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**THE ISSUE OF POLITICALLY CORRECT LANGUAGE
IN MASS AND SOCIAL MEDIA
ПИТАННЯ ПОЛІТИКОРЕКТНОЇ МОВИ У ЗАСОБАХ МАСОВОЇ ІНФОРМАЦІЇ
ТА СОЦІАЛЬНИХ МЕРЕЖАХ**

O. M. TURITSYNA, assistant of the Romance and Germanic Languages and
Translation Department,

О.М. ТУРИЦИНА, асистент кафедри романо-германських мов і перекладу
E-mail: lena.turitsina@gmail.com

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7775-9750>

*Національний університет біоресурсів і природокористування України, м. Київ,
Україна*

National University of Life and Environmental Sciences of Ukraine, Kyiv, Ukraine

Abstract. Introduction. *In modern linguistic and translation studies and in the sphere of cross-culture communication, the issue of politically correct language is of great importance.*

Methods. *Analysing lexical rules and speech codes, determining the transmission of the socially appropriate vocabulary used in mass and social media.*

Results. *The analysis of the recent works on the specifics and peculiarities of the politically correct language as well as on the phenomenon of so-called Cancel Culture involves a lot of research in the field of the interaction concerning certain social groups and social issues. The article investigates the origin of the term "political correctness" and its development and transformation over time. It provides the cases of the term interpretation and gives numerous examples of currently inappropriate vocabulary followed by the preferable regarding political correctness ones. The article pays attention to the attitude to the problem in the modern world, and analyses the reasoning in favor and against the usage of politically correct language. A big part of the study is devoted to the abidance and violation of the rules of political correctness by journalists, politicians, and influential people on media and social networks. The article attempts to distinguish the notions of political correctness, censorship, and freedom of speech. It uses the texts of scientific and psychological research, newspaper articles, Facebook posts, tweets, and books published recently.*

Conclusions. *Prospects for further research on the issue of politically correct language are proved.*

Keywords: *political correctness, discrimination, exclusion, inclusion, inappropriate.*

Introduction. The issue of using politically correct language is crucial for everyone, as politically incorrect terms can harm relationships and help preserve negative stereotypes. This may be rather challenging, especially while performing cross-culture communication. It is similar to adding another layer of meaning while understanding the initial layer. Everyone is supposed to be aware of the effects of the words and to learn how to avoid possible unwanted consequences.

These days you should be careful speaking about women, people with disabilities, people with low income, or any issues touching on inclusion.

So, language really does have a role in changing how people think and speak, and that inclusion might mean actually acknowledging the identities of those around us.

Political correctness or PC is one of the most overused terms today. In fact, an examination of the etymology of the term and the topics it includes shows that PC has been around a long time and is unlikely to disappear soon. The history of 'political correctness' began in 1793 when it was mentioned in the American Supreme Court judgment in the case involving *Chisholm v. the State of Georgia*. During the process, wherein Justice James Wilson points out that it is not politically correct to say the 'People of the United States' as this should be replaced with 'The United States' instead [11, p.3].

Analysis of recent researches and publications. Later the term took on different meanings during the first half of the twentieth century. According to many authors, the term PC originated in National Socialism. Everything that was not consistent with the

party's professed political belief, it would be called "not politically correct" [33,p.5].

Thus, in the 1960s and 1970s, the term "political correctness" obtained a rather negative connotation; it was used to refer to the fellow members of one's party "who toed the party line very strictly and whose behaviour was therefore seen as 'ultra-correct'" [29, p.79].

In Germany, under the Third Reich, being "politically correct" was even one of the requirements for obtaining a permit to practice journalism, recalls an excellent Washington Post article that looks back over the history of the expression.

Nowadays, political correctness generally describes behavior, especially verbal behavior, rather than a political attitude. Scholars claim that "the 'politically correct' terminology is largely concerned with the lexical-semantic level" [19, p.249].

Political scientist, Karsten Schubert, suggests approaching the issue of political correctness from a new angle, focusing on "who feels threatened in their freedom of expression and who is feeding the pet peeve of political correctness – be it consciously or unconsciously" [30, p.32].

Being "politically correct" requires language that does not offend certain categories of the population and could be seen as abiding by certain speech codes that were established in the professional societies' guidelines for bias-free language John L. Austin, author of *How to Do Things with Words*, in which he proves that "giving something a name is not a neutral act, it helps to confirm the existence of things, people and situations" [10, p.52].

The purpose is to study lexical rules and speech codes of politically correct language use in mass and social media.
Materials and methods of research. Materials are various texts of scientific and psychological research, newspaper articles, Facebook posts, tweets, books. The main method used in the study is the analysis and comparison

Results of the research. The term PC is used in its current public denotation, accepted by supporters and opponents alike - a symbol for programs, initiatives, and attitudes designed to improve the public representation of and interaction with certain social groups and fight against discrimination

because of gender, health condition, age, nationality, religion as well. This issue is of great importance as today's society is divided by inequalities anyway, and most of these inequalities are caused by years of political, economic, and social history in which certain groups were discriminated against. We can mention stripping residents of their citizenship, depriving women of political rights, hampering people striving for economic integration, discriminating against people with disabilities, not making public areas accessible rejecting job applications of school leavers, and so on.

Saying "a person with a disability" rather than "disabled", expresses that the disability is a situation that anyone of us could face, from birth, or later in life, permanently or temporarily, the same about "a person experiencing a period of depression" is preferable rather than "a person with a mental disorder". Saying "firefighter" rather than "fireman" actually tells us more about the role, and on the other hand, removes its gender [18, p. 2]. Gender-neutral words are considered appropriate in workplace situations – it is advised to replace chairman, mailman, and policeman with chairperson, coordinator, head, letter carrier, postal worker, and police officer respectively.

Supporters of politically correct language criticize the usage of the masculine generics in the English language. For example: Everyone must be successful in *his* life. Despite the fact that the sentence is making a general statement about basic human nature, *his* is the generic masculine form. As an alternative, supporters advise singular *they* should be used instead, which now is found in the majority of spoken language. It is considered that when reading sentences with generic *he*, the majority of the readers perceived these sentences as referring to males only [23, p.670]. Nowadays, it is advisable to avoid using *manhours*: instead, it is recommended to use a less exclusionary and more descriptive term like *person hours* or *work hours*. Some supporters of PC suggest using *family leave* instead of *maternity* or *paternity* leave.

The House of Commons of Canada even passed a bill in 2016 that would alter the national anthem by replacing "in all thy sons command" with "in all of us command" to make the national anthem gender-neutral.

Also, terms for ethnic groups should be replaced by politically correct terms: *African-American* for *Black*, *Native American* for *Indian*, *Alaska Native* for *Eskimo*.

In general, it is correct to avoid geographic descriptors interchangeably with religious or other terms to describe specific groups of people. For example, *Muslim* is not synonymous with *Arab*. Given the size and diversity of the Middle Eastern region, there is not an accepted encompassing racial or ethnic term. Some politically correct terms include: *Arab* (Arabic-speaking country), *Persian* (Farsi-speakers), *North African*, as well as many other designations. Regarding nationality, we are supposed to avoid using citizen as a generic term for people who live in a given country. Under no circumstances the use of slang words describing nationalities, such as *jap*, *paki*, *flip* is possible. *WASP*, the acronym for White Anglo-Saxon Protestant in the USA: a person descended from Northern Europe, usually Protestant, forming a group often considered the most dominant, privileged, and influential in American society, has been also considered politically incorrect recently [5].

In everyday communication, there is a tendency to avoid *black list* or *white list*, as they may be associated with skin color. *Denylist*, *blocklist*, *block*, *deny*, *disallow*, *exclude* and *allowlist* are suggested.

Further linguistic innovations are connected to social groups which have a predominantly negative connotation, such as *senior citizen* for old age pensioner. It is better to use *people with a disability*, *neurodiverse* (when referring to cognitive ability) for disabled and handicapped, *learning difference* for learning disability as well as *people who communicate through sign language* for the deaf and *people who are visually impaired* for blind [34]. Also, it is considered correct to say *people experiencing homelessness*, *people without homes*, *unhoused*, *displaced* instead of *homeless*.

Today it is considered appropriate to refer to someone as a *facility manager* instead of cleaner, to say *administrative assistant* instead of secretary or *stylist* instead of hairdresser, and so on. So, jobs with relatively lower social prestige are linguistically raised in their value [18, p.1]. For the same reason, we say *wage-earning*

instead of *blue-collar*.

Back in 1989, Multicultural Management Program (MMA) released the Dictionary of Cautionary Words and Phrases in which more than 230 different words and idiomatic expressions were called offensive and biased. Each of them was followed by a short comment explaining the reason for its inappropriate use.

The reasoning to support “political correctness” is extensive: it is about adding words and ideas to reflect the diversity and complexity of reality, not taking them away. So it could stimulate creativity. That is why we may conclude that “politically correct” vocabulary encourages the development of culture, and is not a booster for censorship. Besides, people who are more often discriminated against may be more vigilant about how they are treated than those who have a better position in society. When people denounce discriminative attitudes, they are simply requesting that their feelings might be taken into account, and spotlighting the impact of unequal treatment.

But the issue still remains rather controversial. According to Lichev and Hristoskova, if political correctness is a linguistic phenomenon, then its philosophical and ethical grounds should also be researched on a linguistic level. The point is, that they should not lead to substantiation or exclude the other on a racial, ethnic or religious basis — trends that are increasing nowadays [21,p.12]. Experience shows that politically correct speech does not cancel social exclusion automatically. There are still social problems and inequality. Besides, it is not possible to have authentic, meaningful conversations about sensitive issues of race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, cultural difference and values if we can't call the things what they are. And after saying something topical and worrying we may be called sexist, racist, homophobic, handiphobic, islamophobic, antisemitic, etc. There are over supporters who are always analyzing every word of a movie or a series, always finding fault with the lack of diversity in the cast and/or the stereotypes in the script.

When reporting about current events, numerous articles use various methods to replace offensive lexis with a neutral one, using euphemisms. Thus, according to

O'Neill, language makes a progression from honesty and clarity to dishonesty and obscurity [28, p. 285].

With our changing society, the terms which are considered politically incorrect are changing rapidly as well. There is even a term for this phenomenon. The Euphemism Treadmill is a concept coined by Stephen Pinker in his 2003 book "The Blank State". The concept explains how words that are used to replace offensive terms over time become offensive themselves. For example, the word "retarded" was introduced as an alternative to the term "imbecile". However, "retard" has since become just as offensive, and has now been replaced with words such as "special needs" or "intellectually challenged".

Pinker's Euphemism Treadmill serves as a prediction of possible offensive terms in the future and as an example of how the sometimes considered 'restrictive' nature of PC is unrestricted, and constantly subject to change [31, p.53].

Speaking on the question of political correctness, we often mean the language used in the media, as in our world they are the main source of mass information. Media people have to think about the language they use a lot more than the average person. Thus, the issue is of great importance and leads to numerous debates. While a significant proportion of PC advocates argue that their motivation to follow PC rules is compassion for others, PCL proponents are primarily concerned with promoting socially disadvantaged groups. They take offense to language that undermines their goal of diversity and protest against the use of such language.

Although national and international laws guarantee freedom of information, of opinion, and of the media, we should not forget about the ownership in this sphere, which usually makes the media biased.

In the summer of 2020, an open Letter on Justice and Open Debate was published in the US by Harper's Magazine, having about 150 signatories from the arts and culture. The signatories declared that "the free exchange of information and ideas, the lifeblood of a liberal society, is daily becoming more constricted. While we have come to expect this on the radical right, censoriousness is also spreading more

widely in our culture: an intolerance of opposing views, a vogue for public shaming and ostracism, and the tendency to dissolve complex policy issues in a blinding moral certainty." [17, p. 2].

Numerous authors emphasize the impact of media on the perception of political correctness as part of people's social behavior. For example, Martina Thiele in her work says that "instead of discussing specific terms and language or freedom of expression and censorship in general, we should focus on privilege and power in order to determine who exerts power over our social discourse from which position as well as to expose inconsistencies. For it is mostly those who wield journalistic power who claim to be threatened by speech bans and censorship." [31, p.35]

The debate about freedom and its boundaries is part of the media function today. Some see political correctness as a threat to freedom of expression and even the factor which distracts from the real problems. Debates have been continuing and become more intensive when connected with highly disturbing issues like a covid pandemic, refugees and war conflict, illegal immigration, terrorism, crime, and many others.

In 2017 the Australian Press Council issued recommendations for journalists to use the term asylum seekers instead of illegal immigrants, as "the word 'illegal' may unduly imply 'criminality or other serious behaviour', instead emphasizing that most people who come here without authorization are seeking a legal right to stay in Australia as refugees. In 2017 the Australian Press Council issued recommendations for journalists to use the term asylum seekers instead of illegal immigrants, as "the word 'illegal' may unduly imply 'criminality or other serious behaviour', instead emphasizing that most people who come here without authorization are seeking a legal right to stay in Australia as refugee" [22].

President Barack Obama was criticized in 2014 for his attempts to make the distinction between "Islam" and "Islamism" while speaking about ISIS [6, p.4]. It was pointed out by many journalists that ISIS is Islamic, and he could not ignore the fact. That time, even the book *Retaking America : Crushing Political Correctness* was published [9, p.2].

Considering the United States,

President Trump in his public speeches often used the language that was described by CNN as the one “millions of people consider threatening, abusive, and supportive of violence and bigotry”. He was completely against political correctness and did not hide that fact, being often called the antithesis of political correctness. One of his phrases, also widely broadcasted, was: Political correctness is a cancer eating away at the body politic [1]. The Atlantic sums Trump up using the following: “The press takes him literally, but not seriously; his supporters take him seriously, but not literally.”

After the beginning of the Covid pandemic the virus name debate: the “China virus” expression was considered offensive and “ugly and inappropriate, to say the least, but it was not as racist as it was made to sound by the media.” [3, p.2], [4]. The expressions “Chinese virus” and “Wuhan virus” personify it. Personification is metaphorical: its purpose is to help understand something abstract by using terms that are familiar [12]. But as cognitive linguists George Lakoff and Mark Johnson have claimed, “metaphors are not just poetic tools, they are used constantly and shape our world view” [7]. The adjective “Chinese” is particularly problematic as it associates the infection with an ethnicity. On the other hand, the 1918 influenza pandemic for decades has been called the “Spanish flu” and this fact has never disturbed the supporters of political correctness and the term is commonly used by journalists as well as officials. The covid pandemic showed the important role of media literacy for freedom of expression and freedom of information.

Generally speaking, there are different restrictions for media sources as well as different issues which are preferred to be discussed with caution, and their choice depends on the certain country [20, p.63].

Recently, due to digital and social changes, supporters and those who decry political correctness have a far stronger media presence than before. They have homepages and write blogs. Some publications have a large readership and they are invited to popular talk shows, but there are also many others, doing the bidding of mainstream society. The fact should not be ignored that a great number of people have access to the space where opinions are exchanged.

When discussing the phenomenon of social media, a lot of researchers use the terms: ‘junk news’, ‘problematic information’, ‘information disorders’ and ‘false news’, meaning that the information sharing is not often reliable. In addition, public opinion manipulation is also a trigger for societal unrest.

After the US elections in 2016, Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg argued on the suggestion that fake news on Facebook influenced the election. That argument attracted a lot of attention to the Facebook rules of appropriacy and political correctness. Facebook’s algorithm is designed to treat all races and genders equally. Facebook says its goal is - to apply consistent standards worldwide. In spite of this, it is criticized by many opponents. “The policies do not always lead to perfect outcomes,” said Monika Bickert, head of global policy management at Facebook. “That is the reality of having policies that apply to a global community where people around the world are going to have very different ideas about what is OK to share.”

The challenge of policing political expression is even harder. For example, Donald Trump’s posts about his campaign proposal to ban Muslim immigration to the United States broke the company’s policies against “calls for exclusion” of a protected group [28]. As The Wall Street Journal reported last year, Facebook exempted Trump’s statements from its policies at the order of Mark Zuckerberg, the company’s chief executive. On one hand, the company recently promised to double its team of censors in response to criticism. On the other hand, Facebook does not publish the rules to determine what to allow and what to delete.

Twitter also supports politically correct language and declares that inequality and mistreatment are banned on the basis of race, ethnicity, national origin, caste, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, religious affiliation, age, disability, or serious disease. However, these rules are a formality and are frequently violated. The article The Complete List of Trump’s Twitter Insults (2015-2021) gives a lot of examples of politically incorrect expressions by Donald Trump, a frequent user of Twitter regarding other governments, nationalities, and his political opponents. One of the most infamous is the following: Mexico

is doing very little, if not NOTHING, at stopping people from flowing into Mexico through their Southern Border, and then into the U.S. They laugh at our dumb immigration laws. They must stop the big drug and people flows, or I will stop their cash cow, NAFTA. NEED WALL! (Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) April 1, 2018) [32, p.151]. Actually, on Twitter there are a lot of offensive and abusive messages by many other people.

So, the growth of social media brought up new questions about political correctness freedom of speech, where and how it can be used, and how to prevent their violation. There are fears that 'when people on all sides of politics are at risk of becoming the targets of mass outrage, it seems like the politics of hatred, xenophobia, and tradition has a competitive advantage over a politics of hope, inclusion, and social transformation'.

Conclusions. Generally, the concept of political correctness is associated with tolerance, inclusion, and acceptance of the diversity. It symbolizes the fight against discrimination because of gender, health condition, age, nationality, and religion and protects the most vulnerable social groups. The desire to be politically correct encourages people to use a less exclusionary vocabulary, be aware of the effects of the words and learn how to avoid unwanted consequences. It is especially important in the age of social media, when a great number of people have access to the space where they can share their opinions. On the other hand, it is believed sometimes that this concept tends to impose certain opinions, restrict the freedom of speech and prevent discussion of important issues openly. The supporters of political correctness are blamed by those who decry it for exerting pressure on journalists and mass media in general. As a result, it leads to a lot of controversy in society. Thus, it is possible to conclude that the issue of political correctness is of current interest in modern society, and will continue to influence all the spheres of it.

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Анотація. У сучасній лінгвістиці, перекладознавстві та у сфері міжкультурної комунікації питання політкоректної мови має велике значення.

Методи. Аналіз лексичних правил та мовленнєвих кодів, визначення змін у соціально прийнятній лексиці, що використовується в засобах масової інформації та соціальних мережах.

Результати. Аналіз останніх праць щодо специфіки та особливостей політкоректної мови, а також феномену так званої культури скасування передбачає багато досліджень у сфері спілкування стосовно певних соціальних груп та соціальних проблем. У статті досліджено походження терміну «політкоректність», його розвиток і трансформацію з часом. Розглядаються випадки тлумачення термінів і наводяться численні приклади невідповідної лексики на цей момент, а також такі, які вважаються доцільними з точки зору політичної коректності тощо. У статті приділяється увага на ставлення до проблеми в сучасному світі, аналізуються обґрунтування за та проти використання політкоректної мови. Значна частина дослідження присвячена дотриманню та порушенню правил політкоректності журналістами, політиками та впливовими людьми у ЗМІ та соціальних мережах. У статті зроблено спробу розмежувати поняття політкоректності, цензури та свободи слова. Використовуються тексти наукових та психологічних досліджень, газетні статті, дописи у фейсбуці, твіти, книги, що вийшли за останній час.

Висновки. Обґрунтовано перспективність подальших досліджень проблеми політкоректної мови.

Ключові слова: політкоректність, дискримінація, ексклюзія, інклюзія, неприпустимий.