

Original Research

'Safe' political discourse: Linguo-cultural and pragma-linguistic perspectives

by Ludmila L. Baranova and Natalia L. Kriakina

Ludmila L. Baranova Lomonosov Moscow State University ludbar2000@gmail.com

Natalia L. Kriakina Saint Petersburg State University natalyakryakina@gmail.com

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The study seeks to identify the main tendencies in the use of politically correct language from the linguo-cultural and pragma-linguistic perspectives. The paper offers an overview of the ways in which political correctness is expressed in the British and American political discourse. The study is corpus-based; the contexts illustrating theoretical hypotheses are borrowed from three large-scale corpora of the corresponding variants of English (British National Corpus, Corpus of Contemporary American English, and Hong Kong Baptist University Corpus of Political Speeches). The study relies on the linguo-cultural and pragma-linguistic paradigm supplemented by discourse analysis. Research results indicate that British and American political discourse has both general and culture-specific features. Speakers from both the USA and the UK tend to refer to milestone events their audience is well-acquainted with. They use a wide array of general notions, as well as specific terms and set expressions depending on the impression they wish to make on their listeners. American politicians appear to be inclined towards using less formal lexis such as 'opposing the nation's enemies' and 'political rivals', whereas their British counterparts tend to choose more formal terms and expressions. Modern political discourse is characterised by continuity: it is inextricably connected with the previous stages in its development, while at the same time acquiring new peculiarities and taking new forms.

KEYWORDS: political discourse, political correctness, linguo-cultural studies, corpus studies, pragmalinguistics, communication, euphemism



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1. INTRODUCTION

At the present stage in the development of linguistics, the need to create an effective model of public political statement becomes evident. It would allow a politician to consider not only extralinguistic factors reflecting the dynamics of so-

cial change, but also the pragmatic characteristics of the linguistic devices used. To achieve this goal, it is essential to correlate the statement with a broad non-linguistic context. Obviously, political speeches need to be relevant to the audience and the communication situation. Considering the gen-

eral and particular characteristics of the latter leads to establishing effective interaction between politicians and their audience and achieving the politicians' intended goals.

Thus, modern political rhetoric is a complex phenomenon that implies not only the interaction between the speaker and the addressee, but also the specific communication situation. This paper intends to analyse the way political correctness – or 'sensitive language' (Western, 2016) as it is sometimes referred to – is expressed in British and American political discourse. The relevance of this research is determined by the increasing interest in an interdisciplinary approach, when language is studied not in isolation, but in close connection with a multitude of factors connected with its evolution and use.

The theoretical significance of the paper is conditioned by its contribution to a broader field of knowledge, namely philological hermeneutics and discourse studies. It is of the essence to understand the role that politically correct expressions play in modern society, as well as the extralinguistic factors which determine their use. Only full understanding of these issues will provide the basis for a deeper insight into the functioning of the English language. Besides, the combination of diachronic and synchronic approaches adds to a more thorough comprehension of this phenomenon.

As far as practical relevance is concerned, study findings can be used in teaching English to advanced students (speakers of other languages) and can be integrated into seminars and lecture courses in lexicology, comparative cultural studies, cognitive linguistics, to mention only a few.

2. MATERIAL AND METHODS

The study material comprises entries taken from three large corpora of American and British English: the British National Corpus (BNC), Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA), and the Hong Kong Baptist University Corpus of Political Speeches. The study focuses on speeches by presidents and politicians from both the UK and the USA, as well as books and articles by more than 20 writers and journalists from such maga-

zines and newspapers as *The USA Today*, *The Washington Post*, *National Review*, *History Today*, and other authoritative publications. Reference sources included five online dictionaries: The Macmillan Dictionary, The Merriam-Webster Dictionary, The Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, and The Cambridge Dictionary. Research methods are centred around the linguo-cultural and pragma-linguistic paradigm, supplemented by discourse analysis.

3. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

3.1. The notion of political correctness: basic approaches

As far as the modern perception of PC is concerned, one can find a variety of definitions paying special attention to different aspects of this notion.

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines being politically correct as '*conforming to a belief that language and practices which could offend political sensibilities (as in matters of sex and race) should be eliminated*' (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 2020d).

The Cambridge Dictionary says that '*someone who is politically correct believes that language and actions that could be offensive to others, especially those relating to sex and race, should be avoided*' and that '*a politically correct word or expression is used instead of another one to avoid being offensive*' (Cambridge Dictionary, 2020a).

The Macmillan Dictionary states that '*politically correct language or behaviour is not offensive, especially to people who have often been affected by discrimination or unfair treatment*' (Macmillan Dictionary, 2020e).

One can observe a feature that is common in all these cases, as every definition highlights the necessity of avoiding discrimination and verbal violence.

Notably, PC is closely related to the concept of tolerance, which, in its turn, is often defined as '*willingness to accept behaviour and beliefs that are different from your own, although you might not agree with or approve of them*' (Cambridge Dictionary, 2020b) or as '*sympathy or indulgence*

for beliefs or practices differing from or conflicting with one's own' (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 2020e). The issues of correlation between political correctness, tolerance, and ways of their linguistic manifestation have been in the focus of scholars' attention for some time (Valentine, 1998; Karam, 2011).

A few words should be said about euphemisms being part of political correctness as a concept. Euphemisms can be regarded as a classic example of non-offending and 'polite' words. As Baranova (2015) observes, '*it would be erroneous to believe that the use of euphemisms is confined to some particular kind of discourse*' (Baranova, 2015, p. 99), so euphemisms are universal in almost every sphere of life. The main similarity is in a certain contradiction between the expression plane and the content plane of both a euphemistic and a politically correct expression.

However, it has been pointed out that euphemisms are not likely to retain their 'subtle' meaning over time. As cited by Hughes (2011), Michel Bréal, a French philologist, comments on this in his book *Semantics: Studies in the Science of Meaning*, stating that words often come to possess a disagreeable sense as a result of euphemisation.

Traditionally, euphemisms were classified according to their functions and depending on how long they have existed in a language. Reformatsky (1996) also remarked that euphemisms in general can be organised into two groups: the old ones, or taboo words (*to die, to kill, death, etc.*), and the new ones, whose very form is aimed at performing the etiquette function (*to pass away, to go to heaven, to go to our rest, etc.*).

3.2. The notion of discourse and political discourse

As the term 'discourse' is one of the central issues in the present paper, it is important to outline the main approaches to the understanding of this term. It is also of the essence to state which of the numerous definitions of discourse forms the theoretical background of the research in question. In the past decades, a significant number of scholars have sought to define this notion, so it would seem

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logical to compare their interpretations and single out the one relevant to this study.

Arutyunova (1990) regards discourse as 'speech immersed in life' and 'a coherent text in conjunction with extralinguistic, pragmatic, sociocultural, psychological and other factors' (Arutyunova, 1990, p. 136-137). This point of view correlates with Karasik's (2000), who claims that discourse is 'a text immersed in the situation of communication' (Karasik, 2000, p. 5). Kubryakova and Aleksandrova (1999) interpret discourse as a cognitive process connected with speech production. They define text as a result of the speech production process and lay particular emphasis on its completeness. These interpretations provide the deepest insight into how the notion of discourse is understood in the present paper.

As for the pragma-linguistic perspective, Widdowson (2004) added 'situation' to the relationship between 'text' and 'discourse'. Therefore, he regarded discourse as the unity of a particular text and the situation accompanying it. In this paper, special attention will be given to the third component, i.e. discourse, which is inextricably connected with pragmatics.

Numerous papers devoted to discourse and all of its aspects prove that it has become a paradigm applicable to various fields of the humanities. For example, Van Dijk (1993) mentions illocutionary functions and other pragmatic properties among the levels and dimensions of discourse that appear in a number of contexts, including the political one. Pragmatics as one of the main issues discourse analysis should be focused on is also mentioned by Romero-Trillo (2008).

Sheigal (2000) claims that discourse may be considered to be political if at least one of the three components (the subject, the receiver, or the

very content of the message) belongs to the sphere of politics. The scholar also singles out four functions of political speeches (the integrative function, the inspirational function, the performative function, and the declarative function). She believes that the first one is closely connected with the image of the speaker who identifies him- or herself with the whole nation. It is expressed mostly by using personal pronouns, as in *we* that can be also opposed to *they* and their derivatives (Zupnik, 1994).

An interesting linguo-cultural comment can be discussed here. Urban (1988) singles out six variants of rendering *we* in American political discourse: *we* of the President, *we* of the Ministry of Defence, *we* of the President's administration, *we* of the US Government, *we* of the USA, and, surprisingly, *we* of the USA and USSR considered together.

As far as the British political system and discourse are concerned, one can examine a treatise written by Iñigo-Mora (2004). She has analysed the strategies of using personal pronouns (*we*, *our*, *us*) during a session in the House of Commons. The researcher names four types of these strategies depending on the way a politician treats their listeners: the excluding type ('*my political party and I*'), the including type ('*you and I*'), the parliamentary society type ('*the parliamentary society and I*'), and the general type ('*the whole British nation and I*').

The second (inspirational) function according to Sheigal (2000) consists in encouraging the audience and may be expressed by several linguistic means: lexical items referring to novelty and development, comparative and superlative adjectives.

When implementing the third (performative) function, the speaker poses himself or herself as possessing a particular social and/or political status. Pragmatically, this function is aimed at emphasising the leader's personal involvement in the situation. All words and phrases used are perceived emotionally because the speaker shows that he or she is well aware of the fears and worries of an average person.

'The expressive function is implemented mostly by means of numerous metaphors and/or comparisons complementary to the politically correct words and phrases, and stressing their importance by accompanying them in the communication context'

The fourth (declarative) function is implemented through the topoi of duty (with such keywords as *must*, *obligation*, *duty*, *responsibility*) and work (expressed by means of *task*, *effort*, *service*, *work*, *challenge*, *measures*, and other lexical units bearing on this idea). It means that the speaker should announce the principles he or she intends to follow.

There is also a fifth function, which is not included in the list compiled by Sheigal (2000) – the expressive one. Akhmanova (2007) defines 'expressivity' as 'the presence of expression', i.e. 'expressive figures of speech that distinguish it from stylistically neutral speech and make it metaphoric and emotionally coloured' (Akhmanova, 2007, p. 523-524). In the present paper, the term 'expressivity' and the expressive function itself will be considered in accordance with this definition. The expressive function is implemented mostly by means of numerous metaphors and/or comparisons complementary to the politically correct words and phrases, and stressing their importance by accompanying them in the communication context. This particular function will be commented on in the next section of this paper.

4. STUDY AND RESULTS

4.1. General observations

The list of politically correct words and expressions subjected to analysis in the research forming the basis for the present paper was compiled based on Rawson's (2003) book *Dictionary of Euphemisms and Other Doubletalk* offering a substantial number of politically correct and euphemistic expressions. The list consists of 26 words and word combinations, their number being

determined by Zipf's law, which was discovered in the 1930s. It says (as applied to linguistics and linguo-statistics) that any lexical array includes a relatively small number of types (word forms), which generate the majority of contexts. In reference to word catalogues, it means that the shortest but representative enough lists may comprise around 30 words. However, for objective reasons a limited number of cases is discussed in the present paper.

It is also worth mentioning the theory of speech acts and their classification before proceeding with the analysis of the adduced examples. Searle (1999) sets up a hypothesis that there are five main types of illocution (what the speaker intends to convey). He lists them as follows: representative illocution (including assertive illocution), directive illocution, commissive illocution, expressive illocution, and declarative illocution. This study and the examples given in the tables below refer mainly to representative illocution (which describes certain situations and the attitude people have toward them) and expressive illocution (conveying the psychological state of the speaker, as in apologies, gratitude, condolences, reproaches, surprise, or indignation).

The examples which follow are supplied with a series of contexts borrowed from various corpora and/or other sources. Each table is annotated with

definitions from one or more dictionaries and information on the general number of corresponding contexts in the aforementioned corpora. As pointed out by Telia (1996), language only uses the expressions associated with the national standards and stereotypes. Therefore, it may be not totally out of place to supply the tables with some historical-social overview. It is especially important in cases where the interstate relations or important political events are mentioned. This provides ground for linguo-cultural analysis, which accompanies the majority of examples. It should be reiterated that only a few instances of politically correct words and expressions are analysed below, due to the requirements imposed on the size of the publication. However, in this research all of the 26 politically correct words and word combinations mentioned above have been subjected to analysis.

4.2. Case study

1. [Our] boys ('fighting men') (HKBU – 1 occurrence, BNC – 53 occurrences, COCA – 436 occurrences). Boy – a male child; a son; a young man (Macmillan Dictionary, 2020a); a male child from birth to adulthood; a son; an immature male (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 2020a); a male child, or a male person in general; a son (Longman Dictionary, 2020a).

Table 1
Politically correct use of the word 'boys' referring to fighting men

DATE	SPEAKER / TITLE / CORPUS	CONTEXT
1943	Franklin Roosevelt, 'State of the Union Address' [HKBU]	<i>I have reason to know that our boys at the front are concerned with two broad aims beyond the winning of the war.</i>
1985-1994	The Daily Mirror [BNC]	'OUR BOYS GET COVER': British troops in Sarajevo are now armour-plated against the snipers.
2012	The Quarterly Journal of Military History [COCA]	'They had better start selective service', (Appalachian) Alabama representative Luther Patrick joked, 'to keep our boys from filling up the army'.
2015	Danny Duncan Collum, 'U.S. Catholic' [COCA]	As America's real-life invasion of Iraq turned disastrous, our dream leader, Bartlet, often got tough with the terrorists, but always brought our boys home by the end of the episode.

Contexts borrowed from the corpora to illustrate this expression prove that there is a close connection between the national political discourse and the ways in which a country is represented from the military point of view. This example may be regarded as one of the most interesting ones in the list, for it consists of a regular pronoun and a very frequently used word *boys*. The resulting expression depends heavily on the context because it is only through the use of words like *front*, *war*, *army*, and *invasion* that the listener would understand what is actually meant.

Speaking about *our boys* refers to the implementation of the integrative as well as the performative function of public speeches. The expression

appeals to the emotions of the audience and demonstrates that the speaker/writer considers him- or herself to be a regular citizen. This enhances the effect the statement produces on the listeners/readers. The expressive function is manifested here to some extent as well.

2. *Developing (countries)* (HKBU – 70 occurrences, BNC – 989 occurrences, COCA – 4708 occurrences). Developing country – a country that is poor and does not have much industrial development; now preferred to be used instead of ‘third world country’ (Macmillan Dictionary, 2020b); a country that is changing its economy from one based mainly on farming to one based on industry (Longman Dictionary, 2020b).

Table 2

Politically correct use of the word combination ‘developing countries’ referring to poor countries

DATE	SPEAKER / TITLE / CORPUS	CONTEXT
1924	Calvin Coolidge, ‘Second Annual Message’ [HKBU]	<i>Legal authority for a thorough reorganisation of the Federal structure with some latitude of action to the Executive in the rearrangement of secondary functions would make for continuing economy in the shift of government activities which must follow every change in a developing country.</i>
1963	John Kennedy, ‘Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union’ [HKBU]	<i>Nothing we could do to help the developing countries would help them half as much as a booming U.S. economy.</i>
1968	Lyndon Johnson, ‘Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union’ [HKBU]	<i>But unless the rapid growth of population in developing countries is slowed, the gap between rich and poor will widen steadily.</i>
1979	Jimmy Carter, ‘The State of the Union Address Delivered Before a Joint Session of the Congress’ [HKBU]	<i>We are building the foundation for truly global cooperation, not only with Western and industrialised nations but with the developing countries as well.</i>
1982	Ronald Reagan, ‘Radio Address to the Nation on International Free Trade’ [HKBU]	<i>In fact, both developed and developing countries alike have been in the grip of the longest worldwide recession in post-war history.</i>
1995	William Clinton, ‘The President’s Radio Address’ [HKBU]	<i>Finally, Mexico serves as a model for developing countries from Latin America to Asia that are completing the transition to free markets and democracy.</i>
2007	George W. Bush, ‘The President’s Radio Address’ [HKBU]	<i>Under my proposal, by the end of next year, America and other nations will set a long-term global goal for reducing greenhouse gases. And to meet this goal, we must help developing countries harness the power of technology.</i>
2010	Barack Obama, ‘Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on the State of the Union’ [HKBU]	<i>We’re helping developing countries to feed themselves and continuing the fight against HIV/AIDS.</i>

The complex notion of a developing country implies the idea of a state that has not yet reached a satisfactory level of economic and social development. In political discourse, this word combination is used to denote a considerable number of regions that are in a less privileged position as compared with industrially developed ones. The expressions are accompanied by such words and phrases as *change*, *the gap between rich and poor*, *recession*, *the fight* referring to unrest, dangers, and risks. Nevertheless, a positive tendency can be traced: since 1995, contexts have included the words *model*, *democracy*, *goal*, *power*, *development*, *assistance*, *investment*, and *capital*. Politicians have changed their viewpoint, and the aforementioned states are described as having some potential for further development.

3. *Event [of something]* (HKBU – 315 occurrences, BNC – 1322 occurrences, COCA – 3003 occurrences). Event – something that happens, es-

pecially something that involves several people; an organised occasion such as a party or sports competition (Macmillan Dictionary, 2020c); an outcome; the final outcome or determination of a legal action; a postulated outcome, condition, or eventuality; a noteworthy happening; a social occasion or activity; an adverse or damaging medical occurrence; any of the contests in a programme of sports; the fundamental entity of observed physical reality represented by a point designated by three coordinates of place and one of time in the space-time continuum postulated by the theory of relativity; a subset of the possible outcomes of an experiment (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 2020b); something that happens, especially something important, interesting or unusual; a performance, sports competition, party, etc. at which people gather together to watch or take part in something; one of the races or competitions that are part of a large sports competition (Longman Dictionary, 2020c).

Table 3
Politically correct use of the word 'event'

DATE	SPEAKER / TITLE / CORPUS	CONTEXT
1953	Dwight Eisenhower, 'Inaugural Address' [HKBU]	<i>This basic law of interdependence, so manifest in the commerce of peace, applies with thousand-fold intensity in the event of war.</i>
1960	1960 Democratic Party Platform [HKBU]	<i>We will establish and maintain food reserves for national defense purposes near important population centers in order to preserve lives in event of national disaster, and will operate them so as not to depress farm prices.</i>
1960	Richard Nixon, 'Presidential Debate Broadcast from New York and Los Angeles' [HKBU]	<i>Mr. Von Fremd, it would be completely irresponsible for a candidate for the presidency, or for a president himself, to indicate the course of action and the weapons he would use in the event of such an attack.</i>
1980	1980 Democratic Party Platform [HKBU]	<i>A stand-by gasoline rationing plan must be adopted for use in the event of a serious energy supply interruption.</i>
1985	Ronald Reagan, 'Radio Address to the Nation on Foreign Policy' [HKBU]	<i>Now, in closing, I want to talk about the tragedy of the Mexican earthquake, which has brought a great outpouring of sympathy and offers of assistance from the American people. We greatly admire the bravery and resolve of the Mexican people to dedicate all their resources to overcome this calamitous event.</i>
1997	William Clinton, 'The President's Radio Address' [HKBU]	<i>Our two peoples who experienced so much together are experiencing this sad event together. Diana was not ours, but we grieve alongside you.</i>

According to the dictionary definitions, the word *event* may be also perceived as a regular one. It needs to be specified by adding an adjective or a noun that would clarify its nature (some common collocations are *of war*, *of national disaster*, *of <...> attack*, *calamitous*, and *sad*). These words and word combinations allow us to assume that in political discourse the expressions including the component *event* are used mainly in negative contexts. This hypothesis may be confirmed by the fact that a certain number of negatively coloured synonyms (*tragedy*, *tragic death*) precede this word in the above-mentioned contexts.

4. *Interrogation* (HKBU – 5 occurrences, BNC – 340 occurrences, COCA – 3925 occurrences). Interrogation – the process of asking someone a lot of questions in an angry or threatening way, in order to get information (Macmillan Dictionary, 2020d); the process of asking questions formally and systematically; the process of giving or sending out a signal for triggering an appropriate response (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 2020c); the process of interrogating (asking a lot of questions for a long time in order to get information, sometimes using threats) someone (Longman Dictionary, 2020d).

Table 4
Politically correct use of the word ‘interrogation’

DATE	SPEAKER / TITLE / CORPUS	CONTEXT
1918	Woodrow Wilson, ‘Sixth Annual Message’ [HKBU]	<i>Clearly determined conditions, clearly and simply charted, are indispensable to the economic revival and rapid industrial development which may confidently be expected if we act now and sweep all interrogation points away.</i>
2008	George Bush, ‘The President’s Radio Address’ [HKBU]	<i>The main reason why this program has been effective is that it allows the CIA to use specialised interrogation procedures to question a small number of the most dangerous terrorists under careful supervision.</i>
2008	George W. Bush, ‘The President’s Radio Address’ [HKBU]	<i>The bill Congress sent me would deprive the CIA of the authority to use these safe and lawful techniques. Instead, it would restrict the CIA’s range of acceptable interrogation methods to those provided in the Army Field Manual.</i>
2008	George W. Bush, ‘The President’s Radio Address’ [HKBU]	<i>Limiting the CIA’s interrogation methods to those in the Army Field Manual would be dangerous because the manual is publicly available and easily accessible on the Internet.</i>
2008	George W. Bush, ‘The President’s Radio Address’ [HKBU]	<i>The bill Congress sent me would not simply ban one particular interrogation method, as some have implied.</i>

The word *interrogation* may be included in the group of formal politically correct terms. However, two out of five dictionaries that have been used for the present research define *interrogation* as the process of asking someone in an angry or threaten-

ing way. In other words, this particular word started to lose its external ambiguity and euphemistic colouring. Further analysis has also demonstrated that *interrogation* is not infrequently combined with the words *method* or *procedure*. These lexical

items specify the process described by the PC core word and make its meaning more explicit. Moreover, in the present-day American media *enhanced interrogation* is also used, referring to torture.

5. *Underprivileged* (HKBU – 23 occurrences, BNC – 75 occurrences, COCA – 460 occurrences). Underprivileged – not having as many advantages or opportunities as most other people (Macmillan Dictionary, 2020f); deprived through social or economic condition of some of the fundamental rights of all members of a civilised society; of or relating to underprivileged people (Merriam-Webster Dic-

tionary, 2020f); very poor, with worse living conditions, educational opportunities etc. than most people in society (Longman Dictionary, 2020e).

The word *underprivileged* has got a great deal in common with the word *underdeveloped*. The main difference is that it is more likely to be accompanied by positively coloured lexical items and refers to a group of people who do not have any rewarding experience but deserve it. It is supported by such words and word combinations as *protection, a rewarding experience in a healthful environment, to meet the needs, to benefit, and economic growth*.

Table 5

Politically correct use of the word 'underprivileged' referring to people having fewer opportunities than most people in a society

DATE	SPEAKER / TITLE / CORPUS	CONTEXT
1960	1960 Democratic Party Platform [HKBU]	<i>We shall seek to bring the two million men, women and children who work for wages on the farms of the United States under the protection of existing labor and social legislation; and to assure migrant labor, perhaps the most underprivileged of all, of a comprehensive program to bring them not only decent wages but also adequate standards of health, housing, Social Security protection, education and welfare services.</i>
1960	1960 Democratic Party Platform [HKBU]	<i>As part of a broader concern for young people we recommend establishment of a Youth Conservation Corps, to give underprivileged young people a rewarding experience in a healthful environment.</i>
1964	Lyndon Johnson, 'Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union' [HKBU]	<i>These programs are obviously not for the poor or the underprivileged alone.</i>
1980	1980 Democratic Party Platform [HKBU]	<i>The Democratic Party is committed to a federal scholarship program adequate to meet the needs of all the underprivileged who could benefit from a college education.</i>
1980	1980 Republican Party Platform [HKBU]	<i>Faster growth, higher incomes, and plentiful jobs are exactly what the unemployed, the underprivileged, and minorities have been seeking for many years.</i>
2005	George W. Bush, 'The President's Radio Address' [HKBU]	<i>As Ms. Miers rose through the legal ranks, she also put in long hours of volunteer legal work on behalf of the poor and underprivileged, and served as a leader for more than a dozen community groups and charities.</i>

5. DISCUSSION

The analysis of the material has shown that there are a number of peculiarities in both American and British political discourse and ways of manifesting political correctness in each of them. There are five key points that have been singled out:

- (1) politically correct words and expressions have a relative ability to act as euphemisms;
- (2) inaugural addresses stand out among other genres of political statements;
- (3) political discourse involves the implementation of the integrative, inspirational, performative, declarative, and expressive functions;
- (4) the description of various events in political speeches has certain linguo-cultural peculiarities;
- (5) political discourse may include both the speaker's style and conventional politically correct words and expressions.

There are also several differences between the above-mentioned national variants of political discourse. First, American politicians are more likely to address their listeners as a nation. To achieve this, they use the word *nation* or other words denoting the whole population. Personal pronouns (*we*) are also widely used. This technique is used in order to unite the audience and make it believe in common values.

Second, American politicians often oppose the American nation to its political enemies or representatives of other states. In the material under consideration, opposing various groups of people is used to highlight the difference between good and evil, those who need protection and those who are ready to grant it.

Third, American political discourse is characterised by a more frequent use of informal lexis. This pattern is especially evident with regard to the examples where some national threats or dangers are discussed.

As far as British political discourse is concerned, it would be interesting to comment on the role played by quotation marks. In the written variant of the aforementioned discourse this stop usually signals either that the word or expression is used tentatively, or that it belongs to someone else.

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The aforementioned features were singled out on the basis of the analysis conducted from both linguo-cultural and pragma-linguistic perspectives. Their number is limited, yet they confirm that every national discourse has its functioning peculiarities and should be considered from several angles.

6. CONCLUSION

The present research sought to find out what exactly the notion of political correctness is and how it is used in the American and British political discourse from the linguo-cultural and pragma-linguistic perspectives. The research has shown that politically correct words and their combinations are employed to produce a certain effect on the audience.

American political discourse is slightly different from its British counterpart, yet a considerable number of common tendencies have been singled out. Speakers from both the USA and the UK tend to refer to the milestone events their audience is well-acquainted with, and use a wide variety of general notions, specific terms and set expressions depending on the impression they wish to produce on their listeners. At the same time, however, American politicians have proved to be more inclined to oppose the nation to its enemies and representatives of other countries. Several speakers have used more informal lexis, especially when referring to some threats or dangers that the nation is exposed to.

The pool of statements delivered by British politicians and articles written by various British journalists is less voluminous due to the size of the British National Corpus and the fact that it was the only corpus of British English used in the course of this research. Nevertheless, it was possible to extract contexts for almost every item on the list. The study has found that generally British politicians are less willing to use word combinations and prefer choosing the formal variants of politically

correct items (especially those regarded as terms). One of the implications of this study suggests that modern political discourse is characterised by continuity: it is inextricably connected with the previous stages in its development, and at the same time acquires new peculiarities and takes on new forms. Undoubtedly, this may serve as a basis for further research. The development of corpus linguistics and pragma-linguistics can give a powerful impetus to the studies conducted along these lines.

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