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LINGUISTIC AND SOCIOCULTURAL ASPECTS OF INTERPRETING POLITICALLY CORRECT LEXICAL UNITS

Summary. The article suggests a research into language and sociocultural correlation, and peculiar attention is paid to the term of political correctness. The topic is increasingly relevant due to the growing interest in globalization and integration process of nations, which brings about lexis that involves tolerance towards variety of values, lifestyles and traditions. This tendency is reflected in media texts and should be considered in the process of translation. The article contains examples of politically correct lexical units which have been selected from the current English-speaking media resources illustrating politically correct interpretations.

Keywords: political correctness, cross-cultural communication, politically correct lexical units, sociocultural aspect, media texts, interpretation.

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ЛІНГВІСТИЧНИЙ ТА СОЦІОКУЛЬТУРНИЙ АСПЕКТИ ПЕРЕКЛАДУ ПОЛІТКОРЕКТНИХ ЛЕКСИЧНИХ ОДИНИЦЬ

Анотація. У статті пропонується дослідження лінгвістичних та соціокультурних зв'язків. Особлива увага надається терміну «політкоректність». Запропонована тема набуває все більшої актуальності завдяки процесам глобалізації та взаємної інтеграції між культурами та націями, що, в свою чергу, спричиняє появу лексики, толерантної до різниці в цінностях, традиціях та способах життя. Цю тенденцію відображено в медійних текстах та засобах їх перекладу. Стаття містить приклади політкоректних лексичних одиниць, що відібрані з англійських медійних ресурсів та особливості їх передачі українською мовою.

Ключові слова: політкоректність, міжкультурна комунікація, політкоректні лексичні одиниці, соціокультурний аспект, лінгвістичний аспект, процес перекладу.

Formulation of a research problem and its significance. The research into correlation between language and socioculture is one of the current problems of linguistics as language is a mirror of culture which reflects social self-consciousness, lifestyles, traditions and moral values. For the last decades, such cultural and linguistic phenomenon as “political correctness” has gained popularity in the world. The relevance of the topic can be accounted for by the growing interest in research of politically correct lexis that is valuable and influential in English, which, on its turn, arises from increasing globalization and international integration.

The aim and the tasks of the article. The article is aimed at studying functional specifics of politically correct lexis in English media texts and ways to render them into Ukrainian considering linguocultural differences.

Analysis of the latest research into this problem. The results of the research are practically significant as they enrich modern Linguistic Science with new knowledge of political correctness and its representation in English. Most of the examples of politically correct lexical units offered for analysis in the article have been selected from the current English-speaking media resources that illustrate politically correct interpretations. The research was based on analyzing British media texts including *The Guardian* (2010-2015), *Vanity Fair* (2013), *The Journalist* (2015).

Statements regarding the basic material of the research and the justification of the results obtained. Rapid social development, tolerance, democratization growth and globalization processes are favourable for cultural transformations. Mass media are increasingly participating in reflection of new life realms and contemporary metamorphosis of literature norms. These results are essential for the research of politically correct lexis in media texts which fix the brand-new linguistic tendencies and prove using politically correct lexical units, i.e. terms aimed at replacing of the tokens which are abusive for representatives of particular social groups or veiling some socially-negative phenomena.

Political correctness (PC) is the voluntary public code of conduct that is followed in the West. In its basis, there is aspiration not to offend, not to brush against senses of a human, save dignity of a person and good mood. It is achieved through impermissibility of humiliating which mentions psychical or mental defects of individuals, their racial, religious or national belongings, observes the equality of the genders in public and private life, measures against sexual harassment at work, as well as the inadmissibility of contempt, humiliating statements and aggressive attacks on those who consider themselves sexually minor, if their behavior does not go beyond the law. The linguistic and cultural phenomenon of PC arose in the United States in the late 60's of the XX century [5, p. 2]. The development of this

phenomenon was conditioned by the liberalization of the social order, the emergence of new trends in the life of society and the preservation in the language of units that had a somewhat negative connotation in relation to these changes. So the black people were outraged by the racism of English and began demanding its de-racism, while activists of women's movements declared English sexist. The struggle for PC began in connection with the public appearances of African Americans against the use of the ethnic name "black" to designate the black US population. In demanding the de-Russification of English, African-Americans pointed to the negativity of the connotations of the metaphor of the word "black" as opposed to the positivity of the word "white" (*blacksheep – the digger, the black market, blackmail*); *white-collar – a white collar (an intellectual worker, whitelist – a recommendation list, Whitehall – the British government)*. According to the dark-skinned population of the country, the ethnic name "black" was discriminatory [7, p. 71–72].

Thus, the sociocultural background of this linguistic phenomenon has become an acute political problem, the solution of which has led to significant changes in all variants of the English language. The modern notion of PC appeared in the 1970s and 1980s. At this time in the West it became socially acceptable for women to pursue the style of life that men usually adhere to. For example, attempts to become the chief manager or executive director of a large corporation, to be a leader in family relationships. Thus, there was a necessity to change the nouns of masculinity, such as "chairman" for more general terms, in particular, "chairperson" [9, p. 128] in English.

Foreign researchers emphasize the fact that the phenomenon of PC emerged and spread in the territory of American colleges and universities, as centers of science and culture, as well as due to ethnic and racial diversity of students.

Politically correct lexical units arose as polite euphemisms, which avoid the use of words to denote physical or mental defects of a person, discrimination of a person in society. However, the politically correct lexical units have been transformed. Some of them in a new way call the usual phenomena and concepts, cast doubt on the traditional notions of a person, society and the place of a human in nature: for example, instead of the traditional "mother" and "father" it is suggested to use "parent 1" and "parent 2" [10, p. 352], or to refer to "Mx" for people of an undetermined sex, etc. From this point of view, politically correct vocabulary sometimes approaches disphemisms, although, unlike disphemisms, politically correct lexical units are rarely rude or provocative.

Multiculturalism is defined as "the philosophy of education, which emphasizes the unique contribution of different cultures in the history of mankind" [6, p. 73]. Proponents of multiculturalism call for the renunciation of the need to build education on the principles of Western or, so-called "Eurocentric" culture, in which the Europeans appear as the only bearers of civilization and culture. Moreover, it is considered that a set of higher education institutions should be conducted taking into account the gender and nationality of entrants, and not only on the achievements in education. These ideas have

greatly changed the nature and purpose of learning in American schools, colleges and universities. The concept of multiculturalism is expanding, encompassing not only racial and ethnic groups, but also religious and sexual minorities, as well as socio-political movements like feminism [25, p. 9].

PC is considered to be a new means of linguistic expression and a reproduction of the present realities that arose as a result of the liberalization of cultural processes and aimed at eliminating discrimination at all levels. However, we also emphasize that this concept can serve as an instrument of language manipulation, transform and have both a positive and a negative connotation in the absence of the behavioral and linguistic standards of the linguistic and pragmatic strategy of PC, as well as a sufficiently complete understanding and interpretation of this phenomenon in scientific research. It is important to state the existence of the above-mentioned concept in all languages of the world and in all spheres of life.

Currently, media text has acquired the status of the basic category in media linguistics, media stylistics, media culture and media education – new areas of linguistic, philosophical and pedagogical science.

In the process of analyzing media texts, it can be noted that their authors select a layer of vocabulary, guided by certain principles. First of all, there is a tendency to transmit the "mood" and the nature of the event, that is, funny, sad or patriotic. Secondly, journalists rarely manage to completely lose their personal attitude to the problem, which is reflected in the choice of event details and lexical units for their description. Thus, we should not talk about the impartiality of coverage of events by journalists. The coverage of events taking place in the spiritual, political, socio-economic life of society requires media outlets of euphemistic ways of expressing thought. Without politically correct euphemisms, which involve the replacement of obscene, inappropriate words and expressions, there cannot be any media text. However, dysplasia also occupy an important place in media texts, since the main task of such texts is the transfer of thoughts, feelings and statements that are not always distinguished by positive and pleasant character.

Euphemisms replace a multitude of incorrect words and expressions relating to age, appearance, physical and mental defects, physiology, actions, gestures, occupations of people; dysplasia are the most common in the criminal sphere; they denote defects, defects in the character of a person, belonging to one or another race and nationality.

We illustrate the use of these phenomena in the examples found in the articles of the British newspaper The Guardian (2010): *Council takes an overweight child into care* [1, p. 139]. *The plus-size staff trainer aiming for 'strong not skinny'*. In these examples, we observe the description of the human's appearance. The rude word "fat" is replaced by more correct euphemisms – "overweight", "plus-size". Therefore, it has been found that politically correct vocabulary is a powerful means of influence and manipulation that the media professionals use. Due to the careful selection of events, details of their description and lexical units through which this is carried out, the maximum realization of the purpose

of the authors of publications is achieved. So, when reading a media article, we not only learn about a particular event, but we also perceive it through the prism of perception and comprehension by its author. Consequently, critical thinking is reduced to a minimum, since the ready version of the attitude to information is perceived. Field-correct terms constitute a special group of neologisms that are deliberately created by native speakers to replace lexical units, which, for one or another political or social reason, begin to be perceived as humiliating.

Among the politically correct terms, the following groups of lexical units can be distinguished:

1) units for racial and ethnic origin, such as *African American*, *African Americans*, *Afros*, or *Sun people*, *my brotuhah*, *my sistah* (designated by representatives of the Negriterraci [7, p. 3]), *jigga* (a representative of the darker population – instead of the tabooed word "nigger" in rap songs. Interestingly, the word Oriental (originally from the East), is replaced by the terms "Asian American", "Pacific American", "Pacific Islander", "Oceanian American", which indicate geographical origin and do not take into account the peculiarities of the culture in which the personality was formed;

2) gender units, attempting to create substitutes for the word "woman" that are not derived from "man" – *womyn*, *wimmin*, *wimyn*, *wofem*, *womban*, *womon*; *pre-womyn* (girl), word-formation with the avoidance of a "male" component in the names – *to person* (to man), *herstory* (history), *efemcipated* (emancipated [11, p. 4]);

3) units for sexual equilibrium, for example, referring to Mx (gender neutral reference to Mr, Ms);

4) units for levelling status, for example, referring to Ms / miz /, / məz / (addressing a woman, regardless of her marital status, also used in the event of divorce; commonly accepted in business: *I appreciate your help, Ms. Chen* [26, p. 312]);

5) units indicating physical or mental qualities of a person – for example, synonyms for the indication of a person with overweight: *larger-than average citizen*, *medium-sized*, *a person of size*, *a person of substance*, *a person with a body image*, *a horizontally challenged person*, *differently sized person*; synonyms for the marking of the elderly - *chronologically gifted*;

6) units for denoting non-prestigious professions that emphasize their importance to society – *sanitation engineer*, *garbologist* (instead of *garbage collector*), *environmental hygienist*, *custodian*, *building engineer* (instead of *janitor*), *sex care provider*, *sex surrogate* (instead of "prostitute");

7) gender neutral units, mainly in the denomination of professions, where morphemes are denoted by the genre: *firefighter* (instead of "fireman"), *actron* (instead of "actor / actress"), *waitron*, *waitperson* (instead of *waiter / waitress*), *chairperson* instead of *chairman / chairwoman*. It is also worthwhile to mention attempts to create gender-neutral pronouns at the lexical level: *ze*, *zie*, *xe* (instead of *he/she*), *hir*, *zir*, *xyr* (instead of *his/her*), *hirsself*, *zirsself*, *xemsself* (instead of *herself/himself*); attempts to create gender-neutral pronouns at the graphic level: (s)/*he*, *he/she* (instead of *he* or *she*); the tendency to lexically replace the pronouns *his/her* with the gender-neutral pronoun *their* [11, p. 5];

8) animal and plant unit – *animal companion* (*pet*), *botanical companion*, *floral companion* (*plant*, *bouquet*), *canine-american* (*American dog*, similar to *African American*), *oxygen exchange units* (*trees*), *amphibian american* (*frog*) [21, pp. 509];

9) units for social and household phenomena – *microteaching sessions* (*lessons*), *meltdown* (*crisis*), *home invasion* (*burglary*), *dysfunctional family* (*broken home*), *pro-life* (*anti-abortion*), *gender reassignment* (*sex change*), *homeless person*, *displaced homeowner*, *involuntarily undomiciled*, *underhoused* [11, p. 6];

10) units of commercial PC, due to the desire to please the client or attract the attention of potential buyers. Thus, to attract buyers of large sizes, owners and directors of stores are proving to be ingenious in the design of the complicating signs: "BIB" – abbreviated as "Big Is Beautiful", "Renoir Collection" (*Renoir Collection*). Washing powders are sold in three packages: "small" (*small*), "medium" (*medium*), and instead of "big" (*large*), they write the more "correct" and pleasant word "family" or "Jumbo" – by the name of the animated elephant. Inexpensive things are called "budget-friendly", that is, "at an affordable price." There is also a group of lexical units that can only be conventionally called politically correct, since they reflect a system of values that denies the traditional one [11, p. 6]. Moreover, the following units are presented in this category:

1) those indicating family relationships, emphasizing the depressed position of a woman in marriage – *unpaid sex worker* (*wife*) – derived from *sex worker* (*prostitute*), *unwaged labor* (*housework*). The depressed position of the woman is also emphasized in the social sphere, which is reflected in lexical units such as *Differential Framing*, *faceism* (or *facial prominence*) – the tendencies of television to focus the camera on the face if they are shot by a man and in the figure if they shoot a woman [11, c. 6];

2) lexical units that denote human relations with the outside world and emphasize its barbaric attitude towards other types. For example, *a person with difficult-to-meet needs* (*serial-killer*), *wood weasel*, *paper pirate*, *woodlayer* (*logger*); the notion that representatives of other species are only a resource for people which opposes biocentrism, emphasizing the equality of all species in nature [11, p. 6];

3) a group of words denoting different types of discrimination: by age – *ageism*, in the state of health – *diseasism*, in the presence of overweight – *fatism*, [11, p. 6].

Conclusions and prospects for further research. Consequently, politically correct vocabulary has a fairly wide impact on the modern life of people and manifests itself in completely different forms. The most widespread types of political correctness are gender and social which include units for identifying physical and mental qualities of a person, as well as social and everyday phenomena. *Racial* political correctness is directed against racial and ethnic prejudices, *gender* advocates eliminating the emphasis on gender and supporting women's rights, *social* serves to mitigate social phenomena and processes. In general, politically correct words are perceived with a positive connotation, however, some tokens are mostly reminis-

cent of "fashion victims", because they sound very unnatural and are marked by a lack of meaning. Among them, stylistic hybrids that combine the features of several tropes like *Canine American* (a politically correct euphemism + a cognitive metaphor, since the animal is endowed with an unusual feature such as nationality). Taking into account the development of society as a whole, one should pay attention to modern language trends and use those variants of politically correct vocabulary that are considered appropriate to show respect.

And so in the process of making research it can be stressed that we do hope that the Ukrainian language with the help of the mature nation will become a means of communicative clarity and will not be used on purpose by politicians. But now in order to interpret and translate from English into Ukrainian an interpreter or translator has to bear in mind the context of being polite that can be regarded as a set of socio-cultural situations, which, on their turn, can be useful for interpretation and translation (some scripts to be the background for linguistic appropriateness to be evaluated and chosen). At this point it has to be underlined that sociocultural contextual scripts have to take into account social status, gender, age, certain circumstances, etc. In developing the idea we present the situation/script as communicative and sociocultur-

al context internationally accepted and at the same time subjective construct that can be used to lay basis for a listener's interpretation and/language manipulation. So we insist that content is rather context-specific.

The interpretive procedure has to provide descriptions of particular units, establishing meanings and their limits, giving consideration to relationships among the literal and metaphorical values of a given unit/euphemism. We advocate that all the above mentioned units can be subsumed under the broader category of linguistic politeness that can be viewed as part of politic behavior determined by communicative and sociocultural context internationally accepted aiming to maintain public relations with and within the community. Any individual is responsible for linguistic and non-linguistic choices how to speak and what to say depending on intentions and assessment of the situation and potential outcomes.

In political discourse the linguistic strategies affect the interpretive procedure including lexical replacement, omission. The result is dependent on the speaker's purpose to have avoidance effect or focusing one through connoting the respective associations.

The interpretive procedure can also be adopted and applied for pedagogical purposes for evaluation and assessment of students' translation products.

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