

Category of Political Correctness in Cross-cultural Communication

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The article is devoted to one of the most vivid aspects of cultural studies - linguistics. In the core of analyses, there stands the interaction of languages and cultures, human communication, cross-cultural communication, where language forms the basis.

Nowadays one can see a great interest directed to such social phenomenon as a cross-cultural communication. It could be explained by means of global transformation taking place in the modern world. The ease with which we travel and exchange information across borders these days was simply unpredictable just a few decades ago. Furthermore, a telecommunication society would serve to accelerate the arrival of the cross-cultural communication age. In this kind of environment, the ability to communicate with other people regardless of culture and language, and the certainty not to be overwhelmed with other cultural backgrounds is a skill in demand. Let's put it simply - cross-cultural communicative ability is an advantage today [Eiilm University 2014: 1].

All these innovations have brought humanity to the vast variety of changes and ideas. One of the most popular and overspread phenomenon is Political Correctness, or PC. Political correctness is a term which denotes language usage, ideas, policies and behavior considered as seeking to minimize social and institutional offense in occupational, gender, racial, cultural, sexual orientation, including religions, beliefs, ideologies, disability and age-related contexts to escape an excessive extent. PC has become extremely popular for the period of recent 20-25 years all over the world. This entity attracts attention of scientists from different fields of studies. Thus, PC involves social, psychological, linguistic knowledge. PC emergence could be explained through several reasons. Firstly, PC is not studied enough within linguistics and cross-cultural studies. Secondly, in modern languages PC shows itself in different features - racial, gender, social, commercial, professional, educational. Languages are changing under the influence of PC, which is being discussed today.

The trend of racial PC was revealed over 20 years, when US colored citizens started to demand a language deracialization meaning to avoid all pejorative connotations concerning the words like *black*, *negro* etc. As a result, those ones more appropriate replaced unsuitable wording, e.g.,

- 1) *Negro* > *colored* > *black* > *African American*;
- 2) *Red Indians* > *Native Americans* > *First Nation*;
- 3) *Eskimo* > *Native Alaskan*;
- 4) *Illegal aliens* > *Undocumented residents*.

Here one can realize that 'popular' words and phrases were substituted by 'racially correct' expressions, and now colored population of US is satisfied. [Head 2015]

This idea was immediately absorbed by feministic movements, as women's feelings seemed to be hurt with words that have a 'man'- root. Even a word *woman* they proposed to

spell as **womryn*, or **wimmin*. So, as a result, many changes have taken place in modern English language and, beyond doubt, these changes influence cross-cultural communication in general. Here are several bright lexical examples of gender PC:

- 1) *Chairman* > *Chairperson*;
- 2) *Postman* > *Mail carrier*;
- 3) *Stewardess* > *Flight attendant*;
- 4) *Mother and father* > *Parent 1 and Parent 2*.

The same tendency emerged in social area. To protect people that are different from others because of their appearance or physical abilities, English-speaking society decided to get rid of uncomfortable feelings and offences that language can cause. Actually, this category is the most vulnerable. That is why nearly every term was replaced. As a result, we have the following changes in English today, e.g.,

- 5) *Invalid* > *Disabled* > *Differently-abled* > *Physically challenged*;
- 6) *Old/Elderly pensioners* > *Senior citizens*;
- 7) *Poor* > *Disadvantaged* > *Economically disadvantaged*;
- 8) *Short people* > *Vertically challenged people*.

Talking about social PC, it should be stressed that these changes are most familiar to English-speaking world. Practically, no one today call *plump* people *fat*, and everyone knows who is a *disabled* person. No misunderstanding here during a cross-cultural communication could be met.

Thus, fast-moving world cannot be governed by the rules of one single culture. It is always a dialogue. We should respect our opponents' culture, their traditions and beliefs. To avoid problems and misunderstanding during this dialogue, a special attention should be paid to cross-cultural communication [Ter-Minasova 2000: 17-18].

As an integral part of cross-cultural communication, Political correctness acts as “excess baggage” or “barriers” in cross-cultural exchange and it prevents a real dialogue. When a person observes a set of communication “rules” and another one doesn't know these rules exist and has a completely different set of communication “rules” it's rather difficult to maintain effective conversation.

Nevertheless, category of PC is an integral part of cross-cultural communication. It means that being a good and successful communicator, one should not just respect other cultures, but the one should be aware of all the changes in the language we speak and be able not only recognizing them in course of a dialogue, but also use them in his own speech.

- 1) Ter-Minasova, S.G. Language and Cross-Cultural Communication. M., 2000.
- 2) Head, T. Illegal Immigrants or Undocumented Immigrants? // http://civilliberty.about.com/od/immigrantsrights/qt/illegal_undoc.htm, 2015.
- 3) Cross-Cultural Communication // Eilm University. Sikkim, India, 2014.