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## THE SEMANTIC PECULIARITIES OF THE POLITICAL CORRECTNESS PRINCIPLE IN PRESENT-DAY ENGLISH

**Summary.** The article, based on the material of Thomas Stoppard's trilogy "Utopia Island", clarifies the semantic features of the principle of political correctness in modern English. Attention is focused on the nature of the interaction and coexistence of ethnic groups within a certain country, in particular Great Britain, where numerous ethnic clashes, confrontations, and misunderstandings are a manifestation of xenophobia in relation to 'alien' ethnic groups. The authors explore the reasons for the hostility of 'one's own' as an exclusively higher status people to solving the problems of another 'alien' people, which leads to xenophobia – one of the types of ethnic identity. Awareness and recognition of the existing confrontation between the ethnic majority of British origin and representatives of ethnic minorities is the first step towards solving the problem and overcoming racial and ethnic discrimination. Condemnation and attempts to avoid manifestations of xenophobia are manifested in a change in the attitude of society, government officials and politicians to issues of ethnic minorities and intercultural relations, which force them to build relationships with representatives of other nations on new foundations and principles.

The analysis highlights that the concept of so-called political correctness applies not only to political discourse, but also affects the choice of appropriate linguistic units to designate people with physical disabilities, the elderly, when discussing the problems of ethnic minorities.

The idea is postulated that a tolerant attitude to the problems of ethnic minorities, recognition of equal rights of women with men in society, observance of etiquette during communication and observance of personal space as an important non-verbal component of British culture are the main factors in the implementation of the principle of political correctness. The British are too restrained in relation to physical contact during communication and tolerant attitude towards other people's judgments, beliefs, traditions and forms of behavior is one of the fundamental signs of civilization at the level of political intercultural relations.

**Key words:** semantics, pragmatics, mentality, stereotype, xenophobe, ethnonomination, ethnonim.

**Introduction.** In cognitive linguistics, pragmatics and ethno-linguistics, the term stereotype refers exclusively to the content part of language and culture, that is, it is understood as a mental stereotype and correlates with the picture of the world [1, p. 131].

From a socio-psychological point of view, stereotypes act as general cognitive schemes aimed at understanding social reality [2, p. 68–69]. A positive assessment of a fact, action or phenomenon gives the described object a characteristic of 'one's own' and is perceived by society as a norm, ideal, as its cultural heritage. What is evaluated negatively belongs to the class of 'alien'. Thus, everything that is evaluated positively is a characteristic of 'one's own' and is taken as a rule; everything that is evaluated negatively is described as 'alien', and therefore undergoes rejection. These are the extralinguistic factors (political, socio-economic situation) that determine what form the contact between two nations will take: conflict or dialogue [1, p. 74; 2, p. 163–165].

Conceptual study of the semantics, pragmatics and functioning of ethnonymic vocabulary allows us to identify naive ideas of native speakers about representatives of 'alien' ethnic groups, which are recorded in the nominative system of the language. National stereotypes are one of the inherent characteristics of any nation [2, p. 121–126]. Identification of 'alien' ethnic groups and their representatives by means of modern English has been studied mainly in terms of their semantics, pragmatics and their relevance to the corresponding sphere of use [2, p. 104–105].

**Analysis of recent research and publications.** In modern linguistics, there is an increasing interest to the study of interethnic and intercultural relations and communication between people, one of the essential characteristics of which is ethnic identity (works by P. Brown and S. Levinson, T.A. van Dijk and W. Kintch, G. Fauconnier and M. Turner, G. Leech, A. Miall, F. Smith and G. Miller, A. Wierzbicka, etc.) [2; 3; 4; 5; 6; 7; 8; 9].

The study of the national linguistic picture of the world helps to reveal the peculiarities of the perception of the surrounding reality and its reproduction by the ethnocultural community. Each ethnic group views the world through the prism of its mentality. The lexical system reflects the subjective image of objective reality, understood by ethnic consciousness [9, p. 77–78]. Therefore, the linguistic reflection of objective reality is associated with an ethnically determined perspective on the world.

The subjective nature of interethnic communication is manifested in the existence of ethnic prejudices and stereotypical attitudes towards representatives of 'alien' ethnic communities. National stereotypes and auto stereotypes are one of the inherent

characteristics of any nation [9, p. 111–113]. A typological comparison of nominative models of the creation of official and colloquial names of ‘alien’ peoples was carried out on the material of the English and Ukrainian languages and on the material of English, Ukrainian, French, Polish languages [9, p. 131–137].

The designation of ‘foreign’ ethnic groups and their representatives by means of the British variant of modern English was studied mainly in terms of their pragmatics and semantics by A. Wierzbicka and in terms of their relation to the corresponding sphere of use by A. Miall [6, p. 59–61; 8, p. 55]. The complex of ethnic stereotypes that exists in a person’s cognition of the surrounding world and is fixed by ethnonominations creates a kind of ethnocultural image of a multinational world that affects the organization of interethnic communication: the choice of appropriate nominative units and the strategic deployment of communication.

**The purpose of the article** is to analyze the semantic features of the principle of political correctness and the influence of xenophobia on the functioning of official and unofficial ethnonominations in modern English-speaking society based on the material of Thomas Stoppard’s trilogy “Utopia Island”.

**Presentation of the main material.** Interpersonal communication is not limited to the exchange of information. Participants in communication seek to reconstruct in their minds the inner world of each other, to understand feelings, motives of behavior, and attitudes towards significant objects. A significant role in this is played by stereotypes that regulate the process of communication. The concept of stereotype has recently been widely used in cultural studies, ethnology, sociology, psychology, literary studies, and linguistics, receiving various interpretations [9, p. 173–175].

Stereotyping is a deep process in the form of which a person structures the world in thinking and simultaneously verbalizes this world. A linguistic sign connects an object with a system of socially determined meanings, that is, with the content of the entire collective experience. Developing under different natural and social conditions, different peoples have accumulated a certain diversity of characters, types of thinking, and forms of behavior. However, it is worth considering the relativity of any ethnic characteristics, since stereotypes do not have a universal character and stability [8, p. 134–135; 9, p. 67–68]. Accordingly, ethnic stereotypes are situationally and historically conditioned. They can change and disappear depending on the changes taking place in the life of the people, or due to the expansion of contacts between peoples. A significant role in the linguistic picture of the world is played by orientation according to national characteristics, which is most expressed for an outside observer as prejudice. This is most acutely realized in interethnic communication [10, p. 57–59]. An important feature of national perception is the fundamental antinomy of any national trait, which can relate to diametrically opposed poles of assessment. In the assessment of a national stereotype from the inside, the same embellishment is observed that is manifested in the individual’s assessment of his own properties. Conversely, in the assessment from the outside, that is, the assessment of other nationalities, some exaggeration in the negative sense is felt. The focus of the perception of national belonging can be concentrated on a contemptuous attitude towards individuals of another community [9, p. 107–109; 10, p. 167–169]. A stereotype becomes a projection onto the world of our own values, social status

and rights [9, p. 145–148; 10, p. 68–69]. Stereotypes are filled with preferences, sympathies and antipathies [10, p. 147–151]. Thus, stereotypes are oversaturated with the feelings that we attribute to them. The processes of speech and thinking express not only knowledge, but also our attitude towards them, and one of these aspects is predominant.

The social function of a stereotype is expressed in the distinction between ‘intragroup’ and ‘outgroup’. It leads to social categorization, to the formation of social structures that are actively oriented in everyday life. The emergence of a stereotype is ensured by the frequent appearance of certain objects and phenomena under similar conditions, which leads to the formation of stable ideas based on familiar analogies [10, p. 189–191]. The frequency of the appearance of a certain signal in such situations determines a stable associative connection between the corresponding concept and the schematized stereotypical idea of the specified situations. It is the presence of stereotypes as a result of repeated emotional accents that cause a stable attitude of the subject to the facts and phenomena of the real world, which is the basis of associative thinking of a person. The mechanism of associative reactions is based on the actualization of stereotypes in the consciousness of the individual [10, p. 68].

The phenomenon of stereotyping is associated with the generalizing nature of human thinking, the need for a constant movement of thought from individual, specific cases to their unification, from a fact to a general rule and in the opposite direction to this very fact. From a formal-logical point of view, stereotyping is one of the varieties of cognitive operations [4, p. 115–121].

Stereotypical ideas about *russia* are realized in the discourse presented by Thomas Stoppard. Thus, the set of stereotypes about *russia* is as follows: *russia is a wild and alien country, wild and alien russia, a lot of negative experience and lies in the country; russia is a large corrupt country: large Russia, corruption and inflation predominate ...* [11, p. 139], *russian character is unpredictable: ... revolutionary instinct of the people* [11, p. 268]. *russians are nationalists. ... russians, belonging neither to the East nor West* [11, p. 80].

The development of modern civilization is marked by multiculturalism, a tendency towards the coexistence of different ethnic groups and cultures. In modern theory of multiculturalism, the national is thought of as a part of the universal, which opposes ethnocentrism and ethno-nationalism. Within the framework of multiculturalism, the national acts as an independent factor. The national is realized as one of the forms of the universal, and the universal, in turn, can be embodied only in specific national forms [8, p. 18–24]. The perception of other peoples, based on inadequate or negative, inexhaustible information, is biased and leads to xenophobia and determines the corresponding speech behavior of the English in interethnic interaction. The ethnic prejudices present in English society are manifested in the use of numerous unofficial pejorative nicknames of foreigners and affect the choice of communicative strategies and speech tactics during interethnic interaction [9, p. 28–31]. Despite the requirements of the principle of political correctness and tolerance towards ethnic minorities, the field of xenophobia in modern English is significant and has repeatedly become the subject of special linguistic research on the material of the British variant, and more often – on the material of the American variant of English.

The concept of xenophobia is an ‘invention’ of the 20th

century, but the emotions and feelings associated with it are as old as humanity. The reason for the dislike of foreigners, the illogical fear of them is simple: they are foreigners, not like 'us'. For many people, this is enough to feel wary, prejudiced, and afraid of the unknown (and therefore dangerous). Xenophobia is defined as extreme dislike or fear of foreigners, their customs, their religion, etc. [12, p. 1694]). The term xenophobia is used in psychiatry, where it denotes an obsessive fear of foreigners, strangers [6, p. 27], which confirms the importance and necessity of comprehensive research of this phenomenon within the framework of various sciences. Negative perception of foreigners or people of another nationality can be accompanied not only by hostility, fear of them. An open hatred of foreigners or unknown people becomes a manifestation of xenophobia; xenophobia – hatred or fear of foreigners or strangers or of their politics or cultures [12, p. 1775].

Xenophobia – hostility or hostility towards foreigners – is mostly accompanied by established stereotypes regarding certain ethnic groups. If in the 19th century a positive or negative attitude towards foreigners was limited rather to the perception and assessment of objects of material culture (xenophobe – a person who hates or fears foreigners or strangers [12, p. 1775]), then for the 21st century the spiritual and social spheres acquire greater importance in the sphere of interethnic relations. Such terms as Anglophobia [12, p. 17], Americanophobia [12, p. 16], Australophobia [12, p. 31] denote not only an obsessive irrational fear of representatives of the respective peoples, but also rejection and fear of their culture. Such a shift in emphasis, the separation of the culture of a certain people as a separate factor that can cause phobic states, which indicates, on the one hand, interest and awareness, accessibility of information about the culture and traditions of other peoples, but, on the other hand, a still intolerant, hostile attitude towards unusual, alien communities and their cultures (hatred or fear of foreigners or strangers or of their politics or cultures [12, p. 1775]). To eradicate xenophobia in society, it is necessary to form a positive, tolerant attitude not only towards people of a different race, ethnicity with physiological characteristics, but also towards their culture, way of life and national identity.

The principle of tolerance is defined as the desire to expand one's own cultural experience and dialogue [13, p. 68–69]. A friendly attitude not only towards one's own people, but also towards other peoples, respect for the values of another culture, readiness to communicate and interact with representatives of any nationality indicates both a tolerant attitude towards other ethnic groups and a positive ethnic identity that does not hinder, but rather promotes peaceful interethnic coexistence.

At the present stage of historical development, British society, like most states and associations, is by no means mono-ethnic [13, p. 68]. According to statistical data in 1990, with a total population of Great Britain of 57.384 million people, approximately 1 million were representatives of ethnic minorities [14, p. 21]. At the beginning of the 21st century, the ratio between citizens of Anglo-Saxon origin and representatives of other ethnic groups changed in such a way that the latter accounted for 4,045 thousand out of 58,731 thousand of the population of Great Britain (as of 2000) [14, p. 34]. Among the population of Great Britain, in addition to the British themselves (51,010 thousand) and representatives of other white peoples (1,946 thousand), there are 6,374 thousand representatives of the 'non-white' race. Among the latter, there are 199 thousand Chinese, 3,866 thousand blacks, and 2,309 thousand

Asians [14, p. 33]. The trend towards a possible further increase in the share of citizens of non-British origin is also evidenced by data on granting permanent residence permits in Great Britain to foreigners. During 1997–2000, such permission was granted to: Europeans – 7740 (1997) → 15110 (2000), Latin Americans – 7790 → 11520, Africans – 13200 → 44460, representatives of Asian peoples – 25610 → 47540, which makes a total of 58720 (1997) → 125090 (2000) [14, p. 36].

Additionally, between 1992 and 2000, the British government granted asylum to 24,605 (1992) and 80,315 (2000) foreigners [14, p. 37]. The statistics provided indicate a trend towards an increase in the proportion of the country's population of non-British origin. If until recently, the problems of ethnic minorities concerned more countries such as the USA, Canada, and Australia, then at the beginning of the 21st century, the ethnic diversity of British society has become an acknowledged fact and one of the reasons for xenophobia and ethnic prejudice.

The phenomenon of xenophobia in Great Britain in relation to representatives of ethnic minorities is so widespread that since 1993 a whole series of studies on xenophobia "Xenophobe's Guide" (unreasonable fear and dislike of strange or foreign people, customs, etc.) has appeared, which contain information about the convictions, beliefs or vulnerabilities of other peoples and are aimed at eliminating xenophobia in relation to these peoples [6, p. 62–63].

The term political correctness itself was first used by Karen de Crowe, President of the National Organization for Women, in 1975. The development of the feminist movement, directed against gender inequality, led to the rejection in modern society of the use of words that have an openly expressed gender orientation (for example, *chairman*, *fireman*, *mankind*) and degrade the social status of women as active and equal members of society. However, the principle of political correctness is implemented not only in the sphere of intergender relations, but also influences and regulates other important aspects of the existence of society.

A necessary condition for political correctness in language is to avoid the use of lexical units that can discriminate against a person in relation to age, gender, physical condition, racial and cultural affiliation. The significance of the last two factors – racial and cultural identity – is assessed differently in terms of their importance and priority in modern society. On the one hand, there is a tendency towards further international integration, and on the other – towards the preservation of multiculturalism, the original national characteristics of each ethnic community. For example, when discussing the aspirations of foreign students who come to Great Britain to study English, it is noted that students do not want to lose their own national identity. By learning English and living in a foreign country, they do not try to become English or British, but rather seek to gain new experience, get to know and assimilate the achievements of another culture and thus join human civilization [9, p. 187].

The harmonious coexistence and development of different ethnic groups within a single country also depends on national tolerance, mutual positive perception of representatives of their own and other ethnic communities. Psychological studies prove that a tolerant attitude towards representatives of other ethnic communities can be formed through positive behavior towards these ethnic groups, that is, acting according to the principle "if you want to treat someone better, behave as if you already perceive

them positively” [10, p. 141]. Asking whether positive interracial interaction affects the overcoming of racial prejudices, psychologist A. Miall concludes that prejudices against foreign ethnic groups can be influenced in an appropriate way by forming and correcting the social behavior of the ethnic majority [6, p. 14–16].

Adherence to the principle of political correctness in a multiethnic society contributes to the overcoming and avoidance of ethnic discrimination. At the linguistic level, this is implemented through the use of ‘politically correct’ vocabulary (ethnonyms – neutral official names of ethnic groups) and euphemisms [9, p. 165], which allow getting rid of negative evaluative perspectives of the statement. Euphemisms create a cognitive effect of conceptual blurring or defocusing of undesirable referents, and thereby prevent the addressee from fully interpreting the statement [10, p. 67–68]. For example, given the undesirable emphasis on origin and separation from the rest of society for the nomination of descendants of Africans or residents of African countries in modern English, preference is given to the lexical units Black and African-American, which act as euphemistic designations compared to Negro: ‘Negro’ is now considered offensive by many people and words such as ‘Black’ and ‘African-American’ are used instead [12, p. 948].

**Conclusions and suggestions.** In the course of our study, it was noted that social inequality, historically dependent position, economically unstable situation, difference (and sometimes rejection, misunderstanding) of the culture and traditions of ethnic minorities lead to racial and ethnic discrimination of the latter by representatives of the ethnic majority. Language as a certain way of perceiving and organizing, conceptualizing the world reflects and records the above-mentioned phenomena of social life. The existence and use in modern English of a number of lexical units that are offensive, pejorative designations, nicknames of other peoples is a manifestation of xenophobia, prejudiced, and condescending attitude towards foreigners both in British and in any other society. Intolerant attitude towards foreign ethnic groups and the use of ethnonyms-nicknames lead to ethno-social conflicts. Guided by the principle of political correctness and tolerance towards other peoples, society refuses to use offensive, invective designations of other ethnic groups, which is also recorded by linguistic tradition and dictionaries by separating such units from commonly used colloquial vocabulary.

Research in the field of perception of one ethnic group through the eyes of another from the point of view of speech expression in modern linguistics is a relevant direction, since the political sphere, as an important part of national culture, is represented in the linguistic picture of the world and conceptualized in a special way in the national consciousness of a person – a representative of another ethnic culture.

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#### **Миколайчук А., Матковська М. Семантичні особливості принципу політичної коректності в сучасній англійській мові**

**Анотація.** Стаття присвячена семантичним особливостям принципу політкоректності в трилогії Тома Стоппарда «Берег Утопії». Увага зосереджена на поєднанні взаємодії та співіснування різних етнічних груп у межах однієї країни, зокрема Великої Британії, де численні етнічні конфлікти, протистояння та непорозуміння є характерними рисами ксенофобського ставлення до «чужих» етносів. Автори досліджують причини ворожості «своїх» як виняткових та вищих людей до вирішення проблем інших «чужих» етносів, що може спричинити ксенофобію як один з видів етнічної ідентичності. Усвідомлення та прийняття існуючого аналога між етнічною більшістю британського походження та представниками етнічних меншин визначається як перший крок до вирішення існуючої проблеми стосовно подолання расової та етнічної диференціації. Звинувачення та спроба уникнути ксенофобських розглядів можуть бути висвітлені у зміні ставлення представників вищих верств суспільства до етнічних меншин та міжкультурних відносин, що сприяють створенню нових форм комунікації та співпраці. У результаті стверджується, що проблема концепції політкоректності англословного світогляду стосується не лише аспектів політичного дискурсу, а й вибору мовних одиниць для позначення людей з інвалідністю, людей похилого віку та проблем етнічних меншин.

Постулюється ідея, що толерантне ставлення до проблем етнічних меншин, визнання рівних прав жінок з чоловіками в суспільстві, дотримання етикетних пріоритетів у спілкуванні можна визнати основними перспективами реалізації принципу політкоректності. Толерантність як шанобливе ставлення до суджень інших, їхніх переконань, традицій та форм поведінки становить фундаментальну ознаку цивілізації та рівень політичної культури.

**Ключові слова:** семантика, прагматика, ментальність, стереотип, ксенофобія, етнономінація, етнонім.

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