Politically Correct Terms In The Jakarta Post

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to find out the types of political correctness used in The Jakarta Post's news website. The design of the study was qualitative approach. The sample of this study was eleven news articles taken from March to May 2021. Political correctness categorizations were taken from the works of John (2017), Andary-Brophy (2015), and Monashnenko, Amelina, and Shynkaruk (2021). The finding was that The Jakarta Post used: eight PC-Liberalism and three PC-Authoritarianism types; two politeness, one accuracy, three academic, and five conformity variants; and seven euphemisms of discrimination, one euphemism of unpleasant reality, and three euphemisms of people's lives. The data analysis result exhibited that The Jakarta Post mainly used political correctness for conformity, adhering to the practices of liberalism, and avoiding terms that may be discriminatory. The goal of the study was to provide a better understanding and description of political correctness as well as a model for English language education department students to do further comparable research.

Keywords: Political Correctness, The Jakarta Post, News, Website, Sociolinguistics

1. Introduction

Language and politics have been an inseparable couple (Andresen and Carter, 2016), even more so in the modern days, especially so as the western political environment is in their gradual shift to the left (Krause, 2019). is the attempt to apologize for the past age heinousness through the softening of the language by making it not offensive to the minorities or the disadvantaged is commonly known as political correctness (Moller, 2019).

One of the circumstances that contributes to the retirement of words from modern usage is political correctness (Galef, 2014) and euphemisms are a distinctive characteristic in the constructions of modern politically correct language (Balcazar, 2019). Euphemism is a restraint from using words that are inappropriate through softened expressions, that is by replacing words that are rough or harsh with softer ones (Monashnenko, Amelina, and Shynkaruk, 2021). In avoiding languages that can lead discrimination toward the addressee in terms of age, gender, physical condition, social status, race, and cultural affiliation, politically correct vocabulary consists of euphemisms that help avoid negative evaluative prospects of expression.

Political correctness is very well a part of the umbrella of sociolinguistics. This is because political correctness is a set of conducts on using language formed through the sociocultural and ideological factors that appear within a democratic society by

maintaining the concepts of equality and respect in public communication (Malygina and Ivanova, 2021).

Samples of such politically correct phrases are: using "BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color)" as opposed to only "people of color", "people with disabilities" rather than "disabled", "intellectual disability" not "retardation". According to (Pérez, 2020), not everyone liked the label of "people of color" because it was too simplifying the complexities and flattening the differences of the referenced people. For the usage of "people with disabilities" over "disabled", the latter carried a sense of inappropriateness, dehumanizing, and tied to negative stereotype as an insult word (Barbour, 2020). By using "intellectual disability" instead of "retardation", we are not using derogatory words that may insult people.

English is an ever-popular and widely regarded as an international language, outlets using English in their news publication will surely reach out better (Melitz, 2016). News also goes hand in hand with politics. Within Indonesia, the topic is not as quite proliferated in public perception. The Jakarta Post is an Indonesian-based independent news publication that has its own active online website. For the researcher, The Jakarta Post is a perfect choice in knowing the existence of political correctness in Indonesian media.

Considering the background of the study above, the researcher formulated the research question as follows:

1. What types of politically correct terms are used in The Jakarta Post's online news website?

This study will attempt to determine the types of political correctness used in The Jakarta Post's online news website.

2. Literature Review

History of Political Correctness

The term political correctness was already being used as far as the pre-World War II era. For example, on the year of 1934 when Nazi Germany used it to refer to pure Aryans that had opinions deemed as politically correct; they then were given the reporting permits as a journalist, while the rights of German Jews were squashed down and their livelihood controlled (Bump, 2015).

It is also used by the right-wing authoritarian. The left-wing authoritarian had also used the term to refer toward a set of attitudes similarly described. Ellis (2002) argued that one of the Marxism-Leninism important criteria, partiinost'. It was developed to cultivate the hive-mind-like thinking of same-mindedness commonalities of becoming the member of the same party and to entrench a more involved us-vs-them mentality through the division of "truth" relativism. This was then known as the soznanie. The term then evolved and mutated once more to politicheskaya pravil'nost', or as we commonly use it in English: political correctness.

During the 1980s the term was then used in the United States to connote the term political correctness to "some groups ... attempt to stifle the rights, positions, and speech of other groups" that we know today.

Definition of Political Correctness

Moller (2019) describes political correctness as:

... the attempt to establish norms of speech (or sometimes behavior) that are thought to (a) protect vulnerable, marginalized or historically victimized groups, and which (b) function by shaping public discourse, often by inhibiting speech or other forms of social signaling, and that (c) are supposed to avoid insult and outrage, a lowered sense of self-esteem, or otherwise offending the sensibilities of such groups or their allies.

Political correctness is used to intentionally avoid phrases or words that can offend or marginalized groups that are identified by particular social characteristics, such as race, gender, sexual orientation, or ability. Aside from not using clearly offensive wordings such as overt slurs, it also includes not using terms that reinforce preconceived negative stereotypes (Longley, 2019).

Rather than having a predetermined sets of "how to" in using politically correct language or a clear-cut way in defining whether a particular instance of speech is politically correct or otherwise, political correctness can be thought easily as a way to change old, prejudiced words to new, more neutral words.

In relations to the issue of political correctness and sociolinguistics, Malygina and Ivanova (2021) described that the formation of political correctness as a special language is directly related to language norms, taboos, and speech conventions that happen in society.

Types of Political Correctness

This research will use the works from John (2017), Andary-Brophy (2015), and Monashnenko, Amelina, and Shynkaruk (2021) to distinguish the types of political correctness.

John (2017) described the variants of political correctness, as follows.
1. Politeness: people seeking more polite words instead of those with negative connotations.
2. Accuracy: not using terms that have unintended meanings attached to them, by seeking other accurate ones or inventing new ones altogether.
3. Academic: using terms that particular "academic" circles use but with limited recognition or even without the referred community's widespread use or approval.
4. Conformity: using too general, broad, non-specific, and emotional terms out of fear of being criticized.
5. Political: manoeuvring the language and terms being used as not as valid anymore or even wholly incorrect to defeat political opposition.
6. Anti-Humor: zealously adopting the correct terms without flexibility and without putting the terms deemed as incorrect into contexts such as humorous, art, cultural, self-expression, and historical.
7. Restriction to Freedom of Speech: institutionalizing political correctness by making sanctions, thus significantly restricting the freedom of speech.

Andary-Brophy (2015) on the other hand gives us two pointers to the types of political correctness. Zimmerman (2016) also came to a similar conclusion, dividing the term into two kinds. Those two types of political correctness are as follows.

1. PC-Liberalism: the attempts to change language usage so that it does not demean others, provides decency, and discriminates against disadvantaged groups.

2. PC-Authoritarianism: the attempts to put a set of restraints to the language by inhibiting dialogue through imposing the hierarchically "correct" political view on others.

Monashnenko, Amelina, and Shynkaruk (2021) laid the classifications of euphemisms as a technology of political correctness, as follows.

1. Euphemisms associated with groups of people that exposes discrimination
2. Euphemisms denoting terrible and unpleasant phenomena of reality
3. Euphemisms associated with the influence of the state on people's lives
4. Euphemisms denoting appearance and age of the person
5. Euphemisms, indicating human impact on flora and fauna
6. Humorous euphemisms (parodies of political correctness)

The Jakarta Post

The Jakarta Post is an English-language newspaper published daily in Indonesia. It is one, if not the most, popular English-based Indonesian news reporting. PT Niskala Media Tenggara owns the paper. It is based in the capital of Indonesia, Jakarta.

This unfavorable reporting in vilifying one side was an opposition to the opposition, a sign that perhaps The Jakarta Post is leftist in their spirit.

3. Methods

This research is designed as qualitative research. Creswell and Poth (2018) stated that qualitative research uses an interpretative and/or theoretical framework that informs the study addressing social or human problems.

The data source for the study is The Jakarta Post website, with the URL of https://www.thejakartapost.com/news. The data of this research are the online news stories of the site from the month of March to May the year of 2021.

Instrument

The researcher is the primary instrument within the qualitative research context (Ravitch and Carl, 2016). The researcher's subjectivity, social location/identity, positionality, and meaning-making shape the research's processes and methods.

Helping the researcher is the use of the data note or sheet as another important instrument. The data sheet can help the researcher in managing whether a piece of particular news as published contained instances of political correctness

4. Result

The researcher highlighted eleven political correctness occurrences after the process of identifying and then categorizing them into a collective table. The researcher used three categorization theories of political correctness (PC) classifications from Andary-Brophy (2015), John (2017), and Monashnenko, Amelina, and Shynkaruk (2021).

1. PC-Liberalism appeared in eight instances; PC-Authoritarianism appeared in only three instances.

2. Politeness appeared two times; accuracy appeared one time only; academic appeared in three instances; conformity appeared in five instances; political, anti-humor, and restrictions to freedom of speech did not appear.

3. Euphemisms associated with the groups of people that exposes discrimination occurred seven times; euphemisms denoting terrible and unpleasant phenomena of reality occurred one time; euphemisms associated with the influence of the state on people's lives occurred three times; euphemisms denoting appearance and age of the person, euphemisms indicating human impact on flora and fauna, and humorous euphemisms which parody political correctness did not occur at all.

5. Discussion

Andary-Brophy (2015)'s Theory

The Jakarta Post thus seems to care in making their articles using softened and inoffensive terms to refer to marginalized groups, hence it favoring the PC-Liberalism spectrum. Other article types tended to inject politically biased wordings indicating PC-Authoritarianism choices, but the amount was substantially lower than the former category.

John (2017)'s Theory

The Jakarta Post news were largely motivated behind the need to conform to proscribed leftist ideals, followed by trailing leftist academic terms that did not see widespread use, followed by making polite choice of phrases and words, and finally to appear accurate. This has the implication that The Jakarta Post was concerned on making their articles appear to conform to the most general words possible to avoid poking at sensitive issues on certain groups. This approach is legitimate to take for a notable news agency as one wants the least controversial take on their business.

As for the ones that are not found in the theory of John (2017), which are political, anti-humor, and restrictions to the freedom of speech, the researcher concluded that there is a possible explanation of why they are not discovered within the corpus of The Jakarta Post website during the data collection range. For the political variant, The Jakarta Post, at least during the predetermined range, did not participate in outright appeal and opposition to certain political affiliations that were using politically incorrect and thus "wrong" language. For the anti-humor variant, The Jakarta Post also did not show inflexibility of using outdated, politically incorrect lexical choices in the context of humor, art, culture, entertainment, self-expression, historical, and debate purposes. For the variant of restrictions to the freedom of speech, The Jakarta Post did not engage in a cancel culture movement against a certain individual at the moment of the data collection. The reasoning behind not using political and restrictions to the freedom of speech variant showed that The Jakarta Post appeared to be professional in their reporting. They did not attack figures who may show different views than them, doing their best in keeping their articles objective.

Monashnenko, Amelina, and Shynkaruk (2021)'s Theory

This finding showed that The Jakarta Post concerned with softening or replacing words associated with a certain sensitive topic to more neutral alternatives (in order of most importance): phrases that may discriminate marginalized groups, then that may offend a person's life condition, and lastly realities that are unpleasant for most people. This means that The Jakarta Post vastly cared for a polite discourse in referring to the less advantaged groups and a person's livelihood by choosing word choices that are as neutral as possible. Words related to unpleasant events covered by them sometimes were also softened to make it more accessible for casual readers.

The rest of the euphemism types described by Monashnenko, Amelina, and Shynkaruk (2021), such as euphemisms denoting appearance and age of the person, euphemisms indicating human impact on flora and fauna, and humorous euphemisms which parody political correctness, did not appear within the body of the news items presented by The Jakarta Post within the period of data collecting. There is an explanation for such non-occurrence. For euphemisms denoting appearance and age of the person, The Jakarta Post did not make any reference to portraying or softening the notions of ageism (that is discrimination and prejudice based on a person's age) and negative body image. For euphemisms indicating human impact on flora and fauna, The Jakarta Post did not publish news that discuss climate which softened or undermined the reality of nature's destruction by human hands. For humorous euphemisms which parody political correctness, The Jakarta Post had consistently put a serious tone in their news publication which leave humors out in their reporting and thus prioritized professionality.

Out of the reasons for why The Jakarta Post did not use a certain type of political correctness, the researcher concluded that the reasoning behind it might be that The Jakarta Post choose to be professional, for example by leaving out bickering on partisanship and not using humorous expressions on formal news reports. The other reason is leaned toward chance: during the time the researcher collected the data, they just did not publish news revolving around the said themes of political correctness.

Meanings
1. Extortion vs. blackmail: this choice stemmed from the fact in English, there are pretty decent number of words that connotated the word "black" as bad, coming from the historical and obviously obsolete and mistaken view of black people of African descent possessing bad qualities. To abstain to continue using the badly attached word, The Jakarta Post used "extortion" within the lexical repertoire of the article.
2. Impaired hearing vs. deaf: this lexical choice came from the realization that common words for disability were sadly oftentimes used for name-calling and insults. To avoid the fact, The Jakarta Post used the neutral, despite obfuscated, phrase instead.
3. People with disabilities vs. disabled: same as the case above, this is done to promote more neutral words as the later word "disabled" can be taken as offensive and derogatory.
4. People of color vs. specific color racial term: this move encourages the phasing out of using colors as racially biased language in conversation as there was a history of racism behind this naming sense, whereas "white" oftentimes denote purity and

objectively good things compared to other colors such as "black", "brown", or "yellow".

5. Drug dependence vs. drug addict: this choice sought to be polite when referring to a certain disadvantaged group by not outright demonizing and criminalizing them using sensitive words such as "addict" or "junkie".

6. Marginalized vs. poor: the later word has been used as name calling and insults. By avoiding this attached bad connotation, the choice for a more neutral word is respectable effort.

7. Domestic helpers vs. maid: this word choice originated from the outdated and sexist notion that people doing this profession were only women, as the word "maid" also means as "an unmarried girl (especially a virgin)" according to the WordWeb (2021) digital dictionary, thus enhancing and amplifying the stereotype that women had limited job choice unlike men. By selecting a gender-neutral phrase, it sought to exemplify egalitarianism and fairness and social justice.

8. Bottom of economic ladder vs. poor: With the same consideration as an above item, this choice is done to circumvent a badly connotated word for a more neutral one, hence it is using a quite roundabout wording.

9. Chairperson vs. chairwoman: this lexical choice is biased with the leftist ideology maxim that sought to erase gender coded terms altogether to achieve uniformity as opposed to diversity.

10. Gender-reassignment vs. sex change: this word choice is biased with leftist ideology that may clash against other community's beliefs and by making the said phrase put on a notable news website clearly showed The Jakarta Post's position to reinforce and forced their dogma on their readers.

11. Partner vs. specific relationship noun: their choice seemed to take root because of the company's bias with appeasement of LGBT community and the need for conformity to a world with genderless markers in language, which is a non-issue to begin with in the local sphere

6. Conclusion

Based on the explanations and discussions from previous chapters, it can be concluded that political correctness is a set of practices of using certain words in a language so that it does not offend others. Political correctness is used in the news, movies, and common people's forums like social media and day to day conversations either formal or informal. Using it is considered socially important in western countries especially in the left-wing prominent discourses.

The object of this research is The Jakarta Post news website. The range of collected data is from the month of March until the month of May of the year 2021. There were eleven noteworthy news articles put out by them during the period that contained examples of politically correct terms.

The objective of the politically correct phrases as used by The Jakarta Post company within their news website fits with why the political correctness came into being itself, that is to be seen as not trying to offend people based on the left-wing perspective. The Jakarta Post

puts this lexical choice and style mainly for three important reasons. The first is to not using any terms that may offend a certain group that is usually viewed as disadvantaged. The second reason is to follow to the company's left-wing leaning ideology by ensuring conformity and fair social (and linguistically) representation. The final reasoning is that The Jakarta Post wants to ensure that their publications do not contain words and/or phrases that may discriminate or enhance the stereotypes of discrimination. These motives are derived from the largest categories of politically correct terms they use within their news articles.

Suggestion

According to the conclusions, the researcher understands that politically correct terms are used to avoid offending the sensibilities of the people in accordance with the leftist ideologies and it occurred within news media such as local ones, that is within The Jakarta Post. In order to seek further understanding and information about politically correct terms, the researcher formulates suggestions as follows:

1. For the students, the result of this research can become a reference in understanding how politically correct terms find themselves within the local English media.
2. For the lecturers, this result of the research can be used as reference to enhance the courses of sociolinguistics and pragmatics and applying politically correct terms in some circumstances.
3. For the future researchers, the result of this study can be used as a consideration for those who want to conduct deeper research related to this topic. They can improve the subject by giving attention to politically incorrect terms. The future researcher can conduct further study by using different methods, approach, or instruments

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