only men but also groups of women and men" (Hodel et al., 2017). We inherit these terms from patriarchal languages like Latin, which use masculine suffixes to refer to groups of women, no matter how large, as long as at least one man is present. These terms were also developed from the definition of *man* meaning humankind.

However, while *-man* terms were historically acceptable for groups that included women, the modern assumption is that *-man* denotes maleness. This claim is supported by both scientists and usage policies. After tracking eye-movements of readers, researchers conclude, "it is possible that *man* tends to evoke a male-biased expectation because the gender-specific sense of man is used more frequently than its gender-neutral sense" (Khan & Daneman, 2011). Both younger and older adults "expect a male referent" after reading *-man*. In the previously discussed Australian press release, their government counseled "where possible and appropriate, [avoid] . . . the use of words ending in *man*, such as *chairman*, *serviceman*, *seaman*, and so on" (Garner, 2022).

That being said, *fisherman* "remains the most common term for people who harvest fish, regardless of their gender" (Monterey, 2020). The previously mentioned Valerie Faulk says, "I've been around the industry all my life; it's just natural to say fisherman" (Monterey, 2020). Additionally, even though studies that observe eye-tracking movements reveal that readers assume maleness when they read *-man*, the only relevant definition for *fisherman* that Merriam-Webster provides is "one who engages in fishing as an occupation or for pleasure." *Fisherman*'s referent of one is more inclusive than the woman used in their definition for *fisherwoman* (Merriam-Webster.com, 2023). Because it is considered all-inclusive, *fisherman* does not necessarily entail maleness in the same way *fisherwoman* entails femininity. Garner adds to this defense by saying some attempts at gender inclusivity are

so "absurd" (a description also employed by *Chicago*, see section 5.258) that they reflect poorly on "well-meaning attempts to eliminate sexist language" (Garner, 2022). Sometimes, leaving things as they are is better than bending over backward for an equally flawed solution.

Gender-Neutral Suffixes

In place of gendered suffixes, many substitute *-person*. However, most usage guides advise against it. Garner states that it sounds "wooden and pompous" (2017). *The Chicago Manual of Style* says to avoid "automatically substitut[ing]" *-person* in place of *-man*, unless that substitution is well-established in traditional usage (5.257). This is a valid prescription because "many words that ended in *-man* have been successfully transformed without using *-person*, among them *police officer, fire-fighter,* and *mail carrier*" (Garner, 2022). Gender-neutral suffixes and compound nouns like these are more communicative than *-person*. For example, *officer* adds connotations of order and authority to *police*, connotations which *policeman* and *policewoman* lack. Gender-neutral suffixes, especially those other than *-person*, can be very effective suffixes for job titles.

However, *fisher-* is rarely attached to these more communicative kinds of gender-neutral suffixes. The most common forms are *fisherperson* and *fisherfolk*, which Garner considers "awkwardly neutral" (Garner, 2022). Because of their forced neutrality, these forms call attention to political correctness and may raise the defenses of listeners. Their forced neutrality may also lessen the credibility of the speaker as some listeners judge them for bending to political correctness (see next section). However, some individuals still use *fisherfolk* with confidence. Carol Lynn McKibben "thinks it's important to challenge gender norms within language" by using marked terms like *fisherperson* and *fisherfolk* (Monterey, 2020). In some ways, the loud stiffness that Garner objects to is the very trait that uniquely suits these forms to advocate gender equality.

Avoiding Modifiers

More often than not, when discussing general groups that include both men, women, and nonbinary individuals, gender identity is irrelevant. When unnecessary to the message, style guides condemn calling attention to personal characteristics like gender

because they "may affect a reader's perception of you or the person you are writing about or both. They may also invoke a reader's biases and cloud your meaning" (*The Chicago Manual of Style* 5.260). In other words, using any kind of nonstandard gendered modifier conveys messages that, like radio interference, disrupt efficient communication. Obvious conformity or obvious disregard of politically correct style is an invitation to be ignored. As such, the least provocative forms for job titles are gender-neutral and do not have modifiers. Instead of adding on modifiers or creating new terms, simply remove modifiers from preexisting forms. For example, rather than replace *chairman* with *chairwoman* or *chairperson*, one would replace *chairman* with *chair*. It is also important to note that equivalent terms should be used for both men and women. For example, one would replace *man* and *wife* (which implies the woman is a tangent to the man's identity) with *husband* and *wife*. These subtle suffix-free and gender-neutral terms are "increasingly accepted" as they are introduced to public discourse. In American English, the trend "is toward eliminating sex-specific suffixes" (*The Chicago Manual of Style* 5.257). The best way to overcome political correctness may be to speak intentionally and in such a way that politics are not brought to mind.

Based on these perspectives, one would anticipate *fisher* to be rising in popularity among American English speakers. While future research should explore this with greater depth and breadth, a preliminary search in the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) suggests otherwise. The forms *fishers* and *fishermen* were each searched with the chart setting. COCA shows that *fishers* decreased in usage between 2005 and 2019, going from 1.60 words per million to 0.67 words per million (Davies, 2011). In the same time frame, *fishermen* also decreased slightly, going from 6.20 words per million to 4.75 words per million (Davies, 2011). The decrease in usage of *fishermen* may indicate authors experimenting to find more politically correct forms. Unfortunately for *fishers*, its decrease in usage seems to indicate that it is not a popular choice.

Discussion

When choosing a form to refer to women who fish, speakers should be aware of the implications that the forms they use carry. Because of polarizing woke culture, adherence to or ignorance of politically correct terminology can shut down discourse.

Choosing forms that “betray a writer’s conscious or unconscious biases” limits the effectiveness of communication, either because the listener is offended or because speakers may lose credibility when they appear to contort their language to the whims of society (*The Chicago Manual of Style* 5.260). Agreeable, non-polarizing job titles are those which do not “even hint at the issue” (Garner, 2022). These titles reinforce the speaker’s authority and allow listeners to “focus on [their] ideas and not on the political or moral subtext” (Garner, 2022). When discussing a specific referent, “the best approach is always to respect people’s choices about the language they use for themselves” (“Person-First Language, 2017). Perhaps future usage guides will advise speakers to use fisherman and not any other marked form to refer to broad groups of people who fish. For individual referents, the rule might advise the speaker to use the referent’s preference or *fisherman* but not any other marked form.

Studying the transformation of gendered job titles is important because it reflects how cultural views of gender roles can change. Despite *fisherman* being the predominant job title for occupational fish harvesters that is used in Western, urban societies, all forms of *fisherman* are marked with judgments about those who use them. These judgments are likely to evolve as woke culture spreads to more rural industries. Future research should observe changes in the frequency of various forms of *female fisherman*, as well as document changing perceptions of these terms. Seeking to understand how society talks about women in the fishing industry can increase understanding of underlying gender stereotypes in woke culture.

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Too Cute for Words

A Sociolinguistic Analysis of Cross-Cultural Variation in Dog Meme Slang by Size

Zoe Eldredge

This article describes the sociolinguistic relationship between dog slang and dog size in dog memes. As a popular part of online culture, memes possess various subgenres with distinct features—including a subgenre of memes about dogs. The hypothesis is that there are statistically significant relationships between all dog slang terms and dog size and weight class. To explore these relationships, an online survey presented participants with a curated selection of dog pictures representing various dog weights, matching questions, and metalinguistic questions. Overall, the term doggo *was the most common response, with statistically significant variation across generation, ethnicity, gender, location, and dog lover identity.*

As the human experience has inevitably evolved, language has likewise evolved (Birner, 2012). The separation, isolation, and consolidation of populations over time has created immense variation in language. For instance, Wolfram et al. (2006) identified geographically distinct phonetic and lexical patterns in speakers of English in Utah. Additionally, other influences such as generational innovation have yielded particularly new variations in language change.

By virtue of each generation's unique experiences, language usage has changed to compensate. For instance, Citera et al. (2016) distinguished unique terminology across generations such as Generation X using "rad," Millennials using "popping," and Digital Natives (Generation Z) using "hyped." This same study further found differences in generational language extend to usage. For example, the Silent Generation (about 1928–1945) reported less overall slang usage. As language has transformed, however, so has the media in which it is featured.

One of the arguably most influential evolutions in media has been from written media to visual media. Because new "digital media are changing reading and writing practices," online visual media formats are helping to "transform language and literacy" (Warschauer, 2001, p. 49). The newest iteration of visual media is the internet meme. Memes are mostly humorous blends of text and images or GIFs (Graphics Interchange Format) spread virtually through the internet (Kostadinovska-Stojchevska & Shalevska, 2018). A popular part of online culture, memes often contain multiple levels of meaning and require background knowledge to be fully understood. Memes can contain references from pop culture, politics, religion, and more, and they often vary between location and language. This form of visual media is constantly changing and exhibiting trends in formation such as dissociative echoing and parodies (Dynel, 2021). Multimodal voicing, intertextuality, and echoing in memes have been illustrated to be useful research measures.

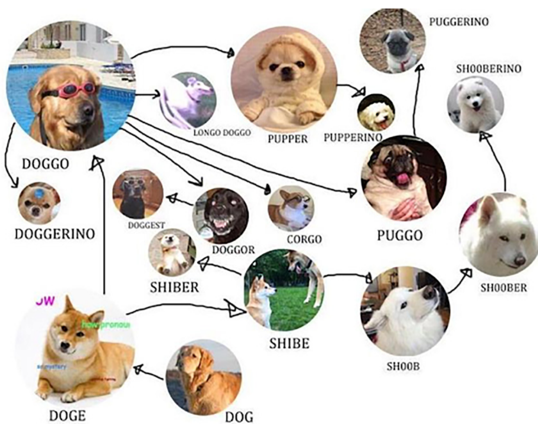
Recently, memes have incorporated the popular trend of utilizing pictures of dogs. These "dog memes" have evolved into their own genre of memes with a specific phonological system, grammar, and lexicon. The overall trend seems to utilize imprecision to index an innocent child-likeness. Dog memes often incorporate purposeful misspelling of words, specifically erroneous addition and/or substitution of letters like *m* and *f*

(Majdzińska-Koczorowicz & Ostanina-Olszewska, 2021). Deletion of letters is also common in cases where removing a letter retains the phonetic pronunciation. Ntouvlis (n.d.) found the grammar of dog memes often incorporates a declarative statement containing an adjective and/or noun with a mismatched intensifier (e.g. ‘many happy’). Dogs may generally be referred to as “boi” or “doge,” regardless of gender, but often utilize a more specific name such as “doggo” or “pupper.” This naming lexicon has become complex enough that memes have been created to reflect this development.

While certain aspects of these dog memes have been analyzed, this naming lexicon has had very little academic research conducted on it. In particular, there is a deficit of research on the potential relationships between dog slang terminology and the size of the dog. From my personal experience, it appears that there may be some pattern between slang term, size, or breed. Thus, this article aims to explore the potential relationships between dog slang and dog size while accounting for cross-cultural variation (i.e., gender, ethnicity, generational identity, and age). I hypothesize there will be statistically significant relationships between all dog slang terms and either dog size or weight class. I believe these patterns may reflect the use of morphological affixes to index size. There is little to no directly related research about the naming lexicon of dog memes; nevertheless, it has been anecdotally noted by internet users in formats such as figure 1.

Figure 1

Dog Meme on Dog Slang



I expect to find statistically significant differences correlating dog slang and dog size by age, generation, gender, and identity status as a "dog lover." I expect those who are younger than forty and/or of Generation X or below will exhibit more usage of slang less phonetically similar to the word 'dog'. I do not expect to find statistically significant differences correlating dog slang and dog size by ethnicity and location as dog memes are an online and worldwide phenomenon.

Methods

I chose to study patterns in dog terminology by size because I have a passion for anything dog-related. This linguistic feature is also extremely understudied but important to understanding the formation and indexicality of language in memes. I gathered mostly quantitative data about terminology usage via an online survey made with Qualtrics. I recruited both those who identify as 'dog lovers' and those who do not identify as 'dog lovers' to gather a more representative sample of the population.

In total, ninety-two people responded to my survey with seventy-seven yielding usable answers (mostly due to survey distribution causing incomplete responses). I first implemented an opening statement with information about the survey, including background information, an outline of the survey, and a trigger warning about images of dogs. I then asked demographic questions about age, generation identity, gender, ethnicity, location, and dog lover status. Respondents included a decent amount of individuals from those under fifty-four years old but strongly neglected those over fifty-four. The respondents also included a fair amount of responses from those who identify as White but was lacking those of the Black, Asian, Hispanic, and other ethnicities. There were no American Indian/Alaska Native or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander respondents.

Surprisingly, this survey had nearly twice as many female respondents as male respondents. There were very few respondents that identified as non-binary or other. Most respondents reported not residing in the United States when asked "Which state did you grow up in/most identify as being from?". A large portion of the respondents from the United States came from Utah, Texas, California, and Arizona. The majority of respondents identified as dog lovers when asked the question "Do you identify as a 'dog lover', or someone who is passionate about dogs?" A

moderate number of respondents identified as partial dog lovers and the minority did not identify as dog lovers.

All respondents were directed to a randomized set of questions where they were presented with ten pictures of dogs and asked "Which term would you most likely use to describe this animal?" Pictures of ten breeds were taken from the official American Kennel Club web pages for those breeds. Pictures were of various non-threatening and non-violent positions/scenarios to naturalize the presentation. Respondents were presented with pictures of one dog of each of the following ten breeds: Pomeranian, Schipperke, Shetland Sheepdog, Whippet, Saluki, Curly-Coated Retriever, Black Russian Terrier, Boerboel, Dalmatian, and Newfoundland. These breeds were selected because they displayed a large variation in characteristics and are not the most frequent dog breeds in dog memes. Respondents were provided with the following slang terms for each picture: "Smol", "Foo Foo," "Yapper," "Pupper," "Pupperino," "Doggo," "Doggerino," "Doge," "Woofer," "Floof," and "Floofer." These terms came from the website Let's Learn Slang (2021) and from my personal experience. All choices provided in the survey were randomized, and a request-response requirement (a survey function that asks respondents to provide an answer to an unanswered question) was also placed on these questions to prevent survey attrition.

All respondents were then administered ten randomized questions where they were asked which term they would be most likely to use to describe a dog in a particular weight range. Weight ranges were taken from the American Kennel Club Breed Weight Chart (2017). These weight ranges were not the exact same weight ranges as the breeds in the pictures to more fully represent the full spectrum of dog weight ranges. A request-response requirement was placed on this set of questions also to prevent survey attrition.

A third and final selection was presented to respondents. This small section contained the questions "Were there any other terms for 'dog' that I missed in this survey? I have chosen to disregard animals outside the canine world that are still called doggos (i.e., water doggo) as well as the breed-specific terms (i.e., corgo)" and "Any questions, comments, or concerns?" These questions were not randomized as it was deemed unnecessary. A few expressed concern about the lack of a normal "Dog" option as well as the weight ranges being in pounds and not kilograms.

The end of the survey message included a thank you message with some dog memes.

To analyze the data collected, I utilized the Results and Stats IQ sections in Qualtrics. The Results section was used to gather descriptive data on the overall trends of the questions. The Stats IQ section was used to relate each demographic question and each survey question. Chi-squared tests were applied by the program to identify statistically significant relationships between demographics and question responses.

Results

There were various significant patterns associated with slang terminology and dog breed.

The term *doggo* was the most favored selection of all dog breeds except for the Pomeranian and Black Russian Terrier. The most frequently selected slang word for the Pomeranian and Black Russian Terrier breeds was *floof,* and the second most popular selection for Schipperke as well as the Shetland Sheepdog was *floof.* The second and third most popular selection for the Black Russian Terrier were *doggo* (21.9%) and *floofer* (20.3%), respectively. The dog with the highest percentage of *foo foo* usage was the Saluki at 16.7%. The Newfoundland breed had equal responses (18.6%) for *woofer, floof,* and *floofer.*

There were significant patterns associated with slang terminology, age, and generational identity. Overall, younger-aged individuals and those who identified as younger generations exhibited more variation in slang usage. For instance, only respondents aged eighteen to twenty-four years old described a Pomeranian as either a *pupperino* or a *doge,* while only those who identified as Generation Z utilized *yapper.* Furthermore, only those aged eighteen to twenty-four years old described the Schipperke breed as either *smol* or a *pupperino.* Likewise, Generation Z was the only generation that utilized *smol* or *yapper* to describe the Shipperke breed. Notably, only respondents aged forty-five to fifty-four years old and/or who identified as Generation X described the Schipperke breed as a *foo foo.* In the case of the Curly-Coated Retriever, only those under eighteen described it as *smol,* only those eighteen to twenty-four described it as a *yapper* or *doggerino,* and only those twenty-five to thirty-four described it as a *pupperino* or *woofer.*

Additionally, only respondents aged eighteen to twenty-four selected *foo foo* to describe a Shetland Sheepdog, while only those aged twenty-five to thirty-four described a Shetland Sheepdog as a *doggerino*. Generation Z was the only generation to utilize *pupper* for a Shetland Sheepdog. Similarly, only those who identified as Generation Z described a Newfoundland as a *yapper* or a *pupperino,* while only those aged eighteen to twenty-four described a Whippet as a *doggerino* and a Saluki as a *yapper*. Both those aged twenty-five to thirty-four and those who identified as Millennials described the Saluki as a *woofer*. However, Generation Z was the only generation to describe a Saluki as a *pupperino*. By the same token, only those who identified as Millennials described the Black Russian Terrier as a *doggerino*. Interestingly, only those aged eighteen to twenty-four years old described a Dalmation as *smol, yapper,* and *pupperino*.

There were two statistically significant relationships found between dog breed and ethnicity. Firstly, there was a strong statistically significant relationship between ethnicity and responses for the Curly-Coated Retriever as observed via chi-square test ($p < .01$). Only Hispanic/Latino respondents utilized *doggerino,* while only Asian respondents utilized *pupperino*. Only White respondents utilized *smol, yapper, doge, woofer,* and *floofer*. Secondly, there was a strong statistically significant relationship between ethnicity and responses for Dalmation as observed via chi-square test ($p < .01$). Only Black respondents used *smol,* while only White respondents used *yapper, pupperino,* and *woofer*.

Only female respondents utilized *pupperino* to describe the Pomeranian, while only male respondents utilized *doge* to describe it. The Shetland Sheepdog was described as a *foo foo* by only male respondents and as a *doggerino* and *doge* by only female respondents. Only female respondents described the Whippet as a *pupperino* or a *doge*. The Saluki was described as a *yapper* only by male respondents. Similarly, only female respondents described the Boerboel as *pupper* and the Dalmatian as a *smol* or *yapper*. Female respondents were also the only ones to describe a Newfoundland as a *yapper, pupper,* or *pupperino*.

Chi-square tests were conducted between location and picture/terminology responses. No statistically significant relationships were found. Nevertheless, location-specific patterns in slang were observed when focusing on breed. For example, only those from Utah referred to the Pomeranian as a *pupperino,* while only

those from California referred to it as a *doge*. The Curly-Coated Retriever was referred to only by those in California as a *smol* or *yapper,* those in Texas as a *pupperino,* and those in New Jersey as a *doggerino*. By the same token, the Saluki, Shetland Sheepdog, and Newfoundland breeds each had significant slang usage differences between individuals from specific states and those outside the United States. Only those from Montana referred to the Saluki as a *yapper,* and only those who did not reside in the United States described it as a *woofer*. The Shetland Sheepdog was referred to as a *foo foo* only by those from California and as a *doggerino* only by those who did not reside in the United States. Only those from Georgia described the Newfoundland as a *yapper,* and only those who did not reside in the United States described it as a *pupperino*.

Those who identified as dog lovers appeared to utilize the most terminology per each dog breed featured. For example, those who identified as dog lovers utilized eight out of the eleven terminology options available. On the other hand, those who partially identified as dog lovers used five of the options, and those who did not identify as dog lovers used four. Those who did not identify as dog lovers did not utilize strong preferences of terminology for any particular dog breed overall. Chi-squared tests were conducted and no statistically significant relationships were found between dog lover identity and picture/term matching.

There were significant trends associated with slang terminology and dog weight. As dog weight increased, the likelihood of being called a *doggo* increased overall. While the term *doggo* was still most prevalent, the use of *woofer* increased in usage as dog weight rose past 80 pounds. The dog with the highest likelihood of being described as a *woofer* was a dog that weighed 150–200 pounds.

Almost forty percent of respondents would describe a dog that is from three to seven pounds as *smol*. Just under thirty percent of respondents would describe a dog that is 10–16 pounds as *smol*. More than thirty percent of respondents would describe a dog that is 15–25 pounds as a *pupper,* while 27.8 percent of respondents would describe the dog as a *doggo*. Similarly, 41.8 percent of respondents would describe a dog that is 25–40 pounds as a *doggo,* and 53.7 percent of respondents would describe a dog that is 40–65 as a *doggo*. Both dogs weighing 45–70 pounds and 60–95 pounds would be described as a *doggo* by 65.5 percent of respondents.

Notably, there is a statistically significant relationship between age and terminology used to describe a 10–16 pound dog as established via chi-square test ($p < .05$). Only those aged twenty-five to thirty-four used *doggerino,* and only those aged forty-five to fifty-four used *doge*. Those aged eighteen to twenty-four exhibited wide variation. Furthermore, there was also a statistically significant relationship between age and terminology used to describe a 25–40 pound dog as established via chi-square test ($p < .05$). Only those under 18 used *smol,* only those aged twenty-five to thirty-four used *pupperino,* and only those aged forty-five to fifty-four used *foo foo*. Only those aged eighteen to twenty-four years old utilized *yapper, doggerino, floof,* or *floofer.*

Moreover, there are strong statistically significant relationships between gender and terminology used to describe a 25–40 pound dog and terminology for a 40–60 pound dog ($p < .01$). Only male respondents described a 25–40 pound dog as a *pupperino,* and only respondents who identified as 'Other' described it as a *floof*. Similarly, only respondents who identified as 'Other' described a 40–65 pound dog as (a) *smol*. Chi-square tests were conducted, and there was no significant relationship found between generation, ethnicity, location, or 'dog lover' identity and terminology by dog weight.

Table 1

Slang Terms Used by Dog Size Survey Results

Dog Size	Slang Term	Percentage of Respondents
3–7 lbs.	*smol*	36.4%
10–16 lbs.	*smol*	34.5%
15–25 lbs.	*pupper*	31.5%
15–25 lbs.	*doggo*	27.8%
25–40 lbs.	*doggo*	41.8%
40–65 lbs.	*doggo*	53.7%
45–70 lbs.	*doggo*	65.5%
60–75 lbs.	*doggo*	65.5%

Discussion

There were statistically significant relationships between dog slang terms and dog size and weight range. The term *doggo* was used most overall, except for the Pomeranian and Black Russian Terrier breeds that utilized *floof*. The minimum weight for a dog to be referred to as a *woofer* was approximately eighty pounds, though the term *doggo* was more frequent. There was no significant relationship found between generation, ethnicity, location, or 'dog lover' identity and terminology by dog weight.

There were statistically significant differences correlating dog slang and dog breed by ethnicity and location. Interestingly, there were no statistically significant differences correlating dog slang and dog weight range by ethnicity and location. This may indicate that the dog's appearance is more important than the size (a sentiment echoed in the comments section of the survey as well). By the same token, dog terminology may be indexing both auditory and visual components. Fuzzy/shaggy dog breeds such as Pomeranian, Black Russian Terrier, and Newfoundland had significant incidences of the terms *floof* and *floofer*. *Yapper* was utilized for smaller dogs, while *woofer* was utilized for larger dogs. These terms may reflect more of how the dogs sound and less of how they look. White respondents also used terms including *woofer* to describe the Dalmation, while Black respondents used the term *smol*. This may indicate an ethnical difference in auditory and visual indexing and vocabulary selection.

Those who were younger than twenty-four exhibited more usage of slang less phonetically similar to the word *dog* as evidenced by the confident use of the terms *smol* and *yapper*. The suffix *–ino* may index a small to moderate size to those aged twenty-five to thirty-four, indicated by the usage of *doggerino* to describe both a 10–16 pound dog and a 25–40 pound dog. There were various possible uses of irony in the terminology such as female respondents and those aged 18–24 describing a Newfoundland as a *yapper*. There was also more variety in female usage than in male usage (e.g., Curly-Coated Retriever usages).

The results of this survey are constrained by assorted limitations. The research was conducted by a single person. My sample size was very small. While I tried to be as thorough as possible, there is some bias in the sampling procedure. Nearly all of the elderly participants came from my grandfather's social circle. Nearly all of the Generation Z and Millennial participants were

university students. There were unequal distributions of age, gender, and ethnicity. All of my data collection was done online, so there is a bias toward those with internet access and willingness to take a survey.

More research should be conducted to better analyze how dog appearance influences slang usage. For instance, does the same rule of *corgo* for a Corgi apply to *labo* for a Labrador or *berno* for a Saint Bernard? This research should include more diversity in age, gender, and ethnicity. The format of future research should be changed so all questions and the survey itself are accessible to those from all backgrounds. Research should also be done in languages other than English to investigate, isolate, analyze, and compare terminology used in dog memes.

This study helps expand knowledge about sociolinguistics by identifying patterns of dog slang usage by size and/or weight range in various demographics (e.g., age, gender, ethnicity). This article further expands work on linguistics in the media and memes. Overall, this research is pertinent to professionals such as linguists, anthropologists, sociologists, professors of English Language or Linguistics, meme creators, and those in advertising. In summation, those of various backgrounds found the majority of dog memes too cute for words and opted for the term *doggo* overall but differentiated when broken down by demographic or presented with weight ranges.

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The Elimination of Harmful Language Initiative

A Corpus Linguistics Analysis

McKayla Lindman

In December 2022, Stanford University's IT department announced its Elimination of Harmful Language Initiative (EHLI), a list of self-prescribed harmful words and phrases and their proposed alternatives to be implemented across all university websites. The initiative points to a broader linguistic trend of categorizing and suppressing so-called hate speech. Using corpus linguistics methodology, this study analyzes how closely EHLI criteria aligns with historical and contemporary American usage patterns. This study employs collocational analysis and principles of semantic prosody to conclude that factors including frequency, historicity, and likelihood of adoption paint a more accurate picture of a term's potential need for elimination. The study's findings point to corpus linguistics as a valuable tool for objective analysis in the future elimination or perpetuation of harmful language.

In December 2022, Stanford University's IT department announced its Elimination of Harmful Language Initiative (EHLI). The EHLI is a list of self-prescribed harmful words and phrases and their proposed alternatives to be implemented across all university websites. In the document, Stanford (2022) explained that the purpose of the new initiative was to "educate people about the possible impact of the words [they] use" (p. 1). The document and the linguistic sentiments included in it sparked a number of reactions from American media. Amid public backlash, Stanford took down its website. This is not to say Stanford's proposed alternatives will always be perceived in a negative light; the English language has demonstrated time and time again that words initially rejected are often adopted with time. However extreme, Stanford's efforts to label and eliminate harmful language demonstrate a broader political question of what constitutes hate speech, slurs, and other harmful language.

Whenever discussing euphemistic speech, it is important to consider Pinker's (1994) euphemism treadmill phenomenon, a linguistic pattern that demonstrates that "concepts, not words are in charge." Generally, euphemisms will fall into disuse and become socially unacceptable as they are tainted by negative association.

Stanford's Chief Information Officers Council (CIOC) attributes many of its selected words and phrases to the Brandeis Suggested Language List. Interestingly, the Brandeis team (2021) asserts that "language that doesn't say what we mean can often serve to avoid directly addressing what we really need to say. Using euphemisms, vagueness, and inaccurate words can get in the way of meaningful dialogue." By definition, a euphemism is a polite expression used in place of a more direct expression to "avoid shocking or upsetting someone" (Longman, n.d.)—a description that ironically fits many of the EHLI terms.

If indeed Stanford CIOC's purpose is to educate people about the impact of the words we use, what better way to determine a word's impact than corpus linguistics methodology? Corpus analysis allows us to derive a word's meaning as expressed in a body of "real world" texts. I propose that a corpus linguistics-based approach may enhance existing methodology that selects lists of offensive words at random and provide direction in an area with a high potential for subjectivity. My goal for this research is to determine whether there is a precedent for eliminating "harmful" language.

My role is not to determine whether a word's position along the euphemism treadmill justifies its elimination; rather, it is to chart an EHLI term's meaning as demonstrated by the usage patterns of everyday Americans over time. Using collocational analysis and principles of semantic prosody, I will evaluate seven terms on Stanford's list according to Stanford's own criteria, keeping the following questions in mind: (1) How is a given EHLI term used by everyday Americans? and (2) How closely does Stanford's criteria reflect actual everyday American usage patterns?

Methods

Choosing the proper corpus parameters is essential to accurately understanding the questions at hand. In the original document, Stanford CIOC specifically states that the website focuses on "potentially harmful terms used in the United States, starting with a list of everyday language and terminology" (Stanford, 2022, p. 1). The corpus that is widely accepted as the most representative of everyday American language and terminology is the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA). COCA is the largest and most balanced corpus of American English (Davies, 2010). The TIME Corpus has been used in similar studies on politically correct terminology (Granath & Ullen, 2019). However, these studies are focused on the role of the media in perpetuating what researchers deemed to be politically correct terminology rather than tracking its everyday use. I consulted the Corpus of Historical American English (COHA) to get a preliminary sense of each word's usage over time, and I used COCA for purposes of collocation and concordance analysis.

Criteria

Stanford CIOC collected words that they considered to be (1) ethnically offensive, (2) implicitly biased in terms of disability, gender, age, or sex, (3) representative of institutional racism, or (4) violent. Offending words and phrases were then listed under ten categories of offense: ableist, ageism, colonialism, culturally appropriative, gender-based, imprecise language, institutionalized racism, person-first, violent, and miscellaneous (Stanford, 2022).

Due to the limited scope and time constraints of this particular project, I focused my analysis on terms with the same part of speech in one category of offense. A narrowed approach allowed for semantic and syntactic cohesion as well. I selected nouns from

the Imprecise Language category of offense because they were the most common part of speech in the category that, on average, yielded the highest usage frequencies for each term. Because nouns are more content-based than other parts of speech, it was easier to extract meaning and accomplish the project's objectives. The EHLI defines imprecise language as "terms that utilize euphemisms, vagueness, or inaccurate words to not say what one is trying to say" (Stanford, 2022, p. 6). Table 1 includes all nouns listed under the Imprecise Language section of the EHLI, including the suggested alternatives and justification for the term's elimination.

Process

The goal of this project was to evaluate nouns deemed imprecise by the EHLI in terms of general connotation in everyday American usage and according to the EHLI's criteria (i.e., the context section) and determine whether there is a precedent for elimination. In order to address my two objectives, I referred to the following process for each term:

1. Conduct a preliminary search in COHA. Chart the word's usage over time relative to how frequently it is used today. Make note of what changed and what stayed the same. Support any claims with concordance lines.

2. Run the term through COCA's Collocates section, ensuring the "sections" box was selected.

3. Analyze the top one hundred collocates for each term. Sort the collocates according to general positive, neutral, and negative connotations in an Excel document. Justify content-based connotation groupings using concordance lines.

4. Analyze EHLI criteria. Consider the EHLI Context section (see table 1) for each term, and group collocates accordingly. For example, the EHLI claims that *thug* often takes on racist connotations. For the term *thug,* I made note of any specific racial reference within the collocates themselves, again referencing concordance lines.

5. Analyze alternatives. Run a basic frequency analysis of the EHLI's suggested alternative(s) for each term (see table 1, Consider Using section).

Table 1

Stanford University. (2022). Imprecise language. *The Elimination of Harmful Language Initiative.*

Instead of	Consider using	Context
American	US citizen	This term often refers to people from the United States only, thereby insinuating that the US is the most important country in the Americas (which is actually made up of 42 countries).
child prostitute	child who has been trafficked	Using person-first language helps to not define people by just one of their characteristics.
Indian summer	late summer	This term infers [implies] that Indigenous people are chronically late. While it may be innocently used to describe a beautiful time of year, it could have an unintended negative impact on those who hear it.
people of color	BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color)	If speaking about a specific group, name that group.
thug	suspect or criminal	Although the term refers to a violent person or criminal, it often takes on a racist connotation when used in certain circles.
user	client	While often associated with one who uses (software, systems, services), it can also negatively be associated with those who suffer from substance abuse issues or those who exploit others for their own gain.
victim	person who has experienced ____, person who has been impacted by ____	Using person-first language helps to not define people by just one of their experiences. If the person identifies with the term, then use it.

Results

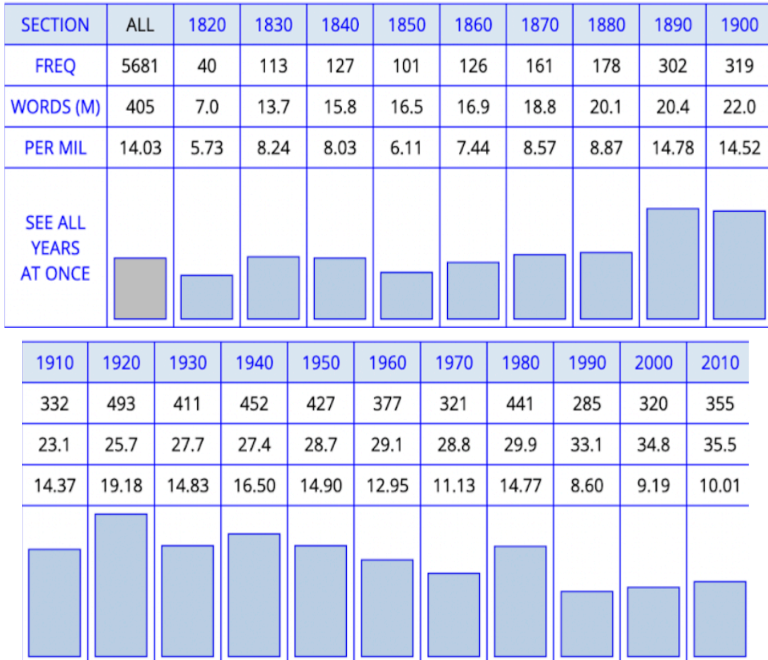
I marked terms in table 2 with a raw frequency fewer than 100 in either COHA or COCA with an asterisk (*). I omitted the COHA timeline results for those queries to avoid drawing misleading conclusions from insufficient data. The following sections detail the individual queries, results, and introductory discussion for each noun in the EHLI's Imprecise Language category.

American

The COCA query *american_n* yielded 14,267 results. The usage of *American* in its noun form has fluctuated since 1820, forming a near bell curve with its highest point around the 1920s and 1940s, as shown in the COHA timeline above (see figure 1). No doubt the advent of the First and Second World Wars contributed significantly to the spike in usage, as the United States was defining its national identity on the world stage. In recent decades, usage frequency has stayed consistent and average (relative to its usage in the last two centuries).

Figure 1

COHA Timeline for American



SECTION	ALL	1820	1830	1840	1850	1860	1870	1880	1890	1900
FREQ	5681	40	113	127	101	126	161	178	302	319
WORDS (M)	405	7.0	13.7	15.8	16.5	16.9	18.8	20.1	20.4	22.0
PER MIL	14.03	5.73	8.24	8.03	6.11	7.44	8.57	8.87	14.78	14.52
SEE ALL YEARS AT ONCE										

1910	1920	1930	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010
332	493	411	452	427	377	321	441	285	320	355
23.1	25.7	27.7	27.4	28.7	29.1	28.8	29.9	33.1	34.8	35.5
14.37	19.18	14.83	16.50	14.90	12.95	11.13	14.77	8.60	9.19	10.01

Table 2

"Instead Of" Results

Term	Query	Raw Frequency (COCA)	Normalized Frequency (COCA)
American	american_n	14,267	14.24
child prostitute*	child prostitute_n	18	0.02
Indian summer	indian summer_n	288	0.29
people of color	people of color_n	2,824	2.82
thug	thug_n	2,485	2.48
user	user_n	35,887	35.83
victim	victim_n	43,163	43.09

Table 3

"Consider Using" Results

Term	Query	Raw Frequency (COCA)	Normalized Frequency (COCA)
US citizen	us citizen_n	635	0.63
child who has been trafficked	child who has been trafficked	1	0.0009
late summer	late summer	1,674	1.67
BIPOC	bipoc b.i.p.o.c.	0 1	0 0.0009
(a) suspect (b) criminal	suspect_n criminal_n	18,292 9,448	18.26 9.43
client	client_n	38,820	38.76
(a) person who has experi-enced ____ (b) person who has been impacted by ____	person who has experienced person who has been impacted by	6 0	0.006 0

An overwhelming majority of the first one hundred collocates listed in COCA for *American* were terms for mixed nationalities, including *African, Native, Asian, Latin, European, Japanese, Chinese, Italian, Hispanic, Jewish, Irish, Cuban,* and *Korean*. Concordance lines like "the future I most fear for **America** is **Latin American:** a grossly unequal society that is prone to wild swings from populism to orthodoxy" confirm the EHLI's claim that *American* most often refers to citizens of the United States, rather than residents of the North and South American continents. If *American* most often referenced the Americas, common terms, including *Latin American, Hispanic American,* and *Cuban American,* would be repetitive and unnecessary.

The EHLI claim posits that using *American* to refer exclusively to US citizens insinuates that the US is the most important country in the Americas (see table 1). With collocates like *proud, dream, patriotic, educated,* and *deserves,* it is easy to draw similar conclusions. However—at a closer glance—these collocates with potentially positive connotations are often used sarcastically or cynically (e.g., "Wow you must be **proud** to be an **american**. Must be wonderful to be an ignorant expendable peasant." or "I thought the **american** people were **educated** but I guess I was wrong."). The much more frequent negative collocates like *ugly, eats, consumes, pounds, spends,* and *dies* point to undesirable "American" habits and prove quite the opposite (e.g., "the average **American eats** around 300 milligrams of cholesterol a day." or "The average **American spends** 3,304 hours per year with one or another kind of media."). The general sentiment around the US from its citizens appears to be one of unmet expectations; not all US citizens' perceptions of their country are positive, let alone nationalist. But there is an underlying sense of "American" entitlement that could be argued for in the original expectations American citizens have for their nation (e.g., pride, education, or entitlement). While the EHLI is correct in its statement that *American* often refers to US citizens, its use does not always paint the United States in a positive light; in fact, its use is often negative.

The EHLI alternative, *US citizen,* was 95.6 percent less frequent than *American*. Because *American* is so closely associated with the United States and not the American continents, it would take considerable effort to override this linguistic trend. According to the first one hundred concordance lines, *US citizen* is most often used when US citizenship is in question or in global or international contexts (e.g., "[Marco] Rubio is, indeed, a natural born

US citizen." or "It feels very strange to be a **US citizen** living abroad."). Ironically, it is linked to the American continents significantly more than *American*.

Child Prostitute

Child prostitute appeared just eighteen times in COCA, with a normalized frequency of 0.02. Of the resulting seventy-four collocates, only seven represented more than two co-occurrences, and all were basic prepositions and articles (*a, as, of, and, the, in,* and *or*). The suggested alternative, *child who has been trafficked,* yielded an even lower COCA raw frequency of just one. This may be due to the lack of data for *child prostitute*. Perhaps a news-related corpus like the TIME corpus would yield higher frequency and more conclusive results.

Indian Summer

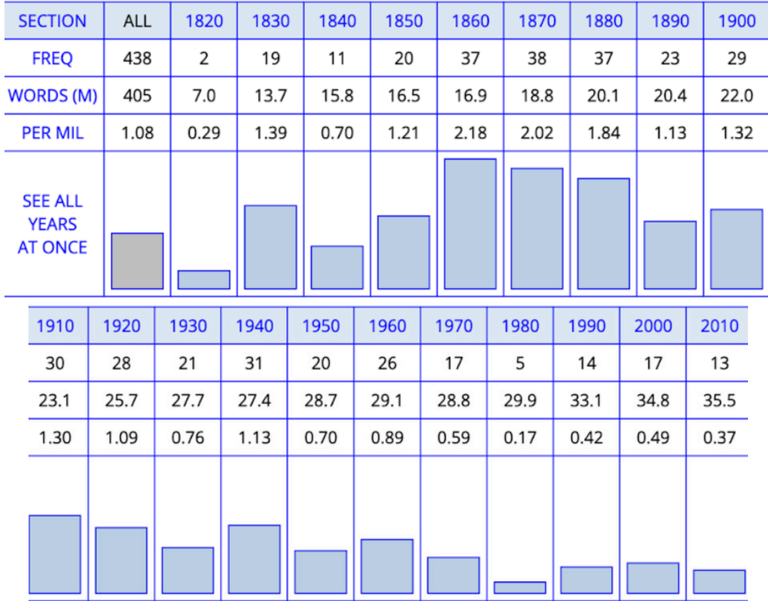
EHLI recommends using *late summer* over *Indian summer,* but a corpus analysis shows what this recommendation may miss. While *Indian summer* is still in use today, it appears that it has become a relatively outdated term compared to its peak usage during the mid-to-late nineteenth century. Throughout time, it has been used both literally and figuratively (e.g., "the misty violet bloom of the **Indian Summer** was washed away by sharp winds and cold rains." vs. "Madame Adelaide is in the **Indian summer** of her charms"). It is largely a literary term, consistently dominating the fiction register across time.

I reviewed the top one hundred COCA collocates, looking for any racialized undertones or negative connotations. *Sioux* was the only collocate that made any direct reference to Native Americans and contained only two concordance lines. Both lines were lyrics from a 1994 documentary that portrayed Judy Garland's 1946 performance of "I'm an Indian, Too" in the musical *Annie, Get Your Gun*: "some **Indian summer**'s day without a care I may run away with Big Chief Sun-of-a-Bear." The most severe negative association was *unseasonably,* which was in reference to the weather: "mesh will keep you cooler and drier on those **unseasonably** warm **Indian summer** days." In fact, the use of *Indian summer* appears to have been preserved in contexts of cooking and gardening, as demonstrated by collocates like *rudbeckia, hirta, plants, leaves, snapdragons, succotash,* and *potpourri*. The remaining

collocates were either neutral or extremely positive: *beautiful*, *glorious*, *bright*, *gorgeous*, *enjoying*, *golden*, and *perfect*.

Figure 2

COHA Timeline for Indian Summer



SECTION	ALL	1820	1830	1840	1850	1860	1870	1880	1890	1900
FREQ	438	2	19	11	20	37	38	37	23	29
WORDS (M)	405	7.0	13.7	15.8	16.5	16.9	18.8	20.1	20.4	22.0
PER MIL	1.08	0.29	1.39	0.70	1.21	2.18	2.02	1.84	1.13	1.32
SEE ALL YEARS AT ONCE										

SECTION	1910	1920	1930	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010
FREQ	30	28	21	31	20	26	17	5	14	17	13
WORDS (M)	23.1	25.7	27.7	27.4	28.7	29.1	28.8	29.9	33.1	34.8	35.5
PER MIL	1.30	1.09	0.76	1.13	0.70	0.89	0.59	0.17	0.42	0.49	0.37

Late summer yielded 1,674 results, making a natural, high-frequency alternative. *Late summer,* with a frequency of 1.69 words per million, is used much more frequently than *Indian summer*'s 0.29 words per million. However, some may argue that with its elimination, we may risk losing *Indian summer*'s literary charm; "Ruthie thought of Mary, of those **late summer** days when, as little girls, they would be loaded back up again" has a slightly different effect than the romantic "light, warming the skin of my own like the **Indian summer** sun I'd never known." As it stands, *Indian summer* appears to be outdated based on diminishing frequency and appears to be disassociated from racial connotation.

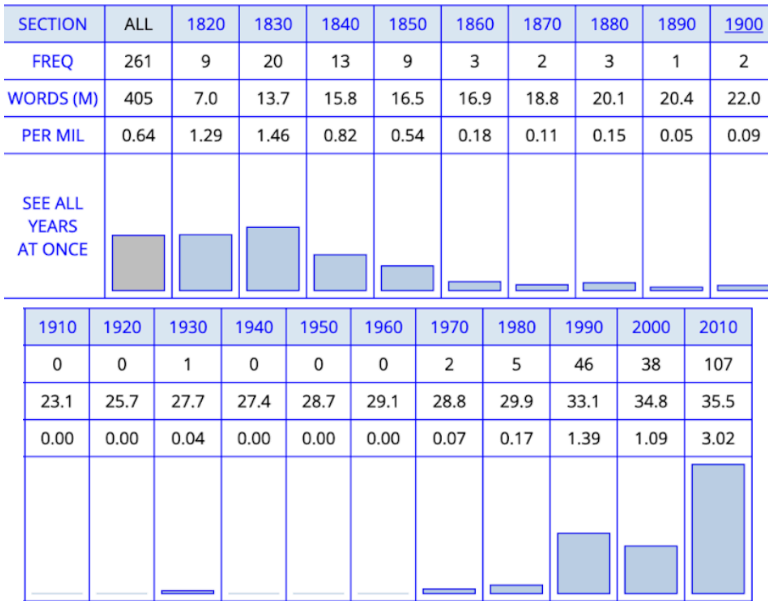
People of Color

There is an interesting pattern that appears in the COHA timeline for this term. *People of color* made a notable appearance in the early- to mid-nineteenth century, exclusively in reference to

enslaved Africans and largely in reference to the colonization movement and the American Colonization Society for the first one hundred results (e.g., “we are enabled to run a statistical parallel between the people of the colony of Liberia, in Africa, and the free **people of color** in the city of Boston” or “Africa is a favorable place for raising the free **people of color** to refinement, intelligence, and religion”). Usage of the term dropped off in the 1860s. *People of color* experienced a dramatic resurgence in the 1990s and is on the rise today.

Figure 3

COHA Timeline for People of Color



SECTION	ALL	1820	1830	1840	1850	1860	1870	1880	1890	1900
FREQ	261	9	20	13	9	3	2	3	1	2
WORDS (M)	405	7.0	13.7	15.8	16.5	16.9	18.8	20.1	20.4	22.0
PER MIL	0.64	1.29	1.46	0.82	0.54	0.18	0.11	0.15	0.05	0.09
SEE ALL YEARS AT ONCE										

1910	1920	1930	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010
0	0	1	0	0	0	2	5	46	38	107
23.1	25.7	27.7	27.4	28.7	29.1	28.8	29.9	33.1	34.8	35.5
0.00	0.00	0.04	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.07	0.17	1.39	1.09	3.02

The COCA collocate list is flooded with terms associated with comparable minority groups, collocates that have skyrocketed in recent years (i.e., since 2015). Interestingly, the most frequent collocate is *women*. *LGBT*(Q), *queer, trans, minorities, gay*(s), *lesbians, disabilities, elderly,* and *transgender* were not far behind. *African-american*(s), *black*(s), and *African* ranked highest, but *Latinos, Indigenous,* and *Indians* were often lumped into the same category (e.g., “he believes that because **people of color**, **blacks** and **Latinos**, live in inner cities” or “historically, **people of color**, including **American Indians**, have been relegated to the category of

menial laborers"). However, this wasn't always the case (e.g., "they will have to drop their hatred for women, **Latinos** and **people of color**" or "**Blacks** in America, **people of color**, **American Indians**, **Hispanics**, and all the weak and oppressed"). It seems that *people of color*, though once used to refer to those of African descent exclusively, has become a decidedly ambiguous term that could reference any number of ethnic/racial groups—or not. This trend toward ambiguity justifies the placement of *people of color* in the Imprecise Language category and points to an interesting trend of fluidity among social, racial, and ethnic groups.

Included in the top one hundred collocates was another prominent theme of opposition, separation, and distinctive treatment, as shown in the following collocates: *against, particularly, disproportionately, especially, underrepresented, targeting, treat, represented, positions, discrimination, affect/ed/ing, overwhelmingly, inclusion, primarily, exclusion, excluded, harder, barriers, targeted, equity, equality,* and *discriminate/d*. This theme indicates a common sentiment among the general American public and how they view the category of "people of color," even if there is ambiguity about who that includes.

In the justification for *people of color*'s elimination, the EHLI suggests, "If speaking about a specific group, name that group." Its suggested alternative, *BIPOC* (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color), only seems to perpetuate the confusion and obscure who qualifies under the *people of color* label. *BIPOC* yielded just one COCA concordance line, which closely aligns with the minority "lumping" trends observed in the top collocates: "Interlocking Roots for the **Q.T.B.I.P.o.C.** community (queer and trans **black and indigenous people of color**)." It is important to note that COCA only includes texts through 2019, so usage may have shifted with various political movements over the last few years. However, even the EHLI's interpretation of the *BIPOC* acronym ("Black, Indigenous, *and* People of Color" [emphasis added]) contradicts the COCA concordance line ("black *and* indigenous people of color" [emphasis added]) and does not address concerns of imprecision.

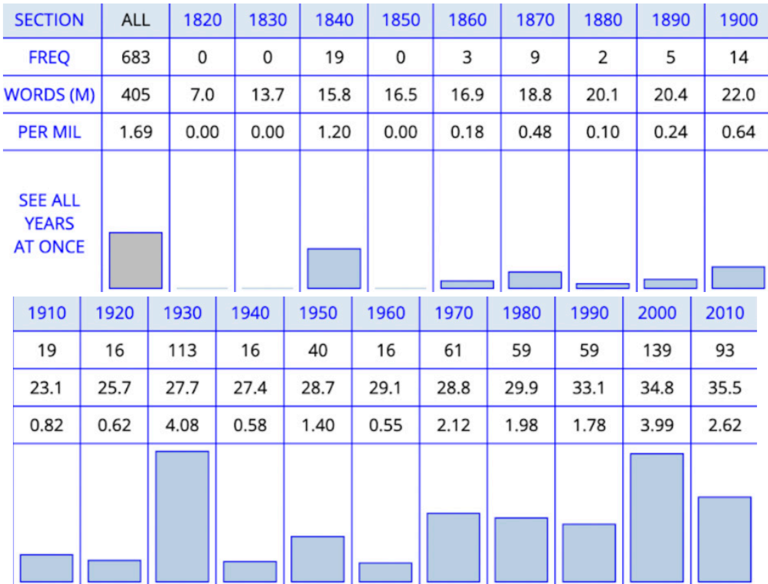
Thug

Thug made its appearance during the 1930s and has been on the rise since the 2000s. The 1930s data may have been slightly skewed because half of the concordance lines were from a play with a "thug" character. The listed reason for including *thug* on

the EHLI list is “Although the term refers to a violent person or criminal, it often takes on a racist connotation when used in certain circles.” (see table 1). While the first one hundred COCA collocates were overwhelmingly negative and linked to criminal activity, there were very few direct references to racial associations. The seventy-ninth listed collocate is *supremacist* with a single concordance line including the phrase “Islamic supremacist thug.” Surprisingly, *Trayvon* was one of the listed collocates. Each concordance line made reference to the Trayvon Martin case, the highly racialized case that gave rise to the Black Lives Matter movement. But the media referred to Trayvon and George Zimmerman (different races) as thugs interchangeably (e.g., “**George Zimmerman** was a **thug** who jumped **Trayvon Martin**” and “**Trayvon** had tattoos, don’t you know, proof that he was a **thug**”). Even the collocate *racist* refers only to the thugs themselves as racist (e.g., “like the **racist thug** Lieberman”). *Thug* instead refers to, in many cases, politicians and government leaders, especially dictators: *Putin, Saddam, Hussein, dictator, communist, regime, Laden,* and *D.C.* The EHLI proposes that *criminal* and *suspect* replace *thug,*

Figure 4

COHA Timeline for Thug



SECTION	ALL	1820	1830	1840	1850	1860	1870	1880	1890	1900
FREQ	683	0	0	19	0	3	9	2	5	14
WORDS (M)	405	7.0	13.7	15.8	16.5	16.9	18.8	20.1	20.4	22.0
PER MIL	1.69	0.00	0.00	1.20	0.00	0.18	0.48	0.10	0.24	0.64
SEE ALL YEARS AT ONCE										

1910	1920	1930	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010
19	16	113	16	40	16	61	59	59	139	93
23.1	25.7	27.7	27.4	28.7	29.1	28.8	29.9	33.1	34.8	35.5
0.82	0.62	4.08	0.58	1.40	0.55	2.12	1.98	1.78	3.99	2.62

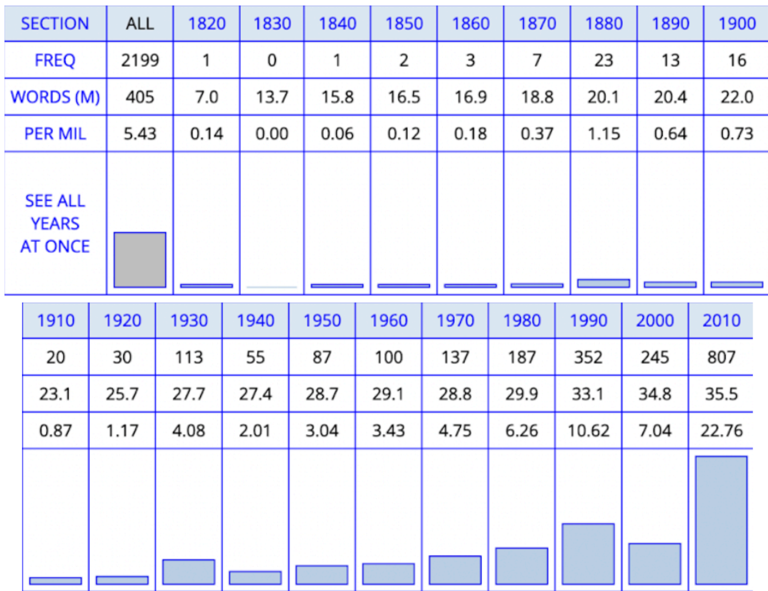
which have a much higher frequency than *thug*. In using *criminal* and *suspect,* some of the politically-affiliated implications of *thug* may be lost.

User

According to the COHA timeline, *user* had been essentially obsolete until a small spike in the 1930s. *User* has been on the rise ever since, especially in the last decade. As noted in the EHLI context, *user* is "often associated with one who uses software, systems, [or] services" (see table 1). The COCA data reflect this pattern with collocates like *information, system, computer, data, experience, account* and *interface*. The rise of computers has undoubtedly contributed to this technological association.

Figure 5

COHA Timeline for User



SECTION	ALL	1820	1830	1840	1850	1860	1870	1880	1890	1900
FREQ	2199	1	0	1	2	3	7	23	13	16
WORDS (M)	405	7.0	13.7	15.8	16.5	16.9	18.8	20.1	20.4	22.0
PER MIL	5.43	0.14	0.00	0.06	0.12	0.18	0.37	1.15	0.64	0.73
SEE ALL YEARS AT ONCE										

1910	1920	1930	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010
20	30	113	55	87	100	137	187	352	245	807
23.1	25.7	27.7	27.4	28.7	29.1	28.8	29.9	33.1	34.8	35.5
0.87	1.17	4.08	2.01	3.04	3.43	4.75	6.26	10.62	7.04	22.76

On the other hand, the EHLI claims that *user* "can also negatively be associated with those who suffer from substance abuse issues or those who exploit others for their own gain" (see table 1). When glancing at the first one hundred COHA concordance lines for each decade leading up to the 2010s, it becomes obvious that in the 1970s and 80s, *user* did primarily refer to drug use. But only two percent of *user*'s top one hundred overall collocates

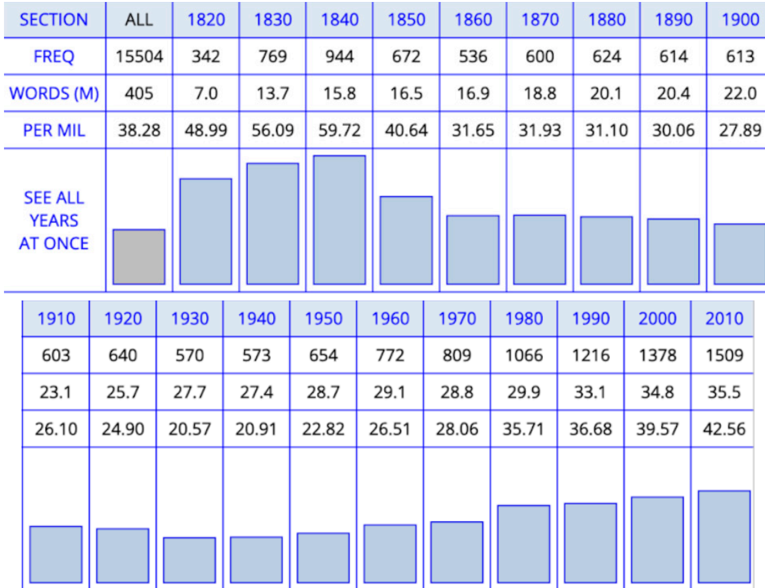
maintained overtly negative connotations, one of which was *drug*. Drug use references and negative references in general were sparse. With this data, one may reconsider whether *user* is negatively connotated enough to necessitate the use of a long, infrequent alternative.

Victim

The EHLI suggests replacing *victim* with *person who has experienced* or *person who has been impacted by* because "using person-first language helps to not define people by just one of their experiences. If the person identifies with the term, then use it" (see table 1). This criteria is not as easily quantifiable or measurable, so I decided to focus on identifying COCA collocates for *victim* that directly reference an experience, meaning an "event" or "occurrence" (Longman); namely, *rape, crime, murder, fall, fell,* and *sexual*. There are many ways to interpret these experiential collocates that warrant further research. It may be that Americans most often associate the word *victim* with those who have experienced rape, crime, murder, or sexual assault.

Figure 6

COHA Timeline for Victim



SECTION	ALL	1820	1830	1840	1850	1860	1870	1880	1890	1900
FREQ	15504	342	769	944	672	536	600	624	614	613
WORDS (M)	405	7.0	13.7	15.8	16.5	16.9	18.8	20.1	20.4	22.0
PER MIL	38.28	48.99	56.09	59.72	40.64	31.65	31.93	31.10	30.06	27.89
SEE ALL YEARS AT ONCE										

1910	1920	1930	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010
603	640	570	573	654	772	809	1066	1216	1378	1509
23.1	25.7	27.7	27.4	28.7	29.1	28.8	29.9	33.1	34.8	35.5
26.10	24.90	20.57	20.91	22.82	26.51	28.06	35.71	36.68	39.57	42.56

It is worth noting that the collocations *fall victim* and *fell victim* are active constructions, where the victim is the agent, and are in a sense "person-first." Active constructions imply that there is an element of choice or responsibility (Williams & Bizup, 2014, p. 5), as in "don't **fall victim** to shiny object syndrome and reach for unproven gimmicks" or "get some sort of compensation when they **fall victim** to a gun crime or accidental death/ injury." These are some factors in play when considering alternatives for identity-defining terms and implementing person-first language.

Both *person who has experienced* and *person who has been impacted by* did not have any COCA results. The length of the phrase and ease of dictation may factor into the low usage levels.

Conclusion

The Stanford CIOC presented many valid usage concerns, especially in regard to imprecision and ambiguity. Terms like *people of color* and *user* are undoubtedly vague. Terms like *Indian summer* and *user* held connotations at one point in time that many today may find offensive. However, the Elimination of Harmful Language Initiative was incorrect in its evaluation of modern usage on many fronts, at least in regard to nouns in the Imprecise Language category. From my analysis of the seven nouns in the Imprecise Language category, I found that a current term's historicity (i.e., a word's position along the euphemism treadmill) and an alternative term's likelihood of adoption (i.e., length, naturalness, awkward phrasing, additional ambiguity, current frequency) are vital to and should be factored into an accurate understanding of a word's potential to cause harm. A word may have held different positions along the euphemism treadmill in different points throughout time; however, it was more often that a noun was disassociated from its original meaning or had become nearly extinct over time.

Due to the limited scope and timeline of this project, I opted to theorize and hypothesize instead of running all of the statistical analyses I would like to, especially in regard to reasons for historical trends. I realize that *some* generalization is often inevitable when sampling a large-scale study. Corpus analysis can never be used to prove an absence of a linguistic feature, but it can be a valuable tool in assessing features present in modern language use.

As a native-English speaker studying linguistics at an advanced university, I had never heard of many of the terms in the Imprecise Language category and in the other categories of offense prior to reading the EHLI document. If indeed Stanford's intended audience is "everyday people," Stanford might consider taking into account everyday (i.e., higher frequency) vocabulary. I propose that linguistic analysis tools like corpus linguistics should be factored into what constitutes hate speech or slurs and the future elimination or perpetuation of harmful language.

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