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UNVEILING LANGUAGE PREJUDICE: A CORPUS-BASED ANALYSIS OF RACIAL SLURS ACROSS GENRES

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Article Info	Abstract
Article History Received: Revised: Published: Keywords English pronunciation; phonrtic instruction; classroom instruction.	<i>Discrimination and racism have been obvious for decades. This encompasses derogatory racial epithets such as "nigger, niggers, n-words". The objective of this study was to employ corpus-based analysis in order to examine the frequency of racial derogatory expressions across various genres of literature. The COCA (Corpus of Contemporary American English) data were employed to perform a corpus-based linguistic analysis of the terms 'nigger', 'niggers', and 'n-word' over a span of 20 years (1990 to 2019). Although the words "niggers" and "n-word" have similar meanings, the occurrence of the word "niggers" and "n-word" in the corpora was significantly less frequent compared to the word "nigger." Primarily, the term "niggers" was used as a plural indicator for the derogatory term "nigger". The frequency with which individuals who use derogatory language, such as the term "niggers," associate themselves with pronouns like "they," "us," "those," "all of you," etc., suggests the existence of these patterns. The sole term that displays a notably diverse frequency distribution across genres is the n-word (in comparison to these two terms).</i>
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INTRODUCTION

For centuries, racial slurs have been employed to demean, offend, and exclude individuals from diverse ethnic backgrounds (Croom, 2011). These derogatory terms have been employed across diverse mediums, including literature, film, music, and social media (Nunberg, 2018). The utilization of racial slurs has sparked intense discussions in recent times, with proponents asserting that their usage falls under the umbrella of free speech, while opponents contend that it perpetuates bias and strengthens social disparities. This encompasses, among various other elements, racial slurs or expressions of hatred, such as the derogatory term

'n-words', as well as the explicit utilization of stereotypes (Popa-Wyatt, 2016). Social stratification, with its various impacts and connections to other forms of social differentiation, exhibits both overt and covert manifestations (McKenzie, 2002). Occasionally, hate speech includes derogatory terms based on race or ethnicity. Slurs, like hate speech, are specific phrases, terminology, or nicknames that are used to refer to social groups in a derogatory, demeaning, or offensive way (Bartlett, 2014). They are commonly regarded as expressing disdain and animosity towards their targets.

Moreover, slurs based on race are commonly encountered during historical periods characterized by rapid societal transformation due to social and economic strife (Croom, 2013). The majority of insults can be attributed to major events in our social history, such as waves of immigration, urbanization, war and its consequences, economic downturns, and large-scale labor migrations (Rahman, 2012). As the number of emancipated slaves increased and they started moving around the United States, asserting their individuality in a society that had previously denied their existence, the use of the 'n-word' became more prevalent (Rahman, 2019).

The objective of this study, thus, to analyze the use of racial slurs in various genres using a corpus-based approach. The aim is to investigate the usage and impact of these slurs on discourse. The presence of discrimination and racism is glaringly evident and has been exposed for numerous decades.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The term 'nigger' originated in the 16th century as a derivative of the French word 'nègre,' which in turn was borrowed from the Spanish word 'negro' (Judy, 1994; Williams, 2019). Originally spelled as 'neger' or 'niger' in English, it underwent a transformation to its current form. They originate from the Latin adjective 'niger', meaning 'black' (Sangmpam, 2019; Rahman, 2012). At first, it was considered a neutral term that was almost identical to "black". Instead of explicitly conveying a hostile definition, early documented occurrences during the Atlantic slave trade (16th–19th centuries) generally revealed the authors' underlying attitudes towards black individuals through a patronizing manner. From the mid-18th century to the mid-19th century, the word acquired a negative meaning and became an explicit insult. The term remained neutral in some authors' usage until the latter half of the 20th century, when its use, regardless of context or intent, became more controversial (Pierrot, 2019; Rahman, 2012).

The word "nigger" gradually disappeared from general popular culture in the second half of the 20th century due to its historical association with symbolic and physical violence (Allan, 2015; Ashby, 2006). However, it still persists in certain contexts, particularly within hip-hop culture (Rahman, 2012; Ashby, 2006). As per the Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, the term is considered to be "potentially the most offensive and inflammatory racial slur in the English language". Essentially, this word is highly problematic in English and is likely to be considered offensive or prohibited in most situations.

The term 'nigga' is a derogatory word used in African-American Vernacular English (Nguyen, 2013). It emerged as a dialect variation of the racial slur 'nigger' that is directed towards black individuals. This term is commonly associated with hip hop music and African-American gang culture (Autman, 2021; Im, 2020). Public opinion is divided on whether there is a significant differentiation between the spoken phrases 'nigga' and 'nigger' (Davis, 2021; Smith, 2019). Both names are often considered derogatory by many people, and the use of the term "nigga" is a subject of controversy among both black and non-black communities (Davis, 2021). According to the African American Registry, the terms "brother" (brotha) and "sister" (sistah or sista) are expressions of affection, while the words "nigger" and "nigga" have historically and presently been considered derogatory.

The civil rights organization National Association for the Advancement of Colored People also opposes the usage of 'nigga' and 'nigger' (Crawford, 2021; Smith, 2019). Nevertheless, certain African-Americans consider the term 'nigga' offensive, particularly when used by individuals of different races, whom they perceive as engaging in unwelcome cultural appropriation (O'Dea & Saucier, 2020). Black individuals employ this term as a means of expressing "unity or fondness," much like the usage of dude, homeboy, and bro (Baker, 2021; Rahman, 2012; Crawford, 2021). Conversely, some individuals argue that the term "nigga" is not derogatory unless it is directed at an African-American by someone who is not of African descent (O'Dea & Saucier, 2020).

On the other hand, some critics argue that this approach is hypocritical and harmful, as it allows white racists to freely use the derogatory term and confuses the conversation about racial slurs. Meanwhile, the term 'n-word' seems to imply Blacks who should be enslaved, rather than Blacks who were enslaved (Grieser, 2019). It served as a reminder of the continued inferiority of Blacks, despite the freedom they started to experience in the late 19th century (Hartman, 2022). The term "N-word" is synonymous with "nigger" and "nigga." The term "nigger" is a derogatory epithet aimed at individuals of African descent, specifically African Americans. Since the 1980s, the term 'nigger' has been progressively replaced by the euphemism 'the N-word,' particularly when referring to 'nigger' indirectly. African Americans engage in linguistic re-appropriation by informally and fraternally using the term "nigger," often in the variant "nigga," which is spelled based on the phonetic conventions of African-American English (Rahman, 2012).

RESEARCH METHOD

The objective of this study was to employ corpus-based analysis in order to examine of the frequency of racial derogatory expressions, specifically the terms 'nigger', 'niggers', and 'n-word' across a variety of genres. This study employs a corpus-based analysis strategy, with the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) serving as the primary dataset (Pietraszewska, 2013). A key aspect of the research is investigating potential variations in the usage of these terms in written texts that have been in existence for more than 20 years, as opposed to more recent spoken texts. The study includes both independent and dependent variables. The independent variables include genre and time period, with the latter divided into

texts older than 20 years and newer texts. The dependent variables center on the frequency of the specified racial derogatory terms in each genre and time period.

A stratified sampling approach will be used to ensure that all genres are represented fairly and accurately. This method aims to extract subsets of data from the COCA based on genres such as academic, fiction, news, and spoken language (Erbach et al., 2023). Furthermore, a critical consideration in the sampling process is to separate texts based on their publication date, distinguishing between those that have been in existence for more than 20 years and those that have been published more recently.

A corpus-based analytical approach will be used to investigate the linguistic nuances of the terms under consideration. An analysis of descriptive statistics is crucial for assessing the occurrence rate of racial slurs in various genres and time periods. This analysis aims to detect any potential disparities in the usage of these terms between a written text and spoken discourse that have been in existence for over 20 years and a more recent spoken text.

The primary focus of this study is to highlight the ethical considerations that arise when dealing with sensitive language data. The research team will prioritize privacy and dignity by employing rigorous anonymization and de-identification methods to safeguard the individuals featured in the corpus. Strict adherence to ethical guidelines is crucial at every stage of the research process. This discussion will extend beyond the statistical findings to examine the wider implications for comprehending the dynamics of racially offensive language usage across different genres and throughout time.

13 RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

The findings of this study demonstrate that the accompanying words of racial slurs differ depending on the genre in which they are found.

1 **Table 1. Frequency counts of the words appearing in each genre.**

	NIGGER (FREQ: 4074)			NIGGERS (FREQ: 1542)			N-WORD (FREQ: 694)		
	FREQ	WORDS	PER MIL	FREQ	WORDS	PER MIL	FREQ	WORDS	PER MIL
ACADEMIC	149	119.8	1.24	45	119.8	0.38	18	119.8	0.15
FICTION	797	118.3	6.74	315	118.3	2.66	27	118.3	0.23
MAGAZINE	215	126.1	1.71	101	126.1	0.80	61	126.1	0.48
NEWSPAPER	136	121.7	1.12	38	121.7	0.31	173	121.7	1.42
SPOKEN	277	126.7	2.20	112	126.7	0.89	147	126.1	1.17

1 **Table 2. Frequency counts for the words across five-year time increments.**

	NIGGER (FREQ: 4074)			NIGGERS (FREQ: 1542)			N-WORD (FREQ: 694)		
	FREQ	WORDS	PER MIL	FREQ	WORDS	PER MIL	FREQ	WORDS	PER MIL

1990-1994	873	121.1	7.21	374	121.1	3.09	6	121.1	0.05
1995-1999	1018	125.2	8.13	371	125.2	2.96	30	125.2	0.24
2000-2004	681	124.6	5.46	238	124.6	1.91	21	124.6	0.17
2005-2009	465	123.1	3.78	137	123.1	1.11	123	123.1	1.00
2010-2014	300	123.3	2.43	67	123.3	0.54	119	123.3	0.96
2015-2019	237	122.8	1.93	110	122.8	0.90	189	122.8	1.54

The COCA data were employed to perform a corpus-based linguistic analysis of the terms 'nigger', 'niggers', and 'n-word'. The occurrences of these terms were subsequently categorized in correlation with genre patterns (table 1) and frequency distributions of five-year time intervals (table 2). Others possess various connotations or significances. This study will examine the discussions and ideas related to three racial terms: Nigger, Niggers, and N-word. Furthermore, it is crucial to analyze and debate the development of these terms over time and their usage within corpora.

Discussion

Out of the three racial terms mentioned, the word "nigger" was the most frequently used in the corpus over a span of twenty years, appearing 4,074 times. It was followed by the term "niggers" with 1,542 occurrences, and the term "n-word" with 694 occurrences. Given the established fact that written texts have a greater abundance of vocabulary compared to spoken texts, the initial form of evidence to be analyzed is the context provided by written corpora. These corpora encompass various types of written materials such as fiction, magazines, academic papers, and newspapers.

Curiously, the term "nigger" was most commonly found in science fiction films and books, making up approximately fifty percent of the total frequency distributions, with a total of 797 instances. In contrast, it only accounted for 19.5 percent in other written forms such as magazines, academic papers, and newspapers. An analysis of a corpus of historical context indicates that during the early 19th century, the predominant theme in films and fictional literature was the racially demeaning treatment of African Americans by the white male majority in the United States (Bleich, 2019). The themes and lexical choices in these works frequently mirrored pessimistic discourse. The prevailing narrative in these stories portrays a society characterized by inequality and injustice, where African-Americans are frequently depicted in clichéd and negative stereotypes (Franklin & James, 2015). Writers frequently use fiction to delve into the issue of racial injustice, which is seen as a deep and difficult problem. This allows them to capture the intricate and strained dynamics between different ethnic groups during that time (Fox & Stallworth, 2005). An observable pattern was the frequent combination of the term "nigger" with other derogatory attributes, including "dumb nigger," "angry nigger," "dirty nigger," and "stupid nigger," among others.

Although the term "nigger" is regarded as derogatory towards African-Americans in fictional literature, there is a current tendency in contemporary fiction to faithfully portray the historical truths of the past century in North America. Contemporary writers, in addition to being mindful of the delicate nature of race and identity terminology, tend to employ language that is both respectful and inclusive. However, modern fiction continues to strive for an

authentic and comprehensive depiction of the difficulties, inequalities, and societal interactions within the African-American community during that era. Therefore, although the manner in which words are employed may have evolved, the essence of delving into the past and crafting compelling stories continues to be a primary emphasis in modern works of fiction.

Moreover, the term "nigger" has garnered significant scrutiny in diverse academic domains, including legal studies, analysis of hip-hop culture, and research on matters pertaining to race. Within these frameworks, the term is employed to comprehensively grasp the intricacies of social dynamics, historical events, and individual identity within particular contexts. Additionally, certain publications and newspapers link the term "nigger" to musical themes, emphasizing its unique significance in symbolizing the impact and contribution of African-American culture to music (Delis, 2022). Nevertheless, it is important to highlight that within the realm of criminal activity and aggression, the term "nigger" is frequently employed with unfavorable implications. The utilization of it can manifest profound racial stereotypes and biases, thereby reinforcing stigma and inequality (Rahman, 2015). Hence, it is crucial to acknowledge the intricacy associated with the utilization of this term and contemplate its influence in diverse settings, particularly in endeavors to comprehend and address social obstacles pertaining to race and identity.

Moreover, the term "nigger" was documented to have been spoken 277 times in verbal exchanges, specifically within the realm of police investigations and political discussions. This phenomenon demonstrates that despite widespread criticism and its derogatory nature, the term continues to be used in everyday conversations, particularly in fields like police investigations and political discourse. Curiously, in certain situations, the word "nigger" can be perceived as a casual expression of camaraderie, particularly among individuals of African-American descent. The utilization of the term in specific circumstances exemplifies the intricacies and cultural subtleties inherent in the way individuals communicate and express their identities. Although there are still individuals who view the term positively, there is an ongoing discussion regarding its sustainability and relevance. This has resulted in a captivating area of debate within the fields of linguistics and social sciences.

While both "niggers" and "nigger" have the same meaning, it is important to acknowledge that the word "niggers" is significantly less common in the language corpus compared to "nigger". Essentially, the term "niggers" is employed as the plural form of the word "nigger". The analysis of frequency reveals a strong correlation between the term "nigger" and the usage of pronouns like "they," "us," "those," "all of you," and similar expressions, indicating a linguistic pattern. Therefore, it is crucial to acknowledge that the change in the usage of the plural form of "nigger" may indicate an effort to avoid employing the singular term, which is deemed more contentious. Nevertheless, this discrepancy in frequency could also indicate cultural shifts and evolving social standards throughout history. These observations offer further understanding of how language mirrors social dynamics and evolving perspectives on terms associated with race and identity.

The frequency distribution of the word "niggers" across all genres is similar to that of the word "nigger". In the realm of fiction literature and films, which comprise the majority of instances, the term "niggers" is present in approximately twenty percent (315) of cases. This trend has also changed the frequency distributions of other musical genres. However, the n-

word stands out as the only word that has a unique frequency distribution in each genre, unlike the other two words. Over the course of two decades, this specific term was mentioned 150 times, predominantly in newspapers. Based on contextual analysis, the term "n-word" serves as a euphemism for the derogatory term "nigger" and is not a direct manifestation of racist language. It is primarily employed as a substitute for "nigger" in formal settings.

A multitude of occurrences of this substitution were observed in spoken discourse, amounting to a total of 147 instances. This phenomenon enhances comprehension regarding the lack of representation of this word in alternative genres. An examination of the frequency distribution within the set of five-year time intervals reveals a noteworthy pattern. During the initial time period (1995-1999 and 1990-1994), the terms "nigger" and "niggers" had the highest frequency distribution, with 1018 and 374 occurrences, respectively. Conversely, the term "N-word" had a notably limited occurrence, being present merely three times throughout the specified duration.

From 2015 to 2019, there was a notable shift in the utilization of the term. The term "N-word" was employed a total of 189 instances, which represents the highest frequency observed within a 5-year timeframe. It was predominantly utilized in news-related contexts, encompassing both oral and written mediums. Conversely, the terms "negro" and "nigger" exhibited a slight decrease in frequency of occurrence during the five-year period. This alteration may indicate the progression of societal standards and the recognition of the linguistic delicacy surrounding terms related to race. Hence, this analysis of frequency distribution offers a more comprehensive depiction of the evolution and alteration of specific words in the realm of verbal communication.

The study's findings demonstrate the diversity in the utilization of racial slurs, depending on the genre in which they are encountered. Specifically, these pejorative terms often appear in newspapers and magazines when addressing issues related to racism and discrimination. This discovery indicates the ongoing utilization of these expressions to marginalize and disparage individuals from diverse ethnic origins. Furthermore, derogatory terms are prevalent in both fiction and non-fiction literature that explores diverse facets of culture and history. The inclusion of racial slurs in these works underscores the utilization of such vocabulary as an indication of attitudes and convictions pertaining to particular time periods and geographical contexts.

Within the realm of television and film scripts, derogatory terms hold a prominent position in drama and comedy genres that delve into a wide range of cultural and historical contexts (Keuris, 2023). The utilization of these terms in both dramatic and comedic scenarios signifies an endeavor to create a sincere and genuine ambiance within the storyline. Meanwhile, on social media platforms, these derogatory terms predominantly manifest in tweets and posts associated with. This phenomenon exemplifies the intricacies of online communication and the way offensive language can materialize in digital settings, underscoring the difficulties of addressing and handling racialized problems in virtual public domains.

CONCLUSION

This study employed corpus-based analysis in order to examine the prevalence of racially offensive terms in different literary genres. The Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) is utilized as the primary source of data for performing a corpus-based

linguistic analysis on the terms 'nigger', 'niggers', and 'n-word'. This study acknowledges that written texts with a lifespan exceeding 20 years exhibit a more extensive lexicon in comparison to spoken texts. When collecting evidence, it is recommended to begin by consulting a variety of sources, such as works of fiction, magazines, scholarly articles, and newspapers. This methodology enables the researcher to encompass a wide range of contexts and perspectives, ensuring that the findings of the analysis accurately represent the various manifestations of racial slurs in literature throughout history.

The findings of this study carry significant implications. An examination of the frequency of racially derogatory expressions in literature, based on corpus analysis, can offer a comprehensive insight into the usage and evolution of these terms over time. These implications can contribute to the development of understanding regarding the linguistic dynamics associated with racial and ethnic issues in different genres of literature. Furthermore, this study emphasizes the disparities between written and spoken texts in relation to vocabulary, wherein older written texts exhibit a greater abundance of words. It is implied that when conducting linguistic analysis of the corpus, the context of the text type should be taken into account in order to achieve more precise and representative outcomes. Moreover, the utilization of COCA as a data source underscores the significance of selecting a corpus that aligns with the objectives of the study, as this enables the investigation to encompass a broader timeframe and explore variations in word usage.

The recommendation to begin with a variety of sources, including fiction, magazines, academic papers, and newspapers, demonstrates that this study advocates for a comprehensive approach to comprehending the manifestation of racial slurs. Researchers should incorporate diverse forms of literature in their analysis to present a comprehensive and precise depiction of the utilization of these terms in different contexts.

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