

I.V. Tsykalyuk, O.A. Shchukina  
Northern (Arctic) Federal University named after M.V. Lomonosov  
Arkhangelsk, Russia

## **POLITICAL CORRECTNESS AS A SOCIOCULTURAL AND LINGUISTIC PHENOMENON IN MODERN ENGLISH**

**Abstract:** It is universally acknowledged that political correctness is an important social, cultural and linguistic phenomenon that has become widespread in English-speaking countries and has had a significant impact on the English language and the world view of its speakers. The study of political correctness helps to understand better the role of a language in society, the relationship between a language and culture, facilitates intercultural communication. The purpose of this article is to study the phenomenon of political correctness in an English-speaking society, its influence on modern English and the picture of the world of its speakers. On the basis of the goal, the following tasks were put: to consider causes and common patterns of the development of political correctness to analyze articles, identify linguistic expressions of political correctness in the press. The most common types of political correctness in speech, such as racial, gender, social and physical are presented in the study. It has been found that in general political correctness has a positive influence on the development of the English language. Without any doubt, the main purpose of its use in speech is based on such qualities as attentiveness, tactfulness, respect and care of people. What is more, political correctness is closely connected with the dissemination of knowledge of the law, raising the educational level, further democratization, education of tolerance and thoughtful language policy within a particular state.

**Keywords:** political correctness, euphemisms, language, discrimination, vocabulary, tolerance, neutral meaning, emotional coloring, politically incorrect.

И.В. Цыкалюк, О.А. Щукина  
Северный (Арктический) Федеральный Университет имени М.В.  
Ломоносова  
Архангельск, Россия

## **ПОЛИТКОРРЕКТНОСТЬ КАК СОЦИОКУЛЬТУРНЫЙ И ЛИНГВИСТИЧЕСКИЙ ФЕНОМЕН В СОВРЕМЕННОМ АНГЛИЙСКОМ ЯЗЫКЕ**

**Аннотация:** Общеизвестно, что политкорректность является важным социальным, культурным и языковым явлением, которое получило широкое распространение в англоязычных странах и оказало значительное влияние на английский язык и мировоззрение его носителей. Изучение политкорректности помогает лучше понять роль языка в обществе, взаимосвязь языка и культуры, способствует межкультурной коммуникации. Целью данного исследования является изучение феномена политической корректности в англоязычном обществе, его влияния на современный английский язык и картину мира его носителей. Исходя из цели, поставлены следующие задачи: рассмотреть изменения, произошедшие в современном английском языке под влиянием политкорректности и проанализировать различные тематические и структурные группы эвфемизмов. В работе представлены самые распространенные в речи виды политической корректности такие, как расовая, гендерная, социальная и физическая. В ходе исследования выяснено, что в целом политкорректность носит положительный характер: в её основе лежат такие качества как внимательность, тактичность, уважение, забота о людях. Политическая корректность связана с распространением правовых знаний, повышением образовательного уровня, дальнейшей демократизацией, воспитанием толерантности и продуманной языковой политики в рамках конкретного государства.

**Ключевые слова:** политическая корректность, эвфемизмы, язык, дискриминация, словарь, толерантность, нейтральное значение, эмоциональная окраска, политически некорректный.

The success of communication is influenced not only by knowledge of vocabulary and grammar, but also by knowledge of culture and norms of verbal communication, since the language is inextricably linked with the mentality of its speakers, reflects the processes and phenomena occurring in society, the lifestyle of the people, their traditions, value system and vision of the world. One of the important factors for establishing successful interpersonal and intercultural interaction is the use of expressions of political correctness in speech which has become an integral part of interethnic relations throughout the world today, mainly in English-speaking countries.

The topicality of this study is due to the fact that political correctness is an important sociocultural and linguistic category of modern English knowledge of which is vital to establish a successful communicative act. Nowadays in Western countries due to the active processes of migration of people political correctness is constantly being implemented in practice, since only tolerance in statements and actions can ensure the peaceful coexistence of people of different nationalities on the same territory. This problem is widely discussed in modern sociolinguistics and finds its expression mainly in the works of well-known US experts such as D. Adler, A. Bloom, D. Souza, D. Leo, D. Taylor. The problem of political correctness by Russian linguists is considered in a limited amount of scientific research. The works of A.V. Ostroukh, Y.L. Gumanova, S.G. Terminasova are devoted to this topic.

In Russia, scientists began to deal with the problem of political correctness at the end of the 1990s, and one of the first who turned to this issue was A.S. Ostroukh. He argues that this phenomenon is closely connected with the philosophy of multiculturalism, it is a reflection of tolerance and an integral element of social assessments. He wrote that to be politically correct is «first of all to be able to speak and write on sensitive topics, balancing between retaining meaning and not wanting to offend the interlocutor or reader, who in turn belongs to a certain category or minority». He emphasizes that all categories of minorities are in the sphere of influence of political correctness, since white men of Anglo-Saxon origin are considered to be the majority in the USA. Thus, society is trying to compensate for the inequality in life with vocabulary that externally enhances the social status of minorities [2].

In the «Dictionary of New Words and Meanings in the English Language» by Z.S. Trofimova the term «political correctness» is defined as the correct political position that emerged due to the idea of cultural

pluralism and in accordance with the new ideology, resulting in necessity to represent the works of literature and art, achievements in public and political life related to representatives of all ethnic and sexual minorities [4].

### **Racial political correctness**

The solution to interethnic and intercultural problems in the USA and Great Britain has always been given special attention. The trend of racial political correctness was born more than 20 years ago in connection with the discontent of Africans outraged by the «racism of the English language» and demanding its «deracialization», that is the elimination or mitigation of the use of racial characteristics in speech.

African users of English were dissatisfied with negative associations with the word «black». The word «negro» has undergone changes and adjustments before it turned into the modern variant «Afro-American». A similar situation occurred to the designation of the indigenous population of America: *Red Indians* → *Native Americans* → *First nation*. The same changes occurred to the word «Eskimo» which are replaced by the word «*Native Alaskan*» if we talk about an Alaskan native or «*Inuit*» if you mean a Canadian Eskimo.

In the 70s of the twentieth century, a general term was introduced for Latin Americans - *Hispanics* (from the adjective Hispanic – Spanish, Latin). However, many people avoid using this word because Hispanics evokes associations with low-income people who are poorly assimilated in the new lifestyle. *Latino/Latina, Chicano/Chicana, Spanish American* are offered instead of Hispanics.

The protests are caused by the politically incorrect adjective «*Oriental*» for people from Asia because it is supposedly imposed on Asian people by Europeans. «*Oriental*» is replaced with a more neutral «*Asian*». Africans and Asians can be called such a politically correct term as «*Non-whites*».

The word «Jew» has recently acquired a dismissive meaning because it is often used in the phrases «dirty jew», «jew boy», «jew store» and the verb forms «to jew, to jew down» therefore today it is replaced in speech with the correct variant «*Jewish person*».

In this way, language changes occurring in the English language and directed against racial and ethnic prejudices imply a revision of some names of certain peoples and ethnic groups (ethnonyms) which are perceived as offensive and derogatory for some reason.

## **Gender political correctness**

The movement against racism was led in America by feminist movements that defended the right of women to engage in male occupations and, therefore, protested against the orientation of the language towards men. Since the names of some professions initially had a masculine gender, in America people were striving to make them gender neutral. «Feminist movements» – as S.G. Ter-Minasova said «won major victories at different levels of the language and in almost all variants of the English language, starting in American. Thus, the appeal of Ms by analogy with Mr does not discriminate a woman, since she does not define her as married (Mrs) or unmarried (Miss). It has successfully penetrated into official English and is making its way into colloquial» [3].

Morphemes pointing to gender such as the suffix – *man* or –*ess* are also being forced out of the language. Words with these morphemes are being replaced by others: *chairman* (chair) → *chairperson*; *spokesman* → *spokesperson*; *cameraman* → *camera operator*. When the gender of a speaker or a person is not specified or unknown, the usual masculine pronoun «he» is replaced by the combination «he/she» or the plural pronoun «they», for example: You must take care of their health. Everyone should protect his/her health → Everyone should protect their health. There is also a substitution of he/she by the combination of s/he.

## **Social political correctness**

The language tact has affected all spheres of human activity. The social group of euphemisms implies terms related to the influence of the state on people's lives and is used with the aim of not infringing the human rights of an individual with person's usual linguistic tactlessness and straightforwardness. This kind of political correctness develops semantically in the direction of erasing in language differences in property status and civil status.

The sphere of prohibitions includes the use of offensive nicknames and inappropriate jokes. The organization charts of many American colleges have a list of various types of discrimination: «ableism» – oppression of people with physical disabilities, «ethnocentrism» – discrimination of other cultures, «heterosexism» – discrimination of people of non-traditional sexual orientation, «lookism» – the creation of standards of beauty and attractiveness and the infringement of the rights of those who do not correspond to them [1].

### **Physical political correctness**

The physical group of euphemisms includes the names and characteristics of people experiencing physiological and mental difficulties, as well as problems associated with age and appearance. Physically healthy people should be called politically correct «temporarily capable». The words «paralyzed», «disabled», «crippled», «blind», «deaf» and similar political correctness taboos and require using in appropriate cases new names to neutralize unpleasant straightness and reduce psychological pressure on a person suffering from physical disability [5].

Words pointing to beauty got absolutely banned as creating a standard of beauty. The preference of the beautiful to the ugly natural for any culture is pursued by political correctness as a manifestation of «lookism» (type of discrimination on external grounds) [6].

Thus, political correctness in the English language is shown in several thematic groups in order to avoid various types of discrimination existing in this society against various members. This approach gives the English language an inclusive character which implies the inclusion of each person in the overall picture of the world and allows people to have equal rights regardless of social status, mental and physical abilities. The study has also shown that politically correct vocabulary is represented mainly by two- and multi-component complex words and phrases. Most politically correct expressions consist of combinations with a noun in the role of the main word and complex adjectives.

In conclusion, it should be said obviously, when teaching English the factor of political correctness should definitely be taken into account for successful communication with representatives of English-speaking communities.

### **REFERENCES**

1. Кипрская Е.В. Национально-специфические особенности политкорректной лексики (на примере английского и русского языков). [Электронный ресурс] URL: <http://www.lingvomaster.ru./files> (дата обращения 20.12.2018)
2. Остроух А.В. «Политическая корректность» в США: культурологический аспект проблемы: автореф. дис.канд. филол. наук / МИГУ. М., 1998. 25 с.

3. Тер-Минасова С.Г. Язык и межкультурная коммуникация. М: Слово, 2000. 624 с.
4. Трофимова З.С. Словарь новых слов и значений. – Москва: Павлин, 1993. 367 с.
5. Kachru В.В. The Other Tongue: English Across Cultures. Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1982. – 384 p.
6. McArthur T. The English Languages. Cambridge University Press. 1998. – 247 p.