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# POLITICAL CORRECTNESS AS AN OBJECT OF INVESTIGATION

**Summary:** The terms political correctness or PC were not used until the late 1970s. According to James Wilson (1995), a judge in Georgia, in 1973 the US Supreme Court first mentioned the term "politically correct". Thus, the doctrine of political correctness was based on the concept of "neutral language". It is this language, free from expressions that offend the feelings and dignity of the person, violate his human rights, must oppose hate speech (Phumsiri N., 2018). The relevance of the work is due to the interest of studying the political correctness in the modern dimension, which is explained by the growing interest in society and spread in the media. Political correctness (PC) – a term that describes the style of behavior, speech, lifestyle, preferences, but at the same time does not violate the personal boundaries of people in religious, racial, political, cultural fields (Stephen Richer, Lorna Weir, 1995).

Political correctness is a kind of voluntary social code of conduct, which provides for the inadmissibility of humiliating mentions of physical or mental disabilities of third parties, about their racial, religious or national affiliation, observance of gender equality in public and private life. The term "politi-cal correctness" began to be widely used only in the 80s of the 20th centuries. It was then that conservatives from American universities began to use it to denote social movements that advocated the establishment of codes of conduct that would exclude manifestations of racism, sexism, homophobia or other unacceptable forms of behavior. Politically correct terms are a special group of neologisms that are deliberately created by native speakers to replace lexical units that, for one or another political or social reason, begin to be perceived as derogatory. A number of researchers consider political correctness as one of the manifestations of euphemism, as an integral component of its linguistic aspect (Anna Monashnenko, Svitlana Amelina, Vasyl Shynkaruk, 2021). They consider euphemisms and politically correct units as identical concepts: euphemism is one of the most effective means of expressing politically correct vocabulary.

**Keywords:** Behavior, cross-cultural, barriers, euphemism, social reason, offensive, language, community, culture, freedom of speech

## 1. Introduction

The relevance of the topic of the work is due to the interest in the study of political correctness in the modern dimension, which is explained by the growing interest in society and spread in the media. Political correctness as a tool of a communicative strategy of behavior aimed at avoiding social aggravations and achieving a conflict-free atmosphere in society causes a lot of heated discussions, which by this very fact does not correspond to its main purpose and only emphasizes the contradiction of this phenomenon. The purpose of the work is to define the flow of "political correctness" in the mass media discourse, by defining the main tasks: 1) to find out the prerequisites for the emergence of the phenomenon of "political correctness"; 2) characterize the types of political correctness; 3) determine in which spheres of life political correctness occurs; 4) identify the meaning of euphemisms in politically correct vocabulary; 5) analyze the impact of mass media on society.

Achieving the goal and fulfilling research tasks are based on the general provisions of system analysis. The methods of linguistic observation and description are used for the systematization and classification of politically correct units in the mass media discourse. The study involves the use of the method of contrastive analysis to compare the peculiarities of the use of the language of political correctness in different dimensions of life. Involvement of general scientific research methods. The scientific novelty consists in the further assessment of the status of political correctness and its influence on culture and lifestyle within society. Modern directions of politeness policy in various spheres of life.

## 2. The emergence of the phenomenon of "political correctness"

The term "political correctness" has recently become a weapon of neo-conservatism. Once used to deride social movements and civil rights groups for occasional lapses in rigor, it has since become a popular vehicle for neoconservative criticism of higher education. Aimed at anti-racist and anti-sexist initiatives at universities, colleges, and other large social institutions, the term is used to discredit such innovations as employment equity, selective enrollment of students from groups that have experienced systemic discrimination, sexual harassment policies, and women's studies programs, exposing them as forms of tyranny that destroy academic freedom and merit (Gustia A., 2018).

Regarding the origin of the term PC, some researchers argue that although the term "political correctness" originated with left-wing politicians, it was later largely "captured" by the right. Thus, Cameron (1995) and Lakoff (2000) show that the term was used as an insult, as a joke, and sincerely by people who believe that the linguistic choice of terms used to represent minorities and marginalized groups (social groups, the way whose life does not correspond to the peculiar features of a certain society) in the discourse, indeed, a relevant moral and ethical issues.

The terms political correctness, political correctness, or PC were not used until the late 1970s. According to James Wilson (1995), a Georgia judge, the US Supreme Court first mentioned the term "politically correct" in 1973. However, it is difficult to trace the origin of "political correctness", as it developed along with the trends of political ideologies. For example, in the late 1940s, the term "politically correct" was used in political debates between socialists and members of the Communist Party in the United States (Phumsiri N., 2018).

So, the doctrine of political correctness was based on the concept of "*neutral language*". It is this kind of language, freed from expressions that offend the feelings and dignity of a person, violate his human rights, that should oppose the language of enmity - *hate speech*. The language of exclusion, repression, hostility must itself be excluded from use. Its use does not mean a desire to avoid uncomfortable topics, on the contrary, it means a desire to talk about these topics in a different way. Thus, political correctness has acquired a threatening character that undermines the worldview issues of society. On the contrary, there are supporters of the term, who believe that the result will lead to the prevention and mitigation of acute social conflicts, and the improvement of the political and legal culture of society (Koliadych Yu., Khotsianivska I., 2018).

## 3. Political correctness in spheres of life

Today, we are faced with a painful problem as a pandemic due to the Covid-19 virus, due to which there is a large number of disputes and negative directions towards the common people from the political branches of each country. A vivid example of political correctness in today's conditions, because people who are not inclined to vaccination must endure insulting words at their expense. These are "*conspiracy theorists*," Offit said. "This is a person who will not believe the data, no matter what you tell them. They think that pharmaceutical companies have the government in their pocket...they won't believe anything you tell them". *Conspiracy theorists* are now the name of people who do not adapt to trends in society today. The use of this expression is inappropriate and affects moral values (Berkeley Lovelace Jr., 2021).

Jonathan Jackson, director of the CARE Research Center at Massachusetts General Hospital, which works with communities to improve representation in clinical trials, said the government's efforts should include a focus on black, Latino and Native Americans, as well as people in rural areas, who may not have access to health care. *Black, Latino* and *Indigenous people* – the use of correct demarcation of people according to national characteristics, without affecting people's own borders. "*It just seems like yet another case where vulnerable folks are being left behind.*" *Vulnerable folks* are vulnerable people, such a term has a place in the politically correct vocabulary, which makes it possible not to specify specific features of people (Berkeley Lovelace Jr., 2021).

It is appropriate to note that units for the designation of racial and national belonging are widespread in our time. An example is a case from the life of a woman who does not belong to the country where she currently lives, which led to offensive provocations in her direction. "The Lviv court fined a resident of the city 40 thousand hryvnias for the fact that she systematically insulted her neighbor – a citizen of Livia, who lives in Ukraine legally. The woman from Lviv accused the foreigner of rudeness, compared her appearance to that of an animal, humiliated her because of her national origin and skin color. The accused began insulting her neighbor last year for no reason. She called her a "*black monkey*" several times, in particular on the street, where the children

who were nearby at the time repeated the offensive statements. The victim repeatedly sought help from a neurologist and a psychiatrist. The abuse continued throughout the year" (The Ukrainians, 2021). "*Black monkey*" is an expression that violates a person's own boundaries, and in no case belongs to politically correct vocabulary, and therefore should be removed from the sphere of usage.

## 4. Types of political correctness

It is generally accepted that political correctness is an important social, cultural and linguistic phenomenon that has become widespread in English-speaking countries and has a significant impact on the English language and the worldview of its speakers. The study of political correctness helps to better understand the role of language in society, the relationship between language and culture, and promotes intercultural communication. Political correctness in language is based on Sapir Whorf's linguistic hypothesis regarding the dependence of the type of thinking and behavior of members of the language community on the type of categorization of the world and classification of knowledge presented in a certain language. The hypothesis has become one of the main foundations of the doctrine of political correctness, which suggests finding neutral or emotionally positive substitutes for offensive and taboo expressions that affect the feelings and dignity of an individual, impress him with language tactlessness or directness in relation to race and gender, age, health, social status, sexual orientation, appearance, etc (Aleksenko S., 2018).

There are a large number of classifications of political correctness, which suggests that this aspect is important to exist in society. Types of political correctness are distinguished, such as: social, racial, ethnic, sexually marked, gender.

Lexical units for the designation of race and nationality are presented among PC terms. As far as racial, ethnic, religious and minority issues are concerned, the same trends apply, i.e., an almost endless succession of terms: «Negro», «Oriental», «Latino», «American Indian», «African-American», «African-Caribbean», «Native American», «Asian», «Italian-American», «Caucasian», «Native Hawaiian», etc. The correct use of the terms will not harm the recipient (Ehlion, 2020).

It is in this context that it would be appropriate to mention the term "deracialization" as one of the most important segments of politically correct language. Most of the originally neutral terms have become devalued over time, sometimes even acquiring a negative connotation, not to mention the fact that they have become obsolete, for example: «*Negro*», «*coloured*», «*black*», «*Afro-American*», «*African-American*». They are inadmissible (Galinfo, 2021).

Lexical units for indicating gender belonging. During translation, it should be taken into account that the world is divided into two spaces: masculine and feminine, and usually with a tendency for women to be relatively less socially active compared to men, that is, language that uses a gender sign is associated with certain stereotypes the roles of men and women in society (Komov O., 2011). There are gender-marked elements in the English language, although they are relatively few, and they are reflected in the use of personal and possessive pronouns (*he/she, her/his*), some nouns and forms of address. Regarding gender, it is perhaps important to mention some of the most noticeable changes that have occurred in recent decades, i.e., nouns ending in – *man* and other gender-marked expressions are changing to "*person*" or other more neutral nouns: *chairman* instead of *chairperson*, *fireman* instead of *firefighter*, *tradesman* instead of *skilled person*, *old master* instead of *classic artist*, etc.

Units that denote physical or mental qualities of a person. The issue of mental health has always been extremely sensitive, as people suffering from mental illness were considered and often still are considered a burden even to the immediate family. As for other minorities, people with different disabilities, as well as people with different sexual orientations, seem to have caused the most heated disputes. This model includes: «*visually impaired, persons with hearing impairment, disabled, mentally challenged*», «*differently abled*», «*people with special needs*», rather than common expressions such as «*handicap*», «*handicapped*», «*invalid*» *and* «*invalidity*», «*blind*», «*deaf*». However, some of them seem rather indirect and peripheral and therefore are often perceived as imprecise and unclear «*visually impaired*» instead of «*blind*», «*hard of hearing*» or «*persons with hearing impairment*» instead of «*deaf*», or «*persons with special needs*» instead of people afflicted by physical or mental deficiencies,

etc.) except for the pretentious and condescending tone (Ehlion, 2020).

Politically correct units are also expressions related to politics, economy and war: *period of negative economic growth, to downsize, pacification, air support, currency adjustment, limited air strike, etc.*).

Units for designation of non-prestigious professions that provide an opportunity to give an objective assessment. Likewise, some terms denoting occupations and professions that were traditionally considered the prerogative of men and are now increasingly performed by women have clearly feminine suffixes, such as *-ess, -ette, -trix*, for example, «*manageress* instead of *manager*, *poetess* instead of *poet*, *authoress* instead of *author*, *usherette* instead of *usher*». Similarly, in the acting profession in particular, an interesting phenomenon can be observed, namely that many women seem to prefer to call themselves "*actors*", although there is a female equivalent "*actress*", and it does not seem to have any negative connotations or offensive connotations (Ehlion, 2020).

Thus, the main strategies of political correctness include:
1. Prevention of expressions that can be interpreted as racism - prejudiced attitude towards nationalities;
2. Prevention of expressions that can be interpreted as a biased attitude towards gender;
3. Prevention of expressions that can be perceived as offensive for different sexual orientations;
4. Prevention of expressions that can be interpreted as a prejudiced attitude towards people of different ages;
5. Prevention of expressions that can be interpreted as narrowing down people of different social statuses;
6. Prevention of expressions that may be perceived as offensive to people with physical or mental disabilities;
7. Prevention of expressions that may be perceived as offensive to people with disabilities or non-standard appearance;
8. Prevention of expressions that can be perceived as discrimination against the beliefs of different religions and denominations;
9. Prevention of expressions that can be perceived as discrimination against animals, nature, and the environment.

Therefore, political correctness is widespread in modern society and has an ambiguous character, both positive and negative. The trend of using words describing gender and social positions is most influential when it comes to de-emphasizing gender and supporting women's rights, social – serves to soften social phenomena and processes.

## 5. Euphemisms among political correctness

Any socio-economic changes, events highlighted in the English-language discourse can be divided into negative and positive, which in turn are perceived by readers in different ways. Usually, positive economic phenomena are emphasized with the help of bright images, loud headlines and are accompanied by statements of famous people. However, negative economic and social changes, on the contrary, are masked with the help of euphemistic units. Let's consider this issue in more detail.

With the development of society, euphemism has already penetrated almost all spheres of people's everyday life. To learn more about English euphemism, it is necessary to know the definition and functions of English euphemism.

According to the *Longman Contemporary Advanced Dictionary*, a euphemism is a polite word or expression that you use instead of a more direct one in order not to shock or upset someone.

The *Oxford Advanced Learner's English-Chinese Dictionary (the 7th edition)* defines a euphemism (for something) as an indirect word or phrase that people often use to refer to something embarrassing or unpleasant, sometimes to make it more acceptable than it is actually.

All definitions come from the pragmatic category of euphemism, which serves the function of polite expression of euphemism. However, the definition does not apply to the methods of euphemism formation.

In short, when a word or phrase is used as a euphemism, it becomes a metaphor, the literal meaning of which is often obscured or omitted. Euphemisms are also used to hide unpleasant ideas, even if the literal term for them is not necessarily offensive.

Euphemisms are characterized by the language of avoidance and evasive expression. We create them

when we are faced with the difficult problem of how to talk in different contexts about things that for one reason or another we would like not to talk about uncontrollably in the prevailing context. In this basic function, euphemisms are verbal loopholes created in response to taboos. These include the usual suspects – private parts, bodily functions, sex, anger, dishonesty, drunkenness, madness, disease, death, dangerous animals, fear, God, and so on (O'Keeffe A., 2011, p. 67).

In a sense, all euphemisms are dishonest. No euphemism tells it like it is–in this context, it is acceptable to talk about something taboo using a euphemism, but not using a direct term. However, the euphemistic vocabulary of language varieties such as military, political, and medical jargon add additional dimensions of cunning and secrecy to camouflage. Here euphemism is used not so much to hide an insult, but to consciously mask the topic and to misrepresent reality. It is a kind of double language that transforms *death* for *a substantive negative patient care outcome*, *a diagnostic misadventure* for *the highest magnitude or a terminal episode*; *dying into terminal living* and *killing into the unlawful* or *arbitrary deprivation of life* (O'Keeffe A., 2011, p. 68).

A number of direct expressions will make people feel embarrassed, unhappy or even scared during communication. Euphemistic expressions would allow people to avoid some troubles and embarrassments in everyday life. The use of phonetic euphemism is important in interactive communication. There are four main functions of phonetic euphemism:

1) Firstly, it is the avoidance of taboos. This is the main psychological origin of euphemism. The original purpose of euphemism was to avoid offensive and unpleasant things that ancient people did not want to mention. When ancient people tried to evade or avoid mentioning these taboos, they had to find substitutes, and euphemism was the best option. Avoiding taboos is an important function of euphemism.

2) Secondly, it is a polite expression. During interactive communication, speakers can show their politeness by using diplomatic euphemisms. Due to the principle of politeness, speakers should avoid references not only to taboos, but also to issues that may offend the listener, for example, the listener's private affairs.

3) The third is the concealment of the truth, which is usually used in politics and mass media. Politicians and broadcasters always use euphemisms to cover up and hide the harsh truth in order to avoid causing anger and panic.

4) The last feature is humor. Euphemistic expressions of some taboos and rude things not only correspond to the principle of politeness, but can also cause a humorous effect. For example, today people use "*the battle of the bulge*" to describe women who are trying hard to lose weight. Actually, the phrase "*the battle of the bulge*" comes from the time of the Second World War.

## 6. Conclusions

So, summing up everything researched, the term political correctness arose to indicate opinions in a polite way, without insulting the side of the communicator during communication or discourse. Being respectful and avoiding words with negative connotations is a priority for political correctness. Euphemisms are a type of PC and serve as an auxiliary link for veiling sensitive information. Mass media discourse plays the role of disseminating information in various forms and platforms.

When investigating political correctness, they tried to draw attention to the most sensitive areas, among which the most significant are gender-biased language, ethnicity, race, sexual orientation, mental and physical disabilities, etc. Such topics are discussed daily in various networks, which harms the moral, physical, and psychological state of a person.

The use of politically correct language, which began in English and spread to many other languages, was caused by an ever-growing social and political awareness that all people should be treated with respect, regardless of gender, ethnicity, religion, age, preference, etc.

Political correctness reflects all the changes in modern society that have taken place with the growing awareness of the rights of various minorities and disadvantaged groups. However, there are many opponents of this language reform who believe that it has gone too far. Some of them claim that political correctness endangers freedom of speech and thought.

At the same time, it is believed that special care should be taken to avoid extreme expressions, most of which have long been considered pretentious and inflated, a laughing stock, thereby undermining all, even more so, good and noble intentions aimed at adapting the use of language, thus, so that he does not offend or exclude any of the members of the society.

One of the main and most linguistically sound arguments in favor of this view is that language is freely and naturally defined and shaped by its users, and that change cannot and should not be defined or prescribed. To give preference to some words and expressions over others, which are absolutely correct and reliable, as well as to replace them with often obscured, inappropriate ones, especially for reasons that have nothing to do with linguistics, is perceived by many as a violation of freedom of thought and speech, tyranny, as a result of which the language deteriorates significantly.

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