ANNA LUBECKA
Jagiellonian University, Cracow

IS THE POLITICALLY CORRECT LANGUAGE ALWAYS CORRECT?

For the last 30 years the phenomenon of Political Correctness (PC) has marked many domains of everyday life not only in the USA where PC was born but also in Poland. As the PC ideology itself is subject of many polemical discussions, the question arises if its language, which is supposed to be non-racist, non-sexist, non-lookist, non-ageist and non-ableist, also creates many controversies. But first of all, what does a politically correct language mean? Is it always correct? And what about its grammatical correctness and the culture-specific semantics of the newly created terms? How are politically correct terms created in English and Polish, which are two different language systems? This article which analyses the politically correct language in English and in Polish hopes to bring answers to the above questions.

1. What is political correctness?

Many important economic, political and socio-cultural changes began in the 1960s and since then have marked the postmodern reality, first in the USA and then in Western Europe. Finally, in the late eighties the Central and Eastern European societies experienced the effects of those changes and gave them their own interpretation and meaning. Political correctness (PC)[1] is one of these phenomena, which continue to arouse controversial feelings and opinions among both its supporters and adversaries alike. Its socio-cultural evaluation is neither clearly positive nor negative. Although in Poland political correctness is not such a significant part of reality as in the USA, for example, it has been a 'hot' issue for the past few years. Most people have heard about it but when asked to give its definition they can hardly do it. The only thing they know is that it is something to criticise or to make a joke about and they call it with the derogatory term 'polityczne słuszniactwo' (political fairness).

---

[1] The opinions on PC presented in this article are not always shared by its author whose main objective is to discuss in an exhaustive and objective way the political, economic and socio-cultural phenomenon of Political Correctness and its language.

So what is political correctness? The journalist of the *San Francisco Examiner* (22 January 1995) claims that Political Correctness got popularity in 1987 when Allan Bloom published the book *The closing of the American mind* which turned out to be a best-seller. By 1990 the debate over PC and multiculturalism has become an ongoing public forum on race, education, politics, arts and morality. As for the roots of PC, it was born out of social radicalism and the hippies' revolution of the sixties, when groups of young angry people protested against the money-oriented society which accepted unjust economy-based hierarchy and which oppressed groups and individuals who were less economically privileged. PC as a new ideology of freedom and equality was also inspired by the fight of Afro-Americans to be given the same rights as the white citizens of the USA (cf. Martin Luther King, revolts in Detroit in '68). In the seventies American feminists started using the politically correct language to draw attention to conservative, stereotype-based and biased approach to women issues. The year 1991 marks an important *caesura* in the history of Political Correctness as its supporters managed to have the Civil Rights Act (cf. Epstein 1992) proclaimed. This legal act defends minority rights to have the same equal opportunities in employment and payment as the white majority. By introducing the concept of 'disparate impact', the *Equal Employment Opportunity Commission* has clearly stated that the policy of employment and payment must be based solely on the applicant's professional skills and abilities, putting aside racial, age and gender prejudice.

Similarly, the programmes offered to the students at American universities as well as the university administration, recruitment and employment policy, which define how the university should be run are not free from the consequences of the Political Correctness controversy. In reality this question is a surrogate for the question who has power and knowledge in the academia, whose values are taught and whose values are devalued. Thus Political Correctness promotes an objective approach to science and fights for the right of the so-called 'silent minorities' to speak up for themselves. On the other hand, however, it is hard to accept the new handbooks of history such as the *African-American Baseline Essays* which has been used as an optional history book in some public schools in Oregon, where it reads that:

> *Africa is the mother of Western Civilisation, Egypt was a black African country and the source of the glory that was Greece and the grandeur that was Rome. Africans also discovered America and named the waters they crossed the Ethiopian Ocean, long before Columbus* (Woodward 1991: 41).

Also American universities have to deal with the issues of politically correct course programmes and selections of books on the reading lists. The Intercollegiate Studies Institute (ISI) published in the *Campus* (Fall 1998), a popular students' newspaper, an authentic story of an Arizona State University professor, Jared Sakren. Sakren, a graduate of Juilliard and previously a professor at Yale used classic texts by white male such as Aristotle, Aeschylus, Chekhov, Ibsen, Shakespeare to teach drama classes "from this sexist European canon that is approached traditionally". Consequently, he was accused by politically correct–minded female students of being racist, sexist and Euro-centric. Moreover, the administration of the Arizona State University decided to terminate the contract with Sakren and the Department of Theatre was advised to replace the sexist plays by Shakespeare with the play entitled *Betty the Yeti: an Eco-Fable*. This is a story of a logger who has sex with a Yeti and is transformed into an environmentalist (cf. ISI "Pollys"[2] 1998:1). How should this

decision be interpreted? Is it a step towards an objectivisation of science and free speech or is it rather a lesson in ignorance, intolerance of others and disrespect for tradition. Is it an example of Ayatollahization of academia where any idea which does not meet the criteria of Political Correctness is to be dismissed?

Even these few examples given above urge us to define Political Correctness. The English-English dictionaries define this term only as late as in the nineties, which stresses the newness of the phenomenon of PC. According to its shortest but at the same time exhaustive definition, PC refers to such verbal and non-verbal behaviours which do not offend any member of any minority, be it ethnic, race, gender, age, etc. (cf. Oxford Wordpower 1997). For the members of the American New Left and of the Students for a Democratic Society Association, PC is an attempt to discover the truth in a new form of fight where economic struggle has been replaced with culture-based conflicts (D'Souza 1991). Schwartz (1999:1-16) claims that PC is an expression of emotional narcissism and *amour propre* of those who do not belong to the power structures but would like to find there their own place. Berstein (1990:1,4) whose article entitled "The rising hegemony of the politically correct" made the term PC enter public discourse to be later taken up by other periodicals such as The New Republic, The Atlantic, Time and Newsweek, the New York Review, defines the concept of PC as

> *a cluster of opinions about race, ecology, feminism, culture and foreign policy [which] defines a kind of 'correct attitude' toward the problems of the world .... Central to pc-ness (...) is the view that Western society has for centuries been dominated by what is often called 'the white male power structure' or 'Patriarchal hegemony'. A related belief is that everybody but white heterosexual males has suffered some form of repression and been denied a cultural voice....* (Berstein 1990:4:4).

Tolerance for any manifestation of diversity is a key-concept for politically correct behaviours which oppose "*stigmatisation or victimisation of an individual on the basis of race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, creed, national origin, ancestry, age, marital status, handicap or Vietnam-era veteran status*" (D'Souza, 1991:10). It a social movement working on behalf of "*the outsiders and downtrodden* [such as] *women, people of colour, third-world people* [and] *other marginalized groups within Western societies*" (Hollinger 1994:53). Thus PC is a philosophy of suffering and shame which should be felt by those who have inflicted this suffering on others. "*The white males have held center stage too long, it's time for their victims*" (Shweder 1991:section 4:15), hence, it is time for compensatory action. However, it should be also remembered that for many conservatives and classical liberals PC has become merely

> *a sarcastic jibe ... to describe what they see as a growing intolerance, a closing of debate, a pressure to conform to a radical programme or risk being accused of a commonly reiterated trio of thoughts: sexism, racism and homophobia* (Berstein 1990:4;4).

---

[2] The "Pollys" were created by the Intercollegial Studies Institute to focus attention on the outrageous excesses of politically correct students, faculty, and administrators in higher education. Each year they publish "The Top Fives Politically Correct Campus Outrages" in the newspaper the *Campus*.

2. The language of political correctness

Language is much more than merely a means to describe the extra-linguistic reality. It also serves for an instrument of cognition and a tool with which to create and change the world around us, our attitudes and beliefs. As there is much evidence that biased language distorts perceptions and works as a powerful inclusion or exclusion factor in social life[3], the PC-exists aim at inventing their own bias-free language suitable to disseminate the PC ideology. Thus based on the key-concept of tolerance and the philosophy of victimisation, the politically correct language can be neither sexist nor racist. It should express respect for religion-based differences as well as for the differences due to age, looks, physical and mental handicap. Consequently, the politically correct language is not ageist, lookist and ableist.

The objective of this article is to examine the politically correct language in both English and Polish as the phenomenon of Political Correctness has also become a part of Polish reality, where it constitutes an object of numerous and heated discussions. The examples chosen for our analysis are to illustrate how the language-specific properties of English and Polish, especially morphology and semantics, determine the abilities of PC-ixists to create new inclusive terms with which to translate the philosophical principles of PC and its ideology. It is also hoped that the article will answer the question if the politically correct language is always correct if the grammatical rules and the objectively approved of ethical principles are assigned the role of the criteria of correctness, which comes to the question on its grammatical and socio-cultural evaluation. First the examples from English, mainly American English are analysed, then the examples from Polish follow. This order is not by chance because it shows that due to different properties of the linguistic systems under examination an automatic transfer of the principles of morphological change in word formation from English to Polish may result in a totally opposed semantic effect of the new, apparently politically correct, words.

As it has been already said, the politically correct language cannot be sexist and thus it should eliminate from the language usage all the forms which degrade women or present them as human beings of lesser value than men. A non-sexist language is free from the nouns or pronouns whose grammatical gender is masculine but which are used as generic and representative for both men and women. Consequently, the personal pronoun *he/him* (E) and *on/jemu/nim* (P), and the corresponding possessive pronouns *his* (E) and *jego* (P) used generically should be either combined with their feminine equivalents *she/her* (E), *ona/ni¹/jej* (P) and appear in clusters *s/he*, *his/her* (E), on/ona, *jego/jej, jemu/jej* (P), or replaced with the pronoun in the third person plural *they/them/their* (ex. 1, 2).

However, the rules of the politically correct usage of personal pronouns create many problems. First of all the personal pronoun *they* used as a singular pronoun of unde-termined sex combined with the verb in the form of the 3rd person singular questions the

---

[3] When people of all ages read the word man or he they tend to picture males. In a 1983 study it was found that women were less likely to consider a career in psychology when the career description used the male pronouns. Similarly, when junior high school students were asked to draw the activities of prehistoric people, the group which received the instruction about 'early man' drew more man, while the group whose instruction was gender-neutral and referred to 'people' or 'humans' had a more or less equal number of males and females on their pictures (cf. PC: Ontario Women's Directorate 1995:2).

principle of subject-predicate agreement in the traditional grammar. Similarly, the impersonal pronoun *everybody* which denotes a subject in the 3rd person singular used with the reflexive pronoun in the 3rd person plural *themselves* (ex. 3) results in ungrammatical and faulty sentences[4]. The idea to apply both the personal pronoun *he/she* and the possessive pronouns *his* and *her* when the gender is unknown (ex. 1) elongates such utterances, which questions the principle of the 'language economy'. Thus to make the sentences shorter and to sharpen the point, the PC-ixists advise to change the possessive pronouns *his/her* to the definite article *the* (ex. 4).

The problems created by the politically correct use of pronouns become even bigger in Polish. The use of the generic pronoun *they/them* solves the problem in English but not in Polish where the distinction between the masculine and feminine gender holds and the pronoun of the 3rd person plural possesses two forms *oni* (masc.) and *one* (fem.). The same applies to the impersonal pronoun *everybody* (E), *każdy* (P). The latter has two distinct forms which are carriers of gender-specific features: *każdy* vs. *każda*. It should be also noticed that in Polish the politically correct utterances become much longer than in English due to the obligatory use of both the double forms of all kinds of pronouns and of verbs as, unlike in English, in Polish verbs are marked with gender-specific features (ex. 5). As a result, the principle of 'language economy' is even more deeply violated than in English and the Gricean Maxim of Clarity is much less strictly observed.

1. *Each student should bring his/her paper on Monday.*
2. *Every participant should bring their lunch.*
3. *Everyone for themselves.*
4. *The member will promptly disclose any interest in a business which may affect **the** client.*
   instead of
   *The member will promptly disclose to **his/her** client any innterest in a business which may affect **him/her**.*
5. *Niech każdy/każda uczeń/uczennica przyniesie dodatkowo po 5 zł na bilet do ZOO.*

One of the most argued-about parts of PC language concerns the names of jobs many of which were traditionally done by men. This fact is reflected by the morphological structure of such names which, as compound words, contain the gender-marked suffix *man/men*. Now when most of the jobs are also done by women, it is advisable either to change the old 'man-marked' names into neutral ones or to create totally new terms free from any gender-specific association when the gender of the job performer is unknown. If the name of the profession belongs to the group of the words with the marked suffix -*man*, then the most common practice to make them non-sexist consists in replacing the masculine morpheme with its feminine equivalent *woman/women* or with the gender-unmarked morphemes *person/-s/people* (ex. 6-9). The most decisive morphological change consists in eliminating the politically incorrect gender-specific morphemes (ex. 10) and thus create completely non-biased terms which include all of the audience, men and women alike. The more traditionally oriented linguists argue however that the semantics of the term *chair* has been changed in the process as it stands for a piece of furniture, not a person who is

---

[4] It is interesting to observe that the usage of *they* as a singular pronoun was considered correct until the mid-nineteenth century.

a holder of the prestigious function of a chairperson[5]. The kind of morphological changes described above are not possible in Polish where the rules of word formation are different.

   6. *weatherman – weatherwoman/-person, -people*
   7. *Frenchman – Frenchwoman/-person, people*
   8. *businessman – businesswoman/-person, people*
   9. *postman – postperson*
   10. *chaiman – chairwoman/-person – chair*

Although in some cases distinct terms for men and women doing the same job have been in use before, feminists want to replace the old feminine forms created by means of the suffix *-ess*, such as *waitress, stewardess* with their gender-unbiased equivalents (ex. 11, 12). In their reasoning they stress that gender-free terms are necessary because when a term is used generically, people always choose the masculine form. Such choices give a wrong impression that, for example, all persons who take care of passengers during the flights as well as all those who wait on table are man.

   11. *waitron, waitperson, dining room attendant – waiter, waitress*
   12. *flight attendant – steward, stewardess*

Another example of the tendency to create gender-free generic names, such as the ones given below (ex. 13-15).

   13. *firefighter – fireman*
   14. *policeman – policewoman, law enforcement officer*
   15. *meter maid – parking enforcement aduciator*

An analyses of the politically correct terms to denote jobs shows that when the term is not used generically but it refers to *womyn*, it should be marked with the grammatical properties of the feminine gender. In this way *womyn* get prestige and their dedication to work and work excellence are properly expressed by means of language. Hence, the use of all such forms is strongly recommended although many of them have been forgotten and when reintroduced to modern language they sound archaic and strange (ex. 16-19). While the procedure described above can be safely applied in English where it does not result in semantic changes, it is risky in Polish. The final effect is opposed to the planned one and the feminine variant of the name of the job actually degrades its woman performer and indicates her lesser professional skills and expertise. In Polish *doktorka* stands for a lady doctor whose skills can be questioned, and the term itself tends to be used jokingly. Similarly, *dyrektorka* (manageress) can be a head of an institution of a smaller prestige and size. *Dyrektorka* usually works as a head of primary school or kindergarten, never of a secondary school or college. The same is true about *profesorka* (lady professor) which is a customary title given to teacheresses in secondary school while women who work at the university and are holders of the highest academic title are always addressed as *pani profesor* (lady professor). Thus, the cultural stereotype that women are less predisposed to do difficult and responsible jobs gets strengthened by means of some feminine gender marked job names.

   16. *doctoress*
   17. *teacheress*
   18. *singeress*
   19. *authoress*

---

[5] To defend their rights, the feminists quote the Oxford English Dictionary which dates 1659 as the first use of *chair* in the contested sense.

An interesting example of some consequences of semantic change which accompanies the change of the gender is the Polish word *stolarzowa* and *stolarka*. Both of them are the feminine derivatives of the masculine noun *stolarz*, a carpenter, but neither of them represents a woman carpenter. The first term *stolarzowa* denotes a carpenter's wife while the second *stolarka* stands for the products of carpenter's work. The same is true about such other names of jobs as *piekarz* (baker) or *cukiernik* (confectioner). Their respective feminine derivatives *piekarzowa* designates a baker's wife and *piekarnia* is a bakery, and *cukiernia* means a pastry shop and *cukiernica* stands for a sugar bowl.

Apart from a strong tendency to use separate terms to describe the jobs done by women, it can be observed an equally powerful trend, in English and Polish alike, to eliminate the names which reduce a woman to a servant, ex. 20-23.

20. *housewife – domestic engineer, homemaker*
21. *żona – pani domu*
22. *służąca – pomoc domowa*
23. *gosposia – pomoc*

It is interesting to observe the change proposed by the feminists in the spelling of the term *women* to avoid the suggestion of sexism in the sequence *m-e-n* (ex. 20). However a far better solution are the terms which exclude any sex associations in relation to women: any term reducing *womyn* to their sexuality is offending and should be banned from language (ex. 24, 26). Consequently it is also advisable not to use *girl* but the politically correct *pre-womyn*.

24. *womyn – women*
25. *person of gender – women*
26. *significant other – wife, lover, spouse, girlfriend*

Two Polish terms babon and kobieta-ch³op seem to suit the PC ideology as they aim at gender-neutrality by presenting women as possessing both female and male features. However, contrary to the expectations, these words are not only funny but also offending. There is something vulgar in the way they picture women and all the positive aspects of femininity are absent from babon and kobieta-ch³op. Even women themselves, who should be the most interested in creating terms evaluating them in a positive and respectful way, are against this usage. It should also be remembered that the words were coined by men to denote the communist women-workers who, as if defying gender-specific limitations, competed with men and were able to work as bricklayers, tractor drivers, crane operators, etc.

In the repertoire of nouns used generically, there is only one, namely prostitute, whose grammatical gender is feminine. Still, the term itself raises many controversies and protests, as being negatively judgmental it is offending and highly inappropriate. The proper substitutes which express neutral evaluation are given below (ex. 27):

27. *person presenting themselves as commodity allotment within a business doctrine, sex care provider, sex worker – prostitute*

A very controversial example of the struggle to use an inclusive language is the claim of the Canadian feminists to eliminate the word sons in the Canadian national anthem (ex. 28). They argue that this word excludes more than half of the population, the women, from being Canadian citizens and deprives them of the symbolic identity the anthem gives to people. They suggest the use of such term as all our hearts instead which will speak to everyone, not just men and boys.

28. "O Canada, our home and native land,

   *True patriot love in all thy **sons** (hearts) command*"

The PC-ixists tend to eliminate the politically incorrect morpheme *man* from all the compound nouns which refer to objects (ex. 29), method of production (ex. 30) and time of work (ex. 31) so as to avoid creating a man-dominated world, where there is no place for *womyn*.

   29. manhole cover – sewer cover (E) – w³az (P)

   30. man-made – artificial, synthetic (E) – sztuczny (P)

   31. man-hours – work hours (E) – godziny pracy (P)

Similar attempts have been undertaken to create alternative terms for the male marked collective nouns referring to all the inhabitants of our globe (ex. 32) or to workers (ex. 33).

   32. mankind – humanity, humankind, Earth children (E) – ludzkość (P)

   33. manpower – workforce, staff, personel (E) – pracownicy (P)

The overzealous tendency to exclude from language all the forms which contain the ideologically wrong morpheme *man* has resulted in a few misunderstandings and have showed the feminist reformers' ignorance about the etymology of the words they want to change. The words in question are *manipulate* and *manacle* as well as the name of one of the American states, namely *Manitoba*. The prefix *man* in these words comes from the Latin word manus and has nothing to do with the inimical man (ex. 34-36).

   34. manipulate – personipulate

   35. manacle – personacle

   36. Manitoba – Personitoba

Forms of address constitute the next controversial area where language promotes unjust and negative stereotypes of women, often presenting them as merely complementary to men or reduced to sex objects. It is thus necessary to exclude the forms which carry information about age and marital status of women and as such disclose information about the woman's sexual availability. Consequently, two terms of address *miss* (E) and *panienka* (P) appear neither in English nor in Polish where their equivalents are *Ms* (E) and *pani* (P), respectively. It is interesting to notice that two different sets of factors are responsible for this linguistic change. It is only in English where the initiative belongs to feminists. In Polish, the change was much earlier and it was motivated by the political system adopted after 1945. The form *panienka* as a remnant of the old bourgeois language and its political and cultural ethos endangered the new communist ideology and had to disappear. American feminists have invented a new term of address to denote an unmarried man – *Mush* but it has not got on popularity yet. The forms which significantly contribute to the woman's identity by stressing the fact that she is married are also banned from a politically correct usage (ex. 37, 38). Their negative semantics is especially conspicuous in Polish where they contain the suffix *–owa*. This suffix expresses the relation of possession and reduces woman to the object owned by her husband. Similarly, the expressions, which describe a girl or a woman by referring her to her father or spouse, are equally difficult to accept as correct (ex. 39).

   37. Mrs John Brown

   38. doktorowa, Janowa

   39. married to the daughter of an Air Vice-Marshal

The review of the non-sexist terms describing women should also contain the words that denote unmarried people of both genders *bachelors/spinsters* (E) and *kawalerowie/*

panny (P). While the meaning of the first element in each pair is rather free from any negative connotations, the second component tends to be negatively marked in both English and Polish. Nearly always, the terms *spinster* (E), *panna* (P) are as if subconsciously, complemented with the qualifying adjectives *old* and *bitter* (E), *stara* and *zgorzkniała* (P). Moreover, it is the choice of *bachelors/kawalerowie* not to get married while *spinsters/panny* are alone against their own will, which is their personal tragedy and social failure.

In the opinion of feminists the paternalistic expressions which treat women as dependent on men are sexist. They are one more manifestation of the struggle between genders, (ex. 40-42).

   40. the better half (E) – lepsza połowa (P)
   41. the little woman (E) – (mała, nieporadna) kobietka (P)
   42. the weaker sex (E) – słaba płeć (P)

The ideology of PC wants to disclose the truth about the input of women in progress and civilisation. The notion *history*, which reads as **his** *story*, serves as an acute example of the discrimination of women and falsifies the account of the development of the world as the presence of the prefix *his* implies that only the achievement of men are of importance. The alternative term *herstory* should be accepted as it emphasises the particular experience of women and their contribution to the world welfare (cf. *A Woman's New World Dictionary*). The English distinction between *his-/herstory* does not hold in Polish where the term *historia* does not bring any connotations with the male morpheme.

American feminists have classified five nouns whose grammatical gender is feminine *car, ship, boat, hurricane* (a plane) as sexist and discriminating women. The point is that all these vehicles are attributes of maleness and the men who drive them symbolically dominate women. In Polish the gender of *łódź* (boat) is feminine but so far nobody has put forward the theory of dominance and discrimination which this noun perpetuates.

The second important feature of the language of PC is its being non-racists (cf. Beard, Cerf 1992). Thus ethnic groups are named not by using their race or ethnicity but their cultural heritage and geographic identity. This procedure allows to avoid negative stereotyping based on the symbolical meaning of colours in the culture of the white men (white = positive, black = negative). It is also important to stress what people share, not what makes them stranger to one another (ex. 43-48). *People first!* is the slogan of PC-ixists.

   43. Afro-, Caribbean-American/Black – Negro, Niger, wong, coon (E);
       Afro-Americanin – czarnuch, asfalt, bambus (P)
   44. Asian-American – Yellow, Chink, Orientals, slant eyes (E);
       Azjo-Amerykanin – żółtek (P)
   45. Chicana/Chicano – Mexican-American, Cheech and Chong (E)
   46. Native Americans – Red Indians, redskin (E);
       pierwotni mieszkańcy Ameryki, Indianie – czerwonoskórzy (P)
   47. persons of non-colour – Whites, especially WASP

The Polish experience of cultural diversity resulted in the change of the names of ethnic minorities who have been a part of Poland. Thus the term *Rom* tends to replace *Cygan* which brings associations with a liar (in Polish *cygan* is a colloquial equivalent of *liar* while *Rom* points out the origin of this ethnic group). Similarly the diminutives such as *Icek, Żydek*, and augmentatives e.g. *Żydzisk* with which to define Jews are forbidden.

PC-ixists believe that religion cannot be a reason to disrespect or even oppress others. Thus the language of PC discredits all these expressions which may create hostility towards, disrespect and disdain of followers of any religion. The widespread practice in the USA consists in sending *Season's Greetings* to the people who do not celebrate Christmas. In Polish the stress is on using neutral terms to denote particular religious groups (ex. 48, 49). .

48. *Świadkowie Jehowy – Jehowici*

49. *Wyznawcy nauki Mojżeszowej – Żydzi*

Since the language of PC is neither lookist, ageist nor ableist (cf. Smith, Jordan 1992) it tends to replace the negatively marked qualifying adjectives referring to looks, age and mental and physical abilities with a non-judgmental adjectives or longer expressions, usually a combination of an adverb and a qualifying adjective, or a prepositional structure. The most typical qualifying adjectives of an emotionally negative load are the following: *handicapped, retarded, spastic, defective, deformed, deficient, disabled* (E) and *upośledzony, głupi, niedorozwinięty, głuchy, ślepy, niemoralny* (P). The list of the positive or at least neutral expressions embraces among others: *challenged, different(ly), disoriented, disadvantaged, alternatively, inconvenienced, gifted, enhanced, free, exploited, marginalized, dispossessed, deficient, deprived, perplexed* (E) and *inaczej, z problemami* (P), ex. 50-63.

50. *physically/mentally different/challenged – physically/mentally handicapped (E) : niepełnosprawny : specjalnej troski (dzieci) – kaleka, fizycznie upośledzony (P)*

51. *morally different/ethically disoriented – immoral (E) : uczciwy inaczej – niemoralny, nieetyczny, oszust (P)*

52. *learning disabled/mentally challenged – mentally handicapped (E) : inteligentny inaczej – głupi (P)*

53. *hair disadvantaged, follicularly challenged/comb free – bald (E) : niepotrzebujący fryzjera, łysy (P)*

54. *alternatively schooled – uneducated (E) : analfabeta – niewykształcony (P)*

55. *alternative dentation – false teeth (E) : sztuczna szczęka (P)*

56. *aurally invonvenienced/hard-of hearing – deaf (E) : niedosłyszący, mający problemy ze słuchem – głuchy (P)*

57. *chemically inconvenienced – drunk, drug addict (E) : uzależniony, w stanie nieważkości, nadużywający – narkoman, ćpun, pijak, pijanica (P)*

58. *chronologically gifted/experientially enhanced, elderly, senior citizen – old (E) : starszy człowiek, w podeszłym wieku, senior – stary (P)*

59. *charm-free – boring (E) : na swój sposób interesujący – nudny (P)*

60. *economically exploited/marginalized – poor (E) : borykający się z problemami finansowymi, należący do I-szej grupy podatkowej – biedny (P)*

61. *motivationally dispossessed/deficient – lazy (E) : nazbyt ceniący wypoczynek – leniwy (P)*

62. *sobriety deprived/spatially perplexed – drunk (E) : pijany – w stanie nieważkości (P)*

63. *cosmetically challenged – ugly (E) : piękny inaczej, o ciekawej urodzie, na swój sposób piękny, mało przystojny – brzydki (P)*

64. *in an orderly transition between career changes – unemployed (E) : poszukujący pracy, bezrobotny (P)*

Many new terms can be accepted without reserve insofar as they teach that what is different is neither worse nor dangerous. However, and this is especially conspicuous in Polish, there are expressions, e.g. *inteligentny inaczej* or *na swój sposób interesujący* which sound funny. They are full of irony and they often function as jokes or puns as the politically correct title of Hemingway's novel "A senior person and the sea". Instead of protecting the less advantageous in our society the politically correct language often stigmatises them and stresses that they are different. This is the opinion of Noel Nightingale, a member of the Board of Directors of the National Association of Blind Lawyers and First Vice-President of the NFB of Washington, a person who is deeply interested in using the language which is free from unjust and painful judgements. She posits that although many new euphemisms have been created to change the unfavourable opinions about disabled people, their social effect is far from satisfactory. The new words lack substance because they cannot change human attitudes and deep-grained beliefs about inferiority of the disabled. She says that it is not enough "to dress up society's vocabulary but to change society's beliefs about how blindness [and other disabilities] affects (and does not affect) people's abilities" (Nightingale 1999:2). And she continues: "we [the blind] accept the label of "blind" because we know that blindness is just one of our characteristics and nothing about it is inherently demeaning" (Nightingale 1999:1). PC has turned out to be a hollow philosophy which when tested crumbles to dust.

The language of Political Correctness also rises questions of ethical nature. The euphemisms that call a dishonest person *morally different* or *ethically disoriented* suggest a different set of values with which his/her deeds are to be evaluated. At the same time ethical relativism seems to be approved of. It should be remembered that the consequences of mere linguistic change are not limited to the language itself. They affect the real world and its order. The danger is that the idea of tolerance which is basic for PC may result in a reversed value system and moral code which will question the norms of social existence. Euphemisms often reduce the weight of an act which they name. In Polish *aborcja* and *skrobanka* can be taken for synonyms, but the second expresses the brutality of the act and calls for compensatory action while the first is an emotionally detached term, elegant and neutral. Less drastic examples of politically correct euphemisms are given in examples 65-66, where the critical evaluation is softened because a negative term is clustered with a positive one.

65. *least best – the worst (this is how UPS evaluates its worst drivers)*
66. *incomplete success – failure (Jimmy Carter used this term to describe an attempt to free American hostages in Iran in 1980)*

Surprisingly, the language of Political Correctness contains many words that are aggressive and brutal. They are to shock the speaker and the listener to draw their attention to many manifestation of cruelty in the world (ex. 67 –72). If this technique is right and efficient to make people more sensitive is a matter of discussion because an aggressive language usually "creates" equally aggressive speakers.

67. *Cattle Concentration Camp – cattle range*
68. *Bambi butcher, meat mercenary – hunter*
69. *Seared Mutilated Animal Flesh (SMAF) – Hamburger*
70. *Adding Insult to Injury – Cheeseburger*
71. *Charnel House – Delicatessen*
72. *Economic Oppression Zone (EO, Economic Development Zone, Empowerment Zone – slums*

3. Concluding remarks

Since its very beginning Political Correctness has been a controversial ideology and both positive and negative opinions about this socio-cultural and politico-economic movement continue. Many of its ideas grounded in the philosophy of tolerance and dialogue in the multicultural world have been lost and PC has become itself an ideology of oppression which stigmatises those who are not PC. It is not uncommon to associate it with intolerance, indifference or mental slavery from the fear of being socially ostracised. For many it has become a synonym of censorship of free speech, and of objective and independent academic research. Zieliński (1991) claims that the ideology of PC depicts the world which does not exist and hence the conflict and tyranny of PC which struggles aggressively for survival. In the opinion of Szacki (1998:24) *PC is a form of conformity, not in the traditional but modern meaning, it is the social radicalism which reached absurdity and even much further*.

As for the language of PC it has rather failed to fulfil the mission. Most of the PC terms do not serve the oppressed groups well because they single them out from the mainstream of the society and make them become a target of jokes. Many newly created words are funny and the concept they stand for cannot be taken seriously. Moreover, the minority members are *encouraged to think of themselves as victims, not as self-fashioning individuals* (Berstein 1990:4). Contrary to their definition, many PC expressions are not politically correct. *Moo-shwitz* or *Cattle Concentration Camp* (CCC) which stand for a cattle range is the illustration of the point. For anybody who has ever read about the tragedy of concentration camp prisoners this term is an unpardonable offence which needs no comment.

To finish more lightly, I would like to suggest reading a politically correct version of the old fairy tale of Cinderella (Nauton 1994:222). Will it really make our children more open to differences and ready to oppose injustice?

AN ALTERNATIVE CINDERELLA
Once upon a time there were three sisters who lived with their widowed father. The two eldest ran a beauty parlour and a clothes shop. They were both interested in finding a rich husband. The youngest daughter, whose name was Cinderella, looked after the house. Her father had refused to set her up in business as he wanted someone to look after him. Cinderella did not mind too much as she was doing a correspondence course in accountancy and marketing.

One day Cinderella decided to enter a competition in a woman's magazine because it offered some good cash prizes. If she won one of them, it would help her finance the setting up of her own hamburger restaurant.

Around that time the newspapers were full of stories about a big party that was going to be held at the palace. It was said that the Prince, a real playboy, wanted to find a wife and settle down. From the moment they heard about the ball, the two elder sisters spent days and days trying to make themselves look beautiful. As for Cinderella, she wondered what all that fuss was all about and didn't have the slightest interest in going to the ball.

One morning, while she was doing some work for her accountancy course, there was a knock at the door. She opened it and saw an extraordinary woman standing there with

a ridiculous-looking tiara on her head. The woman who called herself Fairy God-mother, or FG for short, told Cinderella that she'd won first prize in the magazine competition she's entered.

The prize was a 'charm course' worth hundreds of pounds, as well as books and records. Cinderella wasn't really that keen on doing the course but she realised that she could probably make a small profit if she sold the prizes. However, in return for the prizes she would have to dress up in lots of fine clothes and be driven to the palace where she'd spend the night at the ball and be photographed for the woman's magazine.

The big day arrived and a shiny Rolls Royce came to pick her up. The man from the car hire firm said he was only on duty until midnight. Moments later a woman arrived bringing a fur coat and a diamond necklace which would be Cinderella's just for the evening. When she turned up at the palace, she noticed that one of the servants was stealing food from the buffet tables. The palace itself was cold and draughty and the king himself was a man with a sad smile. Cinderella felt sorry for the man and told him why the food was disappearing so fast. The king then told her about his financial prob-lems. He was almost bankrupt and he had organised then party in the hope that he might find a millionaire's daughter for his son. Cinderella suggested lots of ways of making money: re-organising the kitchens, opening the palace to the public and so on.

By this time it had turned midnight. The car hire man drove away and the woman came to collect her fur coat and necklace. The king showed Cinderella around then palace and they eventually came back to the ballroom where the party was still going on. The prince, who by this time was completely drunk, took one look at Cinderella and asked her to dance. She kicked off her glass slippers, which were killing her, and joined him on the dance floor. Soon afterwards, she left the palace and hitchhiked home.

The following day the newspapers were full of the big story about the prince who had fallen for a beautiful and mysterious woman who had disappeared. Her glass slip-pers, which she had left behind, were the only clues that would lead him to her. When Cinderella read the news, she was absolutely furious. Nevertheless, she saw quite a bit of the prince because she started work at the palace as financial adviser. In no time at all the palace was making a profit again. Naturally, Cinderella refused to marry the prince but she did help him cut down on his drinking and involved him in useful social work in the community.

Bibliography

"ISI anounces the 'Pollys'. The top five politically correct campus Outrages" (1999). http://www.isi.org/whatsnew/outrage.asp

Annette Bening speaks out on Jarem Sakren, ASU, Political Correctness – and the impor-tance of being Shakespeare (1998). *Campus: America's Student Newspaper*, Fall is-sue, Intercollegiate Studies Institute, pp. 2-5.

Beard, Henry i Christopher Cerf. (1992). *The offcially politically correct dictionary and handbook*.

Berstein R. (1990). The rising hegemony of the politically correct. *The New York Times*, 28 October, IV, 1,4.

D'Souza D. (1991). *Illiberal education: the politics of race and sex on campus*. New York: Free State Press.

Epstein R. (1992). *Forbidden grounds: the case against employment discrimination laws*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.

Hollinger R. (1994). *Postmodernism and the social sciences: A thematic approach*. Thousand Oaks, Cal.: Sage Publications.

Kamiya G. (1995). *The San Francisco Examiner*, Magazine Section, 22 January.

Nauton J. (1994). *Think First Certificate*. London: Longman Group, UK, p. 222.

Nightingale N. (1998). The hollow nature of Political Correctness. http://www.nfb.org/bm980511.html

Oxford Wordpower (1997). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

PC: Ontario Women's Directorate: "Words that count women in". (1995). http://www.vix.com/pub/men/pc/extracts/ontario.html

Schwartz H.S. (1999). Narcistic emotion and university administration: an analysis of "political correctness". *Internet*, 1-16.

Shweder R. (1991). The crime of the white maleness. *New York Times*, 18 August, 4:15.

Smith, Steve i Antoinette Jordan. (1992). What the Papers Say and Don't Say about Disability. In: H. Beard, C. Cerf, *The Officially Politically Correct Dictionary and Handbook*.

Szacki J. (1998). Więźniowie wyobraźni. *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 21-2 February, pp. 24-25.

The Random House Webster's College Dictionary. A Woman's New World Dictionary

Weir L. (1995). PC then and now: Resignifying political correctness. In: S. Richer, L. Weir (eds.), *Political Correctness: Toward the Inclusive University*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, pp. 55-82.

Woodward C.V. (1991). Equal but separate views of the discriminating of America. A review of the Disuniting of America by Arthur M. Schlesinger. *The New Republic*, 15 & 22 July 1991, pp. 41-43.

Zieliński M. (1991). The PC attack: Conference takes on right-wing challenge to university reform. *Ann Arbor News,* 13 November, D 1.2.