

Politically correct and gender-neutral language: effects, consequences, acceptance

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Abstract. Political correctness and gender-neutral language are language practices that aim to critically examine current language usage based on certain progressive norms and reject certain words, terms, or expressions deemed inappropriate, while seeking alternatives. This applies to all forms of expression that could offend, discriminate, or underrepresent someone based on their ethnic origin, gender, social class, physical or mental disability, or sexual orientation. Advocates of this language usage argue that it helps promote greater inclusivity, respect, and equality in society, while opponents argue that it leads to language regulation that can make language unclear, complicated, contradictory, incomprehensible, or even censorious. Moreover, some critics argue that this language regulation can be counterproductive, as it may unintentionally draw attention to and reinforce differences among people, rather than celebrating diversity. Additionally, some have argued that language regulation can distract from more significant issues of systemic oppression and inequality, leading to a superficial focus on language instead of real social change. In summary, the debate over politically correct and gender-neutral language reflects broader debates over cultural and social change, with proponents seeing it as a necessary step toward greater equality and respect, and opponents viewing it as a restriction on free speech and a form of social engineering.

Keywords: political correctness, gender-neutral language, progressive norms, language regulation, inclusivity, respect, equality, oppression, systemic inequality, free speech, social engineering

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