



Exploring of the use of Political Correctness in World

Akmal Wisnu Yuwana*¹, Widya Cathrine², Rahmania³

* akmalwisnu@gmail.com, caterine_widya@ub.ac.id, rahma1234@student.ub.ac.id

¹ English Language Education Program, Brawijaya University, Malang, Indonesia

² English Language Education Program, Brawijaya University, Malang, Indonesia

³ English Language Education Program, Brawijaya University City, Indonesia

Abstract

As we understand, the use of political correctness is mainly to avoid and reduce the gap with those who are underprivileged in society. The more awareness people have about PCs, the more peaceful life is because it avoids awakening superiority complex and a sense of indifference. Although there are some controversies behind the banner of political correctness. By knowing political correctness is a double-edged sword when establishing communication with others limiting misunderstanding during communication. In this study, we aimed to investigate the use of political correctness in the current state to increase awareness among people during globalization times. Using sources from around the internet, we tried to uncover the impact of the political correctness world at large. This is qualitative research using library research to answer our three questions; 1. What is political correctness? ;2. What kinds of problems of political correctness? ;3. What is the impact of political correctness in the world? Based on the sources we conclude that it is a culture born from the west and often used as a political tool, it is used to label marginalized people and minorities while giving light to overlooked problems in the west, and it is rarely discussed in part of Asia.

Keywords: communication; language; political correctness (pc)

Introduction

Political Correctness is quite easily bred in controversy, on the “Political Correctness and the End of History” Lawler (1996) commented that it is the conclusion of history. In this case, the author argued that the assumption that history has already come to end. The author uses an argument from Francis Fukuyama which provoked him to question the historical end of human history which leads him to conclude that “History comes to an end when human beings reach definitive, rational agreement on political principles...” (Lawler, 1996). This can be inferred that Political Correctness happened when the masses already believed that they know about the truth and justice concept in the world, even though the concept of both justice and truth often come from based on where they have been raised and the culture surrounding their life.

Political correctness has several problematic points that need to address first. It is used to stir political discourse between the left and the right which is prone to the agenda of both political philosophies (Fairclough, 2003). The objective of political correctness itself is achieving equality with a sterile language that does not offend people which make it difficult to follow, it is quite a narrow point of view of the world. If communication is being limited is it not a form of restriction of free speech through linguistic limitation? Fairclough (2003) commented on the article that “the sedimentation of institutions and the habitues of people may make them resistant.” which makes political correctness difficult to discuss openly without triggering a repulsive reaction of people that has a different view about the topic itself.

Based on Marques (2009), countries with English as their first language tend to have the use of political correctness, especially in language terms. Eventually, as globalization becomes wider each day and English become a global language, this tendency is likely to spread. Taking over its bad history with it, giving a big awareness of political correctness knowledge would add an ability for students to function better in academic and professional English (Tsehelska, 2006). Due to the views on political correctness above some questions that can be purposed are; 1. What kind of problems surfaced when discussing political correctness? 2. What kind of impacts does political correctness bring to the world?

Method

This study use library research as the approach. The data used in this study was a collection of scientific articles from reputable journal publications. Journals and books were collected by searching through Google Scholar and Scopus. All of the studies were chosen from 3 keywords named political correctness, Problem in political correctness and paradigm of political correctness. Next, researchers eliminate irrelevant studies by looking upon the numbers of the citation and the reputation of the study. twenty studies were collected and chosen after extensive filtering. After the relevant study was collected, the collection of studies were analyzed using thematic analysis which focused on political correctness. From the analysis, several themes emerged and are explained below. An extensive analysis result is provided by providing perspectives related to political correctness across the globe.

Defining political correctness

Many researchers have tried to define and measure the terms of Political Correctness, yet there is no conclusion to end this long process. As for highly political polarization such as in the United States, this term always becomes a very sensitive matter and has been used by many politicians to gain their followers and solidify their base of support. Until this day, PC has always been portrayed as something negative by people, nonetheless, in-depth studies of PC showed that people become more respectful mutually after they acknowledge one another's true intentions. Even though there is already widespread usage of PC in everyday life conversation along with the rising popularity of online communication media, there is still no firm definition of political correctness among the people. If we related PC with the educational world, many people argued that political correctness has bad effects on higher education (D'Souza, 1992); on the opposite, many researchers (Favreau, 1997; Wilson, 1995) had proven that those statements were just anecdotes.

According to Roper (2020), political correctness, which is usually abbreviated to PC, is a pejorative term for describing a loose connection between Marxists, feminists, multiculturalists, and deconstructions along with their positions as leftists. Based on various cases such as race, sexual orientation, class environment, and related issues quoted in Schenz (1994). In linguistics, the practice of "political correctness" is likely to be well-known for a desire to eliminate various groups' identities based on their languages. Along with it, Ely, Meyerson, and Davidson (2006) define PC as a situation "Where unspoken cannons of propriety govern behaviour in cross-cultural interactions--that is, interactions among people of different races, genders, religions, and other potentially charged social identity

groups". Based on the explanation of Berman (1992) the term Political correctness was evolved by the Leninist Left into an ironic phrase among 'wide-up leftists' to 'denote someone whose line-toeing fervour was too much to bear' and in the feminist movement. Willis (1984) states that feminists sarcastically used the term 'political correctness to refer to anti-pornography movements efforts in the early eighties. From the explanation above, Political correctness is used sarcastically in some context.

Problems of political correctness

Political correctness started before the sixties based on Hall (1994) section of a book that discussed the emergence of political correctness in American politics. The author commented that the word 'political correctness' is used as a means of the 1980s generation to critique the 1960s generation after the Reagan election, but before that, it is used ironically as an in-joke among the left. A new climate of political climate become more prevalent especially in higher education which is the center of new ideas and views. Although it is used in American politics, it is also prevalent in British politics in the 1980s during the Thatcher era. Both Reagan and Thatcher used PC as means to control the masses with a language that pervaded on part of the New Right think figure (Fairclough, 2003).

One issue that has always carried over from the past is that PC tends to view a political problem with a narrow vision. This creates a discrepancy while discussing the issue of cultural and language problems. People that already developed their culture based on what works and what is accepted will have difficulties changing their view on some topics. This the core of the problems with PC, is that it is trying to change the culture with the intervention of the culture that already develops long before PC come. The idea of strangers bombarding with all kinds of jargon that is not often used in daily conversations is quite distracting from the hearer perspective. Making the idea of PC quite a sensitive topic among the west especially Americans. Thus, it leads to resistant behavior which makes changes difficult (Fairclough, 2003).

The other problem with PC is that it is an ideology that tries to label people based on their identities such as their race, sex, ethnicity, etc. In social discourse often comes a topic that is considered taboo by many. People that avoid discussing it often used PC as their shield to circumnavigate the problems. Political correctness poses a linguistic problem that is tied with 'word taboo'. Word taboo is a word that

is not appropriate to use in the common setting of a conversation, but what is defined as a taboo? In most societies, it is tied with language that describes topics that are not good to hear such as an excretion or digestion process, sexual activity, or any kind of thing that are unpleasant to hear. In some areas, political correctness tried to make everything more complicated by labelling certain things as taboo words to use (Hall, 1994; Andrew, 2015).

On the other hand, Andrew (2015) commented that PC is also used to describe things that are broadly defined and relevant making them equal in terms of the meaning of the word itself. It is often used in restrictive language groups or communities thus some PC words could also make conversation awkward to use in daily conversation with a different set of language groups. It is shown that PC is an attempt or reaction towards inequality in a social context that is everchanging and dynamic changes always happen. The direction that PC takes is based on the ruling class that defined certain words to be not suitable to use, making it as a tool to restrict free speech using restricting language used which looked as if it is just censorship with an integrated cultural problem.

Impact of political correctness in the world

People are very concerned about what others think of them. It may explain most of their behavior such as anxiety (Morris, 2001). In particular, whenever a speaker gives his opinion on any subject, learn something about the topic as well as the speaker. Theory building on such a view but retaining the traditional economist assumption that utility functions do not depend directly on the beliefs of others. If people care about what others think of them, it's for instrumental reasons. This line of thinking comes up from the political correctness hemisphere. The idea that culture can be commoditized is the result of people wanting an ideal form of language that can be used as a marketing tool by big corporations especially in the western culture where the idea is first sprung up. One of those industries is broadcasting which become integrated into modern social practices. (Fairclough, 2003).

In western higher education, political correctness has dictated the policy that is used by institutions. Academic discourse must use inclusive language which makes some topics difficult to be discussed openly without making trouble with political correctness users. On the other hand, people that disagree with PC also have their agenda to fulfil, thus making an academic setting full of people that support one of the political ideologies. Some people attack political correctness on the basis that they will disturb the traditional value of the American people for example. Schultz (1993) argued that the critique of the PC culture does not differentiate between the

different initiative which has their history and goals to meet. On the American campus, there are a lot of hate crimes to marginalize community and seldomly reported during that time.

Klotz (1999) commented it cannot be lost in whose world forevermore refined politeness and political mechanics lead to ever more perfect use of power. Individual and public wisdom, along with the courage to contradict one another, must against mortal political superiority. Political truth, regardless at first it was an idealistic goal, not a cooperative one. Chivalry is in danger of becoming instrumental. However, the fact is cooperative. Most of the idea of political correctness comes from a western tradition which means that it most likely need adjustment if it is ever used outside the western hemisphere. Other cultures cannot be judged based only on one view, there is no such thing as other cultures that are better than others, they just develop it based on what is likely to be suitable for the environment where the culture is formed. (Ellis, 1991).

Phumsiri (2019) research suggests that in Thailand most of the participants reacted positively. They saw Political correctness as a non-offensive language of liberal language. The use of it is mainly to avoid using offensive language about a sensitive topic and promote equality. Most of them agree that the use of political correctness language is used primarily in English language terms, although some of them does not understand which terms need to use when describing words that need it and that does not need it even though there is a clear objective. The participant on the research also commented that it is difficult to think political correctness in their own native language because most of the language is already inclusive thus does not need to conform to political correctness from the west.

In Indonesia itself, the use of political correctness has not been used widely by people because it is similar to rhetoric, especially in politics. Based on Sirulhaq (2020) research about the ignorance for political correctness from the number one presidential candidate during the 2019 campaign, suggest that political correctness is a term that is not familiar among Indonesian people even in politics and language studies. In this case, political correctness is part of rhetoric which is a tool to get political advantages from the opposition of the candidate. The author also suggests that the use of political correctness cannot be separated from implicature which is part of pragmatic studies. Meaning that the language used is often based on implied which is up to interpretation. In the end, the implementation of political correctness

is much of a help for people to avoid offensive communication, especially in a multicultural setting and increase people's awareness about equality based on the cultural setting where political correctness is implemented. In some parts of the world political correctness is already integrated with the culture itself thus does not need to reinforce the idea of PC from the west.

Conclusion

In conclusion, political correctness is hot debated topics in the western countries which it is form. There are some problems that come from the idea of labelling people based on their identity which does not sit well for some people thus making people have a resistant attitude towards it. On the other hand, political correctness brings up some issues that are often overlooked by many people like marginalized people and minorities in American society. Many cultures may do not need political correctness to be implemented in their culture because it is already built-in within the culture itself and not from a western standpoint. The objective of political correctness itself is not necessarily bad but the meaning of it is already diluted because it is part of rhetoric which is a political tool to attract voters or to gain an advantage from the opposite side. Communication using a PC is one way out of shrinking the gap and realizing the laws of human nature that emotional sensitivity and stability in social relations are essential things to continue to do.

Acknowledgement

Thanks for the guide from Mrs. Widya Cathrine as our lecturer which help in giving us suggestions and guiding us during the creation of the article and other friends that help with the suggestion of the article. We also would like to give a note that this paper is for our final project of Pragmatic subject, so if there is some mistake we would like to apologize.

References

- Andrews, E. (2015). Cultural Sensitivity and Political Correctness : The Linguistic Problem. 71(4), 389-404.
- Dzenis, S., Nobre Faria, F. (2020). Political Correctness: the Twofold Protection of Liberalism. *Philosophia* 48, 95-114. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11406-019-00094-4>
- Ely, Robin & Meyerson, Debra & Davidson, Martin. (2006). Rethinking Political Correctness. *Harvard business review*. 84. 78-87, 157.
- Fairclough, Norman. (2003). Political Correctness: The Politics of Culture and Language. *Discourse & Society - DISCOURSE SOCIETY*. 14. 17-28. <https://10.1177/0957926503014001927>

- Favreau, O. E. (1997). Evaluating political correctness: Anecdotes vs. research. *Canadian Psychology/Psychologie canadienne*, 38(4), 212–220. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0708-5591.38.4.212>
- Goldner, B. (1992). [Review of *Illiberal Education: The Politics of Race and Sex on Campus*, by D. D'Souza]. *Michigan Law Review*, 90(6), 1291–1307. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1289414>
- Hall, S. (1994). some politically incorrect pathways. In S. Dunant (Ed.), *The War of the Words: The Political Correctness Deabate* (pp. 164–168).
- Hughes, Geoffrey. (2009). *Political Correctness: A History of Semantics and Culture*. 10.1002/9781444314960.
- Johnson, S. & Suhr, S. (2003). From 'political correctness' to 'politische Korrektheit': discourses of 'PC' in the German newspaper, *Die Welt*. Sage Publications, Inc. Vol. 1, No. 1 - Vol. 28, No. 6
- Klotz, P. (1999). Politeness and political correctness. *Pragmatics*. Quarterly Publication of the International Pragmatics Association (IPrA), 9(1), 155–161. <https://doi.org/10.1075/prag.9.1.08klo>
- Lawler, P. A. (1996). Political Correctness and the End of History. *College Teaching*, 44(1), 20–23. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27558751>
- Manske, A. (1996). [Review of *Political Correctness. Eine Bewegung erobert Amerika; Politische Korrektheit in Deutschland. Eine Gefahr für die Demokratie; Ein Gespenst geht um die Welt: Political Correctness*, by V. Schenz, M. Behrens, R. von Rimscha, & M. Bonder]. *AAA: Arbeiten Aus Anglistik Und Amerikanistik*, 21(2), 306–311. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43025510>
- Marques, J. F. (2009). How politically correct is political correctness?: A SWOT analysis of this phenomenon. *Business and Society*, 48(2), 257–266. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0007650307307155>
- Moss, Jordan. (2020). Political correctness and the alt-right: The development of extreme political attitudes. *PLoS ONE*. <https://15.10.1371/journal.pone.0239259>
- Phumsiri, Napat & Tangkiengsirisin, Supong. (2019). An Analysis of the Use of English with Political Correctness: A Case Study of Graduate Students in Thailand. <https://10.31235/osf.io/bwxcy>
- Powell, L. S. C. and R. R. (n.d.). *Basic Research Methods for Librarians* (5th edition). LIBRARIES UNLIMITED. ISBN: 978-1-59158-863-4.

- Scott, J. W. (1992). [Review of Debating P.C.: The Controversy over Political Correctness on College Campuses; The Changing Culture of the University, by P. Berman]. *Academe*, 78(6), 66–68. <https://doi.org/10.2307/40250420>
- Stephen Morris. (2012). Political Correctness. *Encyclopedia of Applied Ethics*, 109(2), 496–504. <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-12-373932-2.00287-8>
- Lawler, Peter. (1996). Political Correctness and the End of History. *College Teaching*. 44. 20-23. <https://10.1080/87567555.1996.9925549>
- Sirulhaq, A. (2020). Ignorance of Political Correctness on Joko Widodo ' s Political Rhetoric in the 2019 Presidential Election Campaign : a Pragmatic Study. 465(Access 2019), 186–189.
- Tsehelska, M. (2006). Teaching Politically Correct Language. *English Teaching Forum*, 1, 20–22.
- Wilson, John K.. *The Myth of Political Correctness: The Conservative Attack on Higher Education*, New York, USA: Duke University Press, 1995. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9780822378570>
- Willis, E. (1984). Radical Feminism and Feminist Radicalism. *Social Text*, 9/10, 91–118. <https://doi.org/10.2307/466537>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o7uHAAOAF7U>. (Political Correctness Works For No One | Jonathan Kay | TEDxUTSC)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tPdMG3oFGac>. (Political Correctness Then and Now in the Entertainment Industry | Marc Summers | TEDxCapeMay)
- <https://hbr.org/2006/09/rethinking-political-correctness> (Rethinking Political Correctness) Roper, C. (2020, January 31). political correctness. *Encyclopedia Britannica*. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/political-correctness>