



POSUDEK OPONENTA BAKALÁŘSKÉ PRÁCE

Studijní obor: **AJL - SJL**

Název práce: **Politically correct language and its influence on political success**

Autorka práce: **Viktória Onderková**

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Short characteristics of the thesis

The present thesis addresses the phenomenon of political correctness (PC), rightly claims for it to be one of the signature characteristics of modern rhetoric in political discourse and through the analysis of the 2016 United States presidential elections sets out to examine the impact of PC on public popularity polls.

The entire research and subsequent analysis rest on a hypothesis which claims that “the more a politician uses politically correct language, the worse their results in general popularity polls” (thesis Abstract).

Overall assessment

The topic addressed and its ambition are certainly worthy of research attention.

Viktória Onderková’s undergraduate thesis is a beautifully written piece of work which is well researched and clearly laid out. The style of writing is sophisticated, elegant and thoughtful. The breadth of the research is impressive.

In its ambition, the thesis definitely achieves many of the aims set out in terms of the abstract. Specifically, it clearly explores and redefines the description of political correctness. The thesis takes both a historical and global view of the term, painting a historical journey overlaid by various political and global movements. The description and analysis of the USA 2016 is dramatic, illustrative and very punchy. The narrative is worthy of a historian or a political journalist.

As a linguistic analysis, unfortunately, the thesis presents a number of problems.

Firstly, there is no evidence presented to categorically link the language of the presidential debates to the resultant polls and this unfortunately weakens the objectives of the overall study. With hindsight some sort of study of the American electorate might have been interesting to attempt to solidify the initial proposals. This was a disappointment.

The analysis is centred on examining the three public debates between two key protagonists (Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump) in the 2016 presidential campaign in the USA. The analysis undertaken can be labelled as textual or



thematic, featuring a very limited discussion of the actual language devices employed. To be classified as a linguistic analysis, the researcher is compelled to present the data examined and to create systematic linkages between claims about language and the actual language use. Neither is the reader assisted in appreciating the analysis through excerpts of the actual data. These are only referred to in the text but not even placed in the Appendix. Methodologically, this is a failing.

As regards the objectives of the thesis, the author clearly demonstrated through a textual analysis of the official transcripts of the debates that Hillary Clinton was much more likely to use PC language than that of her opponent Donald Trump. Indeed, the thesis demonstrates how un-PC Trump is. Upon the conclusion of each of the three debates analysed, the author presents the official data regarding the ratings of the two candidates which demonstrates that Clinton was ahead in the polls. However, in the election it was Trump who became the president of the US. The author acknowledges a commonly shared understanding that Trump won due to the electoral college system of the US, whilst Clinton carried the popular vote and overall, more of the American public voted for her.

The difficulty in the thesis is that there is no evidence to link the hypothesis and the result of the election being influenced by the use or non-use of PC language. That is that:

- The textual analysis clearly demonstrates the use of PC
- The statistical rating clearly demonstrates that Clinton is ahead in the polls
- The electoral college system announced Trump as president

But there is no way of claiming that the language of PC was responsible or would influence the outcomes of the elections. As a result, the conclusions fail to live up to the expectations set by the writer and remain to be inconclusive.

Further work and research would be required to answer this question and would be of a scale well outside the scope of this thesis.

Stylistically, typos are rare (e.g., p. 35 wore instead of were) and the same applies to occasional mix-ups as in, for example, Figure 1 describing the Standard Political Compass when the left to right axis on which how economy should be run is assessed should be referred to as axis X (the horizontal one), not axis Y, and analogically the vertical axis measuring one's political opinions in a social sense should have been referred to as axis Y. Personally, the most irritating feature for me was caused by the use of the royal "we" when referring to the author's stance. Otherwise, the flow of writing is incredibly smooth, engrossing and of a very high standard.

Overall, it is clear the student has invested a great amount of energy and time in her work and created an admirable piece of research. The frustration is that if the research question/hypothesis were limited to exploring the extent to which the language



of PC was used in the 2016 election, coupled with the quality of writing and argumentation exhibited, the submission would have resulted in an A.

Questions to be addressed:

- 1) How did you link the 3 polls to the use of politically correct or politically incorrect) language?- Specifically, what were the linguistic grounds on which you determined which language was politically correct and which politically incorrect?
- 2) On reflection would you have perhaps tried to limit your research to the use of politically correct or incorrect language by the presidential candidates. Rather than make the claim in your thesis that those using non-PC language come out better?

Práci doporučuji k obhajobě.

Navrhovaná klasifikace: **velmi dobře**

10. ledna 2023
Datum

Podpis