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## **POLITICAL CORRECTNESS AND THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT**

**Анотація** Статтю присвячено розгляду мовних змін, які найбільш рель'єфно фіксуються лексико-семантичною системою мови, що пов'язує суспільство в єдину цілісність. В статті представлено проблеми розвитку лексико-семантичної системи англійської мови та досліджується кореляція між впливом фактора політичної коректності і розвитком лексичного складу сучасної англійської мови. Матеріалом наукової розвідки слугували періодичні видання та лексикографічні джерела.

**Ключові слова** евфемізм, фактор політичної коректності, лексико-семантична система англійської мови, неологізми, розвиток словникового складу.

Social life exists in constant development. As social needs and diversification of human activity are growing, one can observe further differentiation of society according to people's occupation, which leads to the increase of terms and lexical systems development [1, с.32]. Lexical system responds to the changes in social life, which demonstrates social essence of a language. New perception of social reality evokes the need for new terms. The vocabulary development is determined by the contradiction between people's wishes and their ability to express thoughts and feelings more adequately.

The concept of "political correctness" became very wide-spread in the English-speaking countries, especially in the USA, at the end of the XXth century. The term "political correctness" was first used by Karen De Crow, the President of the Women's National Organization in 1975. The necessary requirement of the politically correct language is evasion of lexical units' usage which can discriminate an interlocutor according to their age, gender, physical state, racial and cultural identity [9, с.116]. Euphemisms are used instead of politically incorrect words, thus allowing avoiding negative connotation of the utterance.

Euphemisms create a cognitive effect of concept blurring or defocusing of unwanted referents – objects or actions – and in this way keep the addressee from the full interpretation of the utterance [11, с. 211].

According to V.I. Goverdovsky “polite forms and adhering to the rules of language taboo very often do not allow using vocabulary with its direct meaning”. [2, с. 66] This fact can explain appearance of the euphemism *pseudologer* – “one, who doesn’t tell the truth”, instead of the word “*liar*”. Prefix *pseudo-* is used as a euphemism for the words which have direct meaning of “bad or false quality”.

Politically correct vocabulary creation follows certain structural and semantic principles, the main one of which is usage of words that extend their meaning at the sake of the extension of their sphere of usage [9].

It is worth mentioning that the notion “*political correctness*” has brought to life the whole range of similar notions, namely: “*eco-correctness*” – proper treatment of environment, correct ecological policy; “*emotional correctness*” – accepted by society feelings and emotions; *dress correctness* – proper way of dressing; “*religious correctness*” – correct treatment of different religious denominations representatives.

Feminism evolvement in the USA has given rise to using politically correct vocabulary which is aimed, in this case, against gender inequality. The indispensable condition of politically correct language from the point of view of feminism is avoidance of “sexist terms”, such as *businessman, chairman, man-made, mankind*. They are the words which are able to lower the status of a woman, for they have the seme “male” in their composition. Certain changes were made in the names of some professions in order to decrease their one- dimensional gender focus: *anchorman* → *anchorperson*, *fireman* → *firefighter*, *steward/stewardess* → *flight attendant*, *repairman* → *repairer*, *waiter/waitress* → *dining room attendant*.

Problems of minorities – ethnic or gender – have recently become topical. The language had to respond to this very carefully when describing this or that type of a minority, race or ethnos. Thus, since the end of the XXth century the words *Afro-American and African-American* began to be official terms to denote that race. “*African-Americans on the other hand have been “allowed” to journey much further*

*from their subjugated roots and are well represented in all aspects of the mainstream American government, culture and economy. (The Economist, June 30 – July 6, 2010).*

The politically correct word *Afro-Brazilian* appeared in the English language in a similar fashion. *“Elected last year, Pitta is the first afro-Brazilian to govern the nation’s largest city.” (Newsweek, March 9, 2002)*

Current demographic situation in the United States demonstrates the population growth owing to the increase of the number of non-white representatives [6]. Due to this fact there appeared a neologism *majority minority* to denote ethnic minorities who constitute the biggest part of the population in a certain area.

Another layer of politically correct vocabulary is connected with the considerable growth of senior people in the English-speaking countries. The whole range of euphemisms appeared in the English language to denote elder representatives of the population. Such words are: *golden ager, golden oldie, senior citizen, September people, chronologically disadvantaged*, etc.

*The two monikers that the Europeans liked best were “older people” and “senior citizens”. Time, perhaps, to try something new, fresh and positive from America – “the chronologically disadvantaged”. (The Economist, June, 27, 1996)*

The new word *ageful* was coined following the analogy to the word *youthful* in the USA in 1990 to describe the age of a person in a positive way. This word is a euphemism and it can be considered as an alternative nomination to the word *old*: *Old? Deaf? Snapped the voice. “Ageful, we prefer. I’m ageful myself and this is a hearing-assisted telephone so if you would speak slowly and loudly....” (The Guardian, June 4, 1999)*

Lexical units, which denote challenges of differently abled people, are also under the influence of political correctness. The whole range of politically correct words, such as, *challenged, inconvenienced, vertically challenged, otherly abled, differently abled, diff-abled, diffabled*, have appeared in the English language as synonyms to their corresponding regular notions: *The politically correct send their children to schools*

*like Smith College, where they can learn about ableism (“oppression of the **differently abled** by the temporary abled”). (The Boston Times, June 17, 1999)*

*I sometimes use the word “**diffability**” because it says different abilities and people do have different abilities. We all do. But some are especially different and – deserve some special attention. (The GeraldO Rivera Show, January 6, 1997).*

The needs of differently abled people are considered to be of topical importance in any society these days. It is worth mentioning, for example, that in the USA no building can ever be allowed to be constructed and used if it is not equipped with special ramps for wheelchairs and if there is no special parking space for the vehicles of such people. In this regard there appeared a neologism, *visitability*, which denotes accessibility of the building by people whose physical abilities are different.

*The three basic components of **visitability** are an entrance with no steps, ground-floor hallways and doorways wide enough for wheelchairs, and a ground-floor bathroom big enough for a wheelchair to enter and turn around. (The New York Times, February 7, 2002)*

To sum up, the development of lexical system is determined by the contradiction between its expressive ability and the desire of people to express their thoughts and feelings more adequately. One of the factors, which has a considerable influence on the English language lexical system development is political correctness. It accounts for the coinage of politically correct neologisms which denote gender, age, ethnos, social status and values.

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