



CALIFORNIA SCIENCE & ENGINEERING FAIR 2019 PROJECT SUMMARY

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Project Title The Language of Extremism: A Socio-Linguistic Analysis of Nationalist Content in the Context of Linguistic Purism	
<p style="text-align: center;">Abstract</p> <p>Objectives Linguistic Purism is a linguistic model that refers to rhetors who consciously purge words and grammar structures deemed unpure or foreign. In the English language, Linguistic Purism is manifested as English, or English without any words whose roots are not Germanic, since pure English is the derivative of old Germanic languages, such as Anglo Saxon, Old English, and Old Norse. During periods of intense nationalism, many rhetors have historically used linguistic purism. Such diction was used by many pro-Brexit rhetors. Germanic diction is also characterized by its simplicity and emotional poignancy. We examined the connection between nationalism and English diction in American literature, and the rhetorical impact of linguistically pure diction in comparison to composite standard English.</p> <p>Methods A random sample of 21 essays, tweets, and thought pieces from self-defined American nationalists were analyzed. On average, they contained 27.83% Anglo-Saxon linguistically pure diction, 3.8% higher than standard English. To examine the rhetorical impact of such diction, we conducted memory-testing within a distributed survey about political engagement.</p> <p>Results 61% of respondents reported that essays with linguistically pure diction were easier to remember than those without. However, standard English essays were seen as more rhetorically effective.</p> <p>Conclusions We conclude that this is because non-Germanic diction is seen as more academic and objective than Germanic diction, appealing to our highly-educated, Democratic audience. Our results tell us that an effective use of diction must combine memorability and complexity to uncover our striking connection between memorability and Germanic diction while preserving a rhetor's perceived intelligence.</p>	
Summary Statement We analyzed the frequency of linguistically pure, germanic diction in nationalist texts before testing its rhetorical impact.	
Help Received	