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A CONTEMPORARY RACIST DISCOURSE AS A FORM OF “PRETEND-TO-BE” POLITICAL CORRECTNESS

The *proposed research paper* addresses the problem of presidential rhetoric regarding immigrant communities in the U.S. and the issues of social inclusion of first-generation undocumented immigrants in the United States. The emphasis is on verbal representation of the processes of immigrant labeling and exclusion by the mainstream. The paper tackles the denounced DACA and DREAM Act programs (multi-phase procedure leading to permanent residency in the U.S.), because they are considered an abuse to executive power by the Republican administration. The relationship between language, social movements and culture is explored. The article brings out the issue of Latinx immigration and aims at identifying the *language* and *discursive* implications for social exclusion through the study of verbalized racism. The research focuses on elaborating a theoretical background for the use of politically correct language; bringing out the overt exclusion of undocumented immigrants in the context of changing political regimes; exploring the verbalized protest of pro-immigrant communities in the U.S.

It is argued that current anti-immigrant rhetoric in the United States is becoming part of “English-only” policy; the discriminatory discourse directed at legal and undocumented immigrants is accompanied by the intensification of the “English-only” policy, while the U.S. does not have an official language. The verbal attacks are generally directed against Spanish-speakers, not against speakers of other languages.

Prejudices that were not expressed publicly earlier, not so long ago are “unleashed” through the President’s rhetoric, although D. Trump does not admit it to be racism. An overtly racist speech with the final remark of being “the least racist” forms a new phenomenon of “reconsidered pretend-to-be-political correctness”.

Immigrant communities and their proponents verbalize their acknowledgement of racism in current political and presidential discourse. It is stated that Latino cultural identity has been denigrated for years and the current presidential rhetoric is supportive of it. There is an idea that “English Only” movement “is driven mostly by hostility towards immigrants and their languages and cultures.

While the verbal representation of discriminatory social attitudes regarding undocumented immigrants is reflected in overt ethnic slurs, immigrant communities and immigration advocates are likely to use revolutionary, supportive and optimistic language.

Key words: undocumented immigrants, racist discourse, gender roles, clash of cultures, intercultural communication, integration, social inclusion, “pretend-to-be” political correctness, verbal representation.

Юнацька А. Б., Хамітова Г. А. Сучасний расистський дискурс як форма удаваної політичної коректності. Стаття присвячена проблемі сучасного расистського дискурсу у політичних промовах. Досліджується феномен удаваної політичної коректності, що фактично супроводжується расовою та етнічною дискримінацією на мовному та мовленнєвому рівнях. Увагу сфокусовано на проблемах соціальної інклюзивності та інтеграції нелегальних іммігрантів у США, а також на поточних змінах в імміграційній політиці Сполучених Штатів. Розглядаються лінгвальні та мовленнєві маркери удаваної політичної коректності у риторичі президента США Дональда Трампа, а також мовні та дискурсивні прояви протесту у риторичі іммігрантів та активістів, що їх підтримують.

Ключові слова: нелегальні іммігранти, расистський дискурс, зіткнення культур, міжкультурна комунікація, інтеграція, соціальна інклюзивність, удавана політична коректність, вербальна репрезентація.

In the 21st century open racist discourse is relatively uncommon, while “pretend-to-be” political correctness is a well-known and well-spread phenomenon, because people today are very

conscious about discrimination. Apart from that, discursive consciousness does not normally let people show their discriminatory views. When “pretend-to-be” political correctness and overt racism are combined in one speech we deal with a new discursive phenomenon.

The **urgency** of the proposed paper is determined by the number of undocumented immigrants currently living in and entering the U.S. and the increasing anti-immigration tendencies verbalized in contemporary political discourse.

The presidential rhetoric regarding immigrant communities in the U.S. is qualified as an **object** of the present research; **subject** is the verbal representation of the processes of immigrant labeling and exclusion by the mainstream. The **purpose** of the paper is to identify the *language* and *discursive* implications for social exclusion through the study of verbalized racism. The research is **aimed at** the following: elaborating a theoretical background for the use of politically correct language; bringing out the overt exclusion of undocumented immigrants in the context of changing political regimes; exploring the verbalized protest of pro-immigrant communities in the U.S.

It is common knowledge that immigrants settle in wealthier countries searching for safety, improved economic conditions, and better education options. Today co-existence of different ethnic groups in the same territory is becoming a more controversial and complicated issue, because of the great inflow of recent refugees who are viewed as undesirable by numerous opponents of continuous immigration.

The population of undocumented immigrants in the United States is approximately 11.3 million [Fazel-Zarandi 2018], Latinos make up about 18% of the population [Vives, Castillo 2019]. Spanish speakers make up an estimated 41 million in the US and the number is increasing [Díez 2019]. Intolerance to first-generation undocumented immigrants in the United States of America is growing. The country that was built due to immigration does not abide *recent* immigrants, who according to the Republican segment of the country are more identifiably different from the mainstream, do not assimilate and embrace American values [Yunatska 2018]. When running for President Trump “had labeled migrants from Mexico as *rapists*, *criminals* and *drug traffickers*” [Vives, Castillo 2019]. In his infamous speech in 2018 President Trump used the *racist language* again calling African countries “*shithole countries*” [BBC News 2018; Yunatska 2018].

At the same time he calls himself the “least racist person”. Being already President of the country, at one of the press-conferences as well as making his full statement regarding immigration he openly called an undocumented group of migrants moving up from Central America towards the border of the U.S. “invaders”: “This caravan was an *invasion*”. When asked why he had characterized it as such he responded: “Because *I consider* it an *invasion*. You and I have a difference in opinion”. In his rhetoric President Trump literally demonized immigrants but stressed that “they have to come in legally, through a process” [PBS News Hour 2018].

As a result, many Latinos found it impossible to continue occupying responsible and managerial positions and “represent the country under his administration” [Vives, Castillo 2019]. After a series of verbal assaults, the El Paso massacre happened. It caused “more than 200 actors, writers and artists of Latin American descent to sign a *letter of solidarity*”. The famous Mexican American writer Sandra Cisneros was among those who signed the letter: “We have been *smear*ed by *political rhetoric* and *murdered* in *violent hate crimes*”. The signatories promised “not to be *broken* and *silenced*, but rather “continue to denounce any *hateful* and *inhumane treatment* of their *community*”, demanding *dignity* and *justice*” [Vives, Castillo 2019]. The vocabulary used in the letter of solidarity on the one hand emphasizes that pro-immigrant communities acknowledge racism in presidential discourse (*smear*ed, *hateful* and *inhumane treatment*, etc.), on the other hand, there is a promise to hang in and struggle (demanding *dignity* and *justice*).

Many Latinos believe that “the El Paso shooting and Trumpian rhetoric against them suggest that the country is *regressing*”. Immigrants, they believe, made the U.S. a country “brick by brick”, they believe it to be “an attack on the very DNA of this country” [Vives, Castillo 2019].

There is an organization of “English-Only” proponents (ProEnglish) in the U.S and they believe that “a pluralistic nation ... should ... foster and support the *similarities* that *unite* ..., rather than *institutionalise the differences* that divide ...” [Díez 2019]. They mean English as a unifying factor rather than the “divisive” bilingualism.

While previous waves of immigrants were entitled to shape the American Nation, more recent immigrants have to acquire the necessary cultural competences and embrace the values of the U.S. society. Thus, Latinx immigration and assimilation have been studied from a socio-historical perspective [Balestra, Martinez, Moyna 2008]. Samuel P. Huntington, a classic opponent of Mexican immigration, claimed that “the single most immediate and most serious challenge to America’s traditional identity comes from the immense and continuing immigration from Latin America, especially Mexico” [Yunatska 2018]. In the United States of America about 25 % of low-wage workers are foreign-born. Latinx (gender neutral term for people with Latin American and Spanish-speaking background) Americans are an increasingly significant portion of its population. Legal immigrants primarily enter the U.S. to be united with their families; undocumented immigrants enter for work purposes. However, they bring their children and naturally want them to obtain education and pursue careers in the U.S.

According to the National Science Foundation around 30 % of graduate students in science, engineering, and health are foreign (NSF 2013). Contrary to Huntington’s statement, many undocumented first-generation low-income immigrants certainly set great hopes on education, strive for becoming professionals and succeed in their careers.

Meanwhile, recent changes of political regimes and immigration policies have seriously influenced undocumented immigrants. While President Obama introduced significant changes into the country’s immigration policies through announcing a set of progressive actions and later expanding DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) in order to cover additional undocumented immigrants, the new Republican party leaders denounced the DACA program as an abuse to executive power. Likewise DREAM Act (Development, Relief, and Education), DACA is a multi-phase procedure leading to permanent residency in the U.S. It aimed at young undocumented immigrants brought to the U.S. by their parents; the vast majority of them are from Mexico. At the University of Arizona, an activist, M. Dominguez, calls to action (in support of the DACA students) all higher education faculty and staff. She worked out recommendations to support DACA students on campus, creating a safe and welcoming environment, including support for mental health and empathy. The activist argues that “along with *social stigmas* and *discrimination* come the feelings of *shame* and *guilt*” [Dominguez 2018, Yunatska 2018].

Many renowned Universities (students and faculty) express concern for young undocumented students whom they see as marginalized after the divisive decisions of the Republican government. Activists are trying to make their colleges sanctuary campuses, because they believe it to be undisputable that undocumented students of color are unprotected on campus [Brown University 2016; Podugu 2017; Texas A& M University, Yunatska 2018].

Scholars stress that there is also “a small but vocal movement to restrict the spread of Spanish” [Díez 2019]. There have been debates on English-Spanish bilingualism for decades. Resisting the *assimilationist model* of the U.S. society, bilingual educators state that children lose a degree of “individuality” by blending into the Anglo mainstream. Contrary to this statement, an educational consultant and a free-lance writer Richard Rodriguez, a Mexican American who grew up in California, stresses that a student should not be reminded of his difference from others and his heritage in mass society. In this respect R. Rodriguez comes up with the conclusion that “bilingualists” (proponents of bilingual education) oversimplify their approach to assimilation. According to R. Rodriguez a person is individualized in two ways: in *private* and in *public*. There is no balance between their *private* and *public individuality*. The author does not deny the disadvantages of assimilation, but at the same time underlines that “while one suffers a diminished

sense of *private individuality* by being assimilated into public society, such assimilation makes possible the achievement of *public individuality*" [Yunatska 2017, 114].

Donald Trump simply and very straightforwardly announced during his presidential campaign and having become President: "This is a country where we speak *English*. It's *English*. You have to speak English!" [Díez 2019]. Referring to his rival in the presidential campaign (former Florida governor Jeb Bush), who addressed his voters in Spanish, Trump reacted: "Jeb Bush is *crazy*, who cares that he speaks *Mexican*, this is America, *English!*!" [Vives, Castillo 2019].

Thus Latino cultural identity has been denigrated for years and the current presidential rhetoric is supportive of it. There is an idea that "English Only" movement "is driven mostly by hostility towards immigrants and their languages and cultures" [Díez 2019]. A popular Latino actor Wilmer Valderrama also stresses "underrepresentation, and misrepresentation, of Latinos in popular culture". He points out that he would like "to make sure that someone doesn't erase *their* heritage, the struggle and sacrifice that *their* great-grandparents or grandparents or parents made" [Vives, Castillo 2019].

Conclusion.

1. Current anti-immigrant rhetoric in the United States is becoming part of "English-only" policy; the discriminatory discourse directed at legal and undocumented immigrants is accompanied by the intensification of the "English-only" policy, while the U.S. does not have an official language. The verbal attacks are generally directed against Spanish-speakers, not against speakers of other languages.
2. Prejudices that were not expressed publicly earlier, not so long ago were "unleashed" through the president's rhetoric, although D. Trump does not admit it to be racism. An overtly racist speech with the final remark of being "the least racist" forms a new phenomenon of "reconsidered pretend-to-be-political correctness".
3. Immigrant communities and their proponents verbalize their acknowledgement of racism in current political and presidential discourse (*demonizing immigrants, regressing, smearing, scapegoating*).
4. While the verbal representation of discriminatory social attitudes regarding undocumented immigrants is reflected in overt ethnic slurs (*illegals, illegal aliens*), immigrant communities and immigration advocates are likely to use revolutionary, supportive and optimistic language (*major responsibility, Latino leadership, calling to unite, immigration rights clinic, the struggle and sacrifice, solidarity, dignity, justice*).

Further research in this domain may include the factual and verbal output of the ongoing pro-immigrant struggle in the United States.

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