ACADEMIC GYMNASIUM № 56



POLITICALLY CORRECT LANGUAGE AND JOURNALISTIC ETHICS IN MODERN PRESS: COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Research work

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**The goal of the research work:**

* To explore the problem of disregard for professional ethics by modern journalists.

**Research objectives:**

1. Study journalistic ethics and standards:

1.1. to examine the emergence of journalistic ethics and standards;

1.2.to study its value and role;

1.3. to outline the main rules that journalist should follow;

1. to find out what possible violations are often committed by journalists in their articles:

2.1. to get acquainted with several printed issues of English Media

2.2. to analyze them in terms of usage of politically correct and incorrect lexis.

**Research work object:** journalistic ethics and standards; political correctness

**Research work subject:** the problem of disturbance rules of ethics by journalists;

**Methods of research work:** comparative studies and analysis, working with sources.

The **theoretical significance** of my research work is to draw attention to the problem of incorrect presentation of information in journalism.

The **practical significance** of my research work is that it can be used by students to prepare for a University course “Journalistic ethics and standards”.

**CONTENTS**

1. **THEORETICAL PART**

1.1.Definition……....………………………………………..…………4

1.2. The value and role of ethics and standards in journalism……….....5

1.3. The honour code…………………………………………………....6

1. **EMPIRICAL PART**

2.1. Politically correct words………………………………………..…10

2.3. The analysis……………………………………………………….11

**Conclusion**………...…………………………………………………..12

**THEORETICAL PART**

1.1. DEFINITION

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 To start with, the definition of journalistic ethics cannot be separated from the concept of political correctness, shorter PC. PC language is one of the most important parts of journalistic ethics and standards. Without this concept, it is impossible to discuss the problem of noncompliance with the ethical principles by modern journalists.

 I tried to put in my research work the most understandable definitions of journalistic ethics and political correctness.

 B.N. Lazovsky in his research work “Journalistic: short dictionary” defines journalistic ethics as:

 *The field of ethics which studies the norms, rules, one of the forms of self-regulation for journalists, where object and subject are both the professional journalistic community.*

The New Oxford Dictionary of English defines PC as “*the principle of avoiding language and behaviour that may offend particular groups of people*”.

 From the second statement, it is seen that PC deals with the elimination of words that might be offensive to people according to their religion, race, gender, orientation etc. As I say, it is one of the parts of journalistic ethics and standards on which the modern Code of honour is built.

In the 21st century, more attention has been paid to the issue of inequality of people's rights. News is transmitted in more ways than ever before: in print, on the web, on the radio, with words, images, sounds and videos. News of events crosses the globe in seconds.

It is impossible to disagree with G. Lazutina, who believes that the attitude to the product of activity (news) determines the further relationship between the reader and the journalist. As a customer of a product, society is also concerned about its quality, which affects the status of the activity that produces it, the prestige of the profession and the well-being of its representatives. Only a careful attitude to work is not enough to ensure the interests of both parties. It is necessary to "insure" the quality of the product on the part of the professional group. The function of such "insurance" is assumed by professional ethics. What about journalism, professional ethics directs the media staff on standards of professional conduct, proven experience and reactions of the society.

1.2. THE VALUE AND ROLE OF POLITICALLY CORRECT LANGUAGE AND ETHICS IN JOURNALISM

A lot of people perceive the standards of journalism negatively, believing that they impose the conventions of the Anglo-Saxon or Anglo-American tradition. However, journalistic ethics and standards still exist. These principles do not allow a journalist to violate human rights by adhering to certain boundaries. In addition to this, journalistic ethics and standards do not allow the media to mislead people.

Also, opponents of PC language claim that politically correct language violates freedom of speech. They say that freedom of speech as a fundamental human right should not be restricted except when it causes serious harm to others.

I am in favour of the substitution of racist, sexist, hate speech, and other inappropriate words with new ones. It is much more polite to talk of a ‘police officer’ referring to a female person than a ‘police woman’. When going through politically correct dictionaries, I found expressions which, in my opinion, go beyond the reasonable and are absurd, naming a dog a nonhuman animal companion or plants botanical companions. Some newly created words sound even more offensive (e.g. a human animal for a man or a woman) and are not likely to be used in common language.

However, I am of the opinion that anyone can say what they want and how they want. Exactly freedom of speech allows them to do it. However, journalists should not disrespect personal boundaries. A civilized society begins precisely from the moment when people stop violating the personal boundaries of others.

We should ask ourselves the question about who determines the standards of PC. I partially agree with Lorber, who claims that there should be a precise list of politically correct and politically incorrect words. A precise list would be ideal. In my opinion, it is impossible to make one since language is not constant and it changes. It is too complex and dynamic. Language, especially vocabulary, can change quickly as new words constantly appear.

It is understandable that freedom of the press should have some boundaries to preserve the interest of those who would be harmed because of irresponsible journalism. In my opinion, journalists should deliver the news as truthfully as they can. The media should broadcast news in a way that people are able to understand what is happening in the world regardless of political correctness.

1.3. THE HONOUR CODE

Journalistic ethics has its own special norms. Among them are:

1. Complete coverage of the issues and circumstances in which the events occur;
2. The freedom of a journalist from one-sidedness, partiality;
3. Honesty in the presentation of facts, objectivity in the reviews;
4. Compliance with the rules of anonymity, sources of information;
5. Participation in public and political events only in accordance with the specific rules;
6. The impartial ratio of all "pros" and "cons" that occur while getting familiar with the situation;
7. Special caution in the use of materials and data related to a person's personal life;
8. Public access to information and participation in media;
9. Respect for universal values and cultural diversity;
10. The struggle against wars and other troubles threatening humanity;
11. Development of the new world information and communication order.

Of course, it is not permissible for journalists to use harsh language. The main objectives of PC language are:

1. Avoiding sexist language.

1.1. Use of gender-free, gender-fair, gender-specific words (teacher, councilwoman\councilman, alderwoman);

1.2. . Use of generic, pseudo generic words

1.3. Use of feminine endings, as *-ess, -ette*, and *-trix*

1.4. Use of –Woman, -Man, endings only when it's necessary. Try to use more -person ending: chairman-chairperson;

1.5. Pseudogeneric man, men, mankind. Try to find alternatives:

housewife - homemaker,

householder - homeowner

foreman - supervisor

watchman - guard

Anyone who wants to go to the game should bring *his* money. - Anyone who wants to go to the game should bring *their* money.

1. Avoiding racist language:

Politically incorrect: black, coloured, ethnic, half-caste, Indian, nigger, third world, tribe, west Indian.

Politically correct: Asian, developing countries, mixed-race, immigrant, native, non-industrial.

1. Using doublespeak in order to disguise or distort actual meaning:

Another very important branch of politically correct language is to disguise or distort the actual meaning of words. Doublespeak words are deliberately constructed for political purposes and often occur in the form of euphemisms (downsizing for the firing of many employees).

1. Fighting against different kinds of “-isms” (ageism, alphabetism, animal lookism and etc).

To replace politically incorrect words, try to find non-offensive wordings. For example:

Coinages with different:

• COSMETICALLY DIFFERENT – ugly

• CULTURALLY DIFFERENT – ethnic minority

• EMOTIONALLY DIFFERENT – crazy

• MENTALLY DIFFERENT – mentally retarded

• METABOLICALLY DIFFERENT (terminally inconvenienced) – dead

• MORALLY DIFFERENT (ethically disoriented) – dishonest, immoral, evil

• PHYSICALLY DIFFERENT – physically disabled

 Some other coinages:

• abled:

DIFFERENTLY ABLED – physically or mentally disabled

• advantaged:

DIFFERENTLY ADVANTAGED – poor

• deficient:

MOTIVATIONALLY DEFICIENT - lazy

• disadvantaged:

HAIR DISADVANTAGED – bold

• dysfunctional:

SEXUALLY DYSFUNCTIONAL - perverted

• gifted:

CHRONOLOGICALLY GIFTED - old

• impoverished:

MELANIN IMPOVERISHED - white

• inconvenienced:

AURALLY INCONVENIENCED – deaf

• oppressed:

PARASITICALLY OPPRESSED – pregnant

• organised:

SPECIALLY ORGANISED - sloppy

• undomiciled:

INVOLUNTARILY UNDOMICILED – homeless

**EMPIRICAL PART**

2.1. POLITICALLY CORRECT WORDS

 In order to answer the key questions as to how politically correct the media is, I have examined the print media.



It is the ratio between politically correct and politically incorrect words in **The Sun**. Taking 10 completely random articles, 41 PC incorrect words were found, but the PC words turned out to be 43. The most frequently used politically correct word of the Sun is *police officer,* used twelve times. The most frequently used incorrect word is *spokesman*, used nineteen times.



This is the ratio between politically correct and politically incorrect words in **The Guardian**. Taking 10 completely random articles, 37 politically incorrect words were found, but the PC words turned out to be 50. The most frequently used politically correct word of the Guardian is *obese*. The most frequently used incorrect word is *black*.



The ratio between politically correct and politically incorrect words in **The Times**. As we see, politically incorrect words occurred 48 times. The number of politically correct words turned out to be 33. The most frequently used politically incorrect words were black and gunman. The most frequently used politically correct words are guards and chairman.

2.3. THE ANALYSIS



The graph presents the percentage of politically correct words in the newspapers. As we see, the most politically correct language friendly newspaper is The Guardian.

To be honest, I have expected better results. I should point out that all the articles used in this analysis have already been edited and checked by the editors.

This makes us understand that some publications often purposely use politically incorrect words to make themselves more popular. Perhaps many publications do not even notice such mistakes, which indicates the quality of the product consumed by readers.

A.S. Maslov said: “It is important that the superficial approach of the journalist in the preparation of the material violates professional ethics. And if the basic norms are not met, then we can not talk about a professional, ethically correct attitude to work”.

 **CONCLUSION**

 Summing up, we must once again mention the importance of professional ethics for journalists.

Today, they have a great influence on society, and the way a journalist expresses his thoughts is very important. Many publications of various types and levels are characterized by a low culture of polemics, distort the thoughts of opponents, and show great hostility to other people's views. The profession provides the journalist with the right and duty to make public moral judgments on matters of common interest on behalf of society. If one of the media publications does not comply with ethical standards, allowing many violations in its publication, then an outflow of the audience is inevitable. Readers will turn to a better source of information, for which following the norms of journalistic ethics is valuable in itself.

Political correctness aims at preventing social discrimination by ceasing offensive speech and behaviour towards underprivileged groups of individuals. Wisely applied and edited media words can prevent various misunderstandings and conflicts within society. However, the situation with PCs is far from being perfect.

Some steps must be taken to solve the problem of noncompliance with the politically correct language in the press to live in a tolerant and civilized world.

*"Unfortunately, today the biggest sin of today's press is the neglect of professional standards. As a result, the audience is less and less trusting the media, the printed and spoken word. The current generation practically does not know high-quality journalism."*

*Vladimir Tulupov, researcher*

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**APPENDIX**

**The Sun. Politically incorrect words:**

FROGMAN

CHAIRMAN

FRONTMAN

POSTMAN

MAN

SPOKESMAN

DUSTMAN

ACTRESS

GUNMAN

MILITIAMAN

BLACK

MARKSMAN

POLICEMAN

CRIPPLED

FAT

RETARDED

 **The Sun. Politically correct words:**

POLICE OFFICER

OBESE

GUYS

GUARDSMAN

CHILDMINDER

CHIEF

BATSMAN

SPOKESPERSON

THEIR

THEM CHAIRMAN

AFRICAN-AMERICAN

COPS

SERVICEMAN AND WOMAN

**The Guardian. Politically incorrect words:**

CHAIRMAN

SPOKESMAN

HEADMASTER

BLACK

COLOURED

POLICEMAN

ACTRESS

MARKSMAN

GUNMAN

MAN

**The Guardian. Politically correct words:**

GIRLS AND BOYS

POLICE OFFICER

MAN AND WOMAN

ACTOR

SPOKESPERSON

IT

THEM

HEADTEACHER

CHIEF EXECUTIVE

HEAD

**The Times. Politically incorrect words:**

BLACK

SALESMAN

POLICEMAN

HOUSEWIFE

SPORTSMAN

GUNMAN A MAN’S

CAMERAMAN

ACTRESS

FRONTMAN

TOMBOY

GAL

FISHERMAN

MAN

COLOURED

FATHERLAND

OMBUDSMAN

BROTHER

**The Times. Politically correct words:**

SPOKESMAN

SALESMAN

GUARD

GUYS

CHIEF EXECUTIVE

OBESE

SPOKESPERSON

CHAIRMAN

FRONTMAN

AFRICAN-AMERICAN

PRINCIPAL

LEADER

BUSINESSMAN

STATESMAN