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ALTERNATIVE EUPHEMISMS: INVESTIGATING THE PRESENCE OF “PEOPLE-FIRST” EXPRESSIONS IN THE COCA CORPUS

Abstract: Politically correct language seems to have become a norm in the past three decades; however, this type of language is in constant flux, with alternative expressions replacing old ones. Among key expressions used in politically correct language are expressions known as euphemisms, a euphemism being “a word or phrase used as an alternative to a dispreferred expression.” (Allan 2001: 148) This research focuses on politically correct euphemisms used for people with disabilities, which are introduced in an attempt to create a more neutral and non-discriminatory attitude towards this group of people. The subtype of politically correct euphemisms about people with disabilities explored in this paper falls under the label of “people-first” language, which replaces premodified with postmodified nouns. This paper aims to ascertain the level to which these prescribed guidelines for talking about people with disabilities have been implemented in everyday American English by exploring their distribution in the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) in comparison to their “non-people-first” counterparts within the 1990–2010 period. The hypothesis is that the research will show a larger proportion of the politically correct people-first expressions coupled with non-offensive lexical euphemisms and that the progress of time will coincide with the increase in people-first terminology in comparison to its non-people-first counterparts.

Keywords: euphemisms, people-first, people with disabilities

1. Introduction

In general, the goal of language and communication is to promote harmonious relations and social cohesion among people. One of the inescapable elements of this kind of communication are the norms of political correctness — a term used to describe language, policies, or measures which are intended to prevent offending or disadvantaging any particular group of people in a society (Puissegur 2016). Among key expressions used within the area of political correctness are expressions known as euphemisms, a euphemism being “a word or phrase used as an alternative to a dispreferred expression.” (Allan 2001: 148)

A sphere of life where politically correct euphemisms play a significant role is referring to people with disabilities. A subtype of these politically correct euphemisms is the so-called “people-first” language, euphemistic expressions that

use postmodified instead of premodified nouns. Apart from the standard lexical changes of expressions with a dysphemistic connotation, this approach envisaged a syntactic change that would use postmodified instead of premodified nouns. For example, one should say that someone is ‘a person with a disability’, and not ‘a disabled person.’ These principles are reflections of changes in society, attempting to create a more polite or sensitive world for all its members. The idea behind introducing prescribed rules is that changing the language used to address people with disabilities will change the public attitudes towards these marginalized groups.

This paper aims to ascertain the level to which these prescribed guidelines for talking about people with disabilities have been implemented in everyday American English. This will be achieved by exploring their distribution in the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) in comparison to their “non-people-first” counterparts, which raises two secondary goals. The first one is to ascertain which areas of everyday language use are more susceptible to the influence of language planning in the form of prescribed rules. By areas of language use, we mean the presence of these expressions in the three expression categories (people with disabilities, people with blindness, and people with hearing impairments) and five genres of the COCA (spoken, fiction, newspaper, magazine, and academic). The other secondary aim is to determine whether the usage of people-first expressions has grown over time by examining their distribution in comparison with their non-people-first counterparts in the 1990–2010 period, the two decades when their use should have gradually become the norm. The hypothesis is that the corpus search will show a larger proportion of the politically correct people-first expressions coupled with non-offensive lexical euphemisms, as well as that the progress of time will coincide with the increase in people-first terminology in comparison to its non-people-first counterparts.

2. Theoretical framework

As a part of politically correct language, the general rule of using politically correct euphemisms involves using a commonly innocuous word or expression in place of one that may be found offensive or suggest something unpleasant (Webster’s Online Dictionary). The main motive for using these expressions is to avoid “dysphemistic locution” — language that is perceived as discriminatory “against a variety of disadvantaged groups” (Allan, 2001:153), which testifies to its role in the greater area of political correctness.

The last decade of the twentieth century in the United States saw a significant number of publications in the areas of psychology and education that proposed a people-first approach, which stated that premodified nouns (such as *disabled people*) needed to be substituted by postmodified nouns (*people with disabilities*) (e.g., American Psychological Association 1994, Folkins 1992). The central presupposition of this approach (and euphemistic locution in general) is that changing the language will modify the attitudes towards disadvantaged groups for the better. This attitude

rests upon Benjamin Lee Whorf’s “linguistic relativity principle” (Whorf 1956: 214), which states that differences in language use influence the perceptual apparatus:

We dissect nature along lines laid down by our native language. The categories and types that we isolate from the world of phenomena we do not find there because they stare every observer in the face; on the contrary, the world is presented in a kaleidoscope flux of impressions which has to be organized by our minds — and this means largely by the linguistic systems of our minds.

(Whorf 1956: 212–214)

In other words, the assumption is that using postmodified instead of premodified nouns would emphasize the personhood of people with disabilities, and not the fact that they are disabled. If this is introduced as a norm by the authorities, in time, this would change the public’s attitude towards this social group that is often a target of discrimination.

The American Psychological Association gave the general tenets of the people-first language through the Committee on Disability Issues in Psychology (1992), and they can be summarized in the following five prescriptions:

- 1) Put people first, not their disability/Avoid implying that “a person as a whole is disabled (e.g., disabled person)”;
- 2) Do not label people by their disability/Avoid equating “persons with their condition (e.g., epileptics)”;
- 3) Do not overextend the severity of a disability/Avoid expressions that extend the scope of the disability (e.g., the disabled);
- 4) Use emotionally neutral expressions/Avoid suggestion of helplessness (e.g., stroke victim, suffer from a stroke, confined to a wheelchair);
- 5) Avoid offensive expressions (e.g., cripple).

(Committee on Disability Issues in Psychology 1992)

The stated prescribed rules are exemplified in the following expressions given in Table 1, taken from Halmari (2011: 830):

	PROBLEMATIC	PREFERRED
I	Disabled person Mentally ill person	Person with (who has/having) a disability Person with mental illness
II	Deaf and dumb/the deaf Schizophrenics Epileptics Amputee Paraplegics The disabled The retarded The mentally ill The CMI or SPMI	People who are hearing impaired People who have schizophrenia Individuals with (who have) epilepsy Person with an amputation Individuals with paraplegia People with disabilities Children with mental retardation People with a mental illness People with long term or serious and persistent mental illness or psychiatric disabilities
III	The physically disabled The learning disabled Retarded adult	Individuals with a physical disability Children with specific learning disabilities Adult with mental retardation

IV	Stroke victim Afflicted with cerebral palsy Suffering from multiple sclerosis	Individual who had a stroke Person with cerebral palsy People who have multiple sclerosis
V	Cripples Deformed Mongoloid Crazy, paranoid	People who are mobility impaired / People who use wheelchairs Person with a shortened arm Child with Down Syndrome Person with symptoms of mental illness

Table 1. ‘Problematic’ vs. ‘preferred’ phrases taken from Halmari (2011: 830)

The syntactic form of the preferred expression is 1) head noun + prepositional phrase (PP starting with the preposition *with*); 2) head noun + relative clause (starting with *who*), or 3) head noun + participial (*people having*). Apart from the change of the syntactic pattern, the preferred language introduces lexical euphemisms for the terms which were often earlier euphemisms themselves (e.g., *people with long term mental illness* for *CMI*, itself a euphemistic acronym for “chronic mental illness”). A further characteristic is the favoring of abstract nominalizations: disability, paraplegia, retardation, mental illness, etc. The final characteristic of this language is that the postmodifying relative clauses include transitive verbs *have* (*people who have schizophrenia*) and *use* (*people who use wheelchairs*) in the “preferred” expressions.

4. Previous research

Halmari (2011) investigated the distribution of people-first and non-people-first expressions related to people with disabilities in the press, i.e., the Texas daily newspaper named the *Houston Chronicle*, in the 2002–2007 period. The results were compared to those acquired using the same methodology to analyze articles from *Google News*. The goal was to determine to what extent people-first euphemisms were adopted in a non-academic everyday context of a daily newspaper. The results spoke largely in favor of the “non-people-first” approach — 73.6% of the *Houston Chronicle* corpus and 73% of the *Google News* corpus pertained to the non-people-first variant. On one hand, as far as the people-first expressions in the *Houston Chronicle* are concerned, the structures containing a noun and a postmodifier are either embedded within names of organizations providing services for the target groups, or in descriptions of what these types of centers, organizations, or programs do. On the other hand, the non-people-first pattern is reserved for criminals, their victims, or some fictional characters while the people-first pattern is used regarding children and non-criminal adults.

Stamenković (2017) examined the level to which these prescribed guidelines for talking about people with disabilities were adopted in the Serbian press during a period of nine years. This involved analyzing the distribution of people-first expressions in the online archives of the Serbian newspaper *Politika* between 2007 and 2015. As far as the absolute numbers are concerned, non-people-first expressions were slightly more dominant, but there was no strong inclination towards either type (50.73%). Another aim of the research was to ascertain whether the percentage of

people-first expressions (in relation to their non-people-first counterparts) grew over time. However, a linear regression analysis provided no statistically significant connection between the passage of time and the increase in the share of politically correct people-first expressions.

Taking another perspective, nearly half of the expressions conformed to the people-first pattern, while certain expression categories favored one variation over the other. The category denoting “People with disabilities” tended to use the people-first version of expressions while the category “People with visual and hearing impairment” strongly favored the non-people-first variant.

5. Methodology

This research was performed by searching the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA), which contains more than 520 million words in 220,225 texts equally balanced among five genres: spoken (109 million words), fiction (105 million words), popular magazines (110 million words), newspapers (106 million words), and academic journals (103 million words)¹. This corpus had been updated by 20 million words each year from 1990 until 2015. This balanced presence of language from different genres allows not only a good general overview of the distribution of people-first expressions but also a possibility to look at the degree of their acceptance and introduction in individual genres. Furthermore, the timespan the corpus covers is in line with the introduction of the people-first norm since it spans several years before and after the alleged year of its official introduction (1992/1994). An additional advantage of the corpus is that it allows for filtering by genres and years, enabling researchers to track a phenomenon within an individual genre for every included year.

The search was limited to three areas: people with disabilities (general reference to people with some sort of disability), people with blindness, and people with hearing impairments. The reason these target groups were selected is because there has been a history of opposition to this language by associations of people with blindness and hearing impairments. Firstly, as Jernigan (2009) notes, the National Federation of the Blind adopted a resolution in 1993 that condemned people-first language and dismissed the notion that the term “person” must be placed before the disability in order to emphasize the humanity of the people. They argued that the effect was the opposite of the intended aim since it implied some sort of shame and not equality. Secondly, people with hearing impairments also rejected this prescribed norm since they saw their disability as a source of positive identity and pride (Lum 2010: 441) and had no problem embracing the premodified term “Deaf person” (Gallaudet University 2013). Therefore, it seems that the analysis of these two groups of expressions would yield interesting results, while the group of expressions encompassing all people with disabilities was introduced to see if any differences would emerge.

A list of search terms was compiled for both people-first terms and their non-people-first counterparts for these three groups according to the tenets of people-first language

(Committee on Disability Issues in Psychology 1992; Halmari 2011; Snow 2016). The search queries were limited to noun phrases, including premodified and postmodified noun phrases, and lexically offensive expressions. The search queries used the lemmatization feature of the corpus, the part-of-speech tagging feature and its extension which enables the specification of what a particular word should be searched as by adding an underscore with a certain letter, and the filtering features for the genre and time period. Table 2 gives an overview of the search queries used to search the corpus.

	People with disabilities	People with visual impairments	People with hearing impairments
non-people-first	disabled_j NOUN the disabled handicapped_j* NOUN the handicapped	deaf and dumb NOUN the deaf and dumb deaf NOUN the deaf hearing impaired NOUN the hearing impaired hearing-impaired NOUN the hearing-impaired	blind_j NOUN the blind visually impaired NOUN the visually impaired
people-first	NOUN with a disability NOUN with disabilities NOUN who HAVE a disability NOUN who HAVE disabilities NOUN having a disability NOUN having disabilities	NOUN with a hearing impairment NOUN who HAVE a hearing impairment NOUN with hearing impairments NOUN who HAVE hearing impairments NOUN who BE hearing impaired NOUN having a hearing impairment NOUN having hearing impairments	NOUN with blindness NOUN with a visual impairment NOUN with visual impairments NOUN having a visual impairment NOUN having visual impairments NOUN who HAVE a visual impairment NOUN who HAVE visual impairments

Table 2. The search queries used to search the COCA

After the figures were acquired, they were first normalized by dividing the absolute frequencies by the number of words that the portion of the corpus contained in order to enable direct comparison. The analysis consisted of three stages: the first stage encompassed a general overview per category of expression and genre; the second stage included grouping the numerical result per expression category (disability, blindness, and hearing impairments), regardless of the genre; and the third stage meant presenting the results according to the five genres (spoken, fiction, newspaper, magazine, and academic), regardless of the expression category. Apart from that, the second and third stages of analysis included calculating the percentage of the people-first expressions in comparison to their non-people-first counterparts (their percentage in the total number of expressions for the given year) to ascertain whether their presence in each category/genre grew over time, indicating the degree of their acceptance into everyday language. The following section, which presents and discusses the results acquired by this research, will describe these procedures in more detail.

6. Results and discussion

6.1 General overview of the data

When the searches and the disambiguation between false positives were performed, the observed absolute frequencies were organized in tables, which can be seen in the Appendix, including detailed results for every search query. However, even though the different sections of the COCA have roughly the same number of words, the absolute values still needed to be normalized to allow comparison between figures. Table 3 shows the exact number of words that every section (genre) of the COCA contains.

Genre	Words
Spoken	109,391,643
Fiction	104,900,827
Magazine	110,110,637
Newspaper	105,963,844
Academic	103,421,981

Table 3. An overview of the number of words every section of the COCA contains

Since some of the absolute frequencies were rather small, the frequency was calculated as the number of examples per 100 million words and the values were rounded to include two decimal spaces. Figure 1 shows the relative frequencies of expressions dealing with people with disabilities in general².

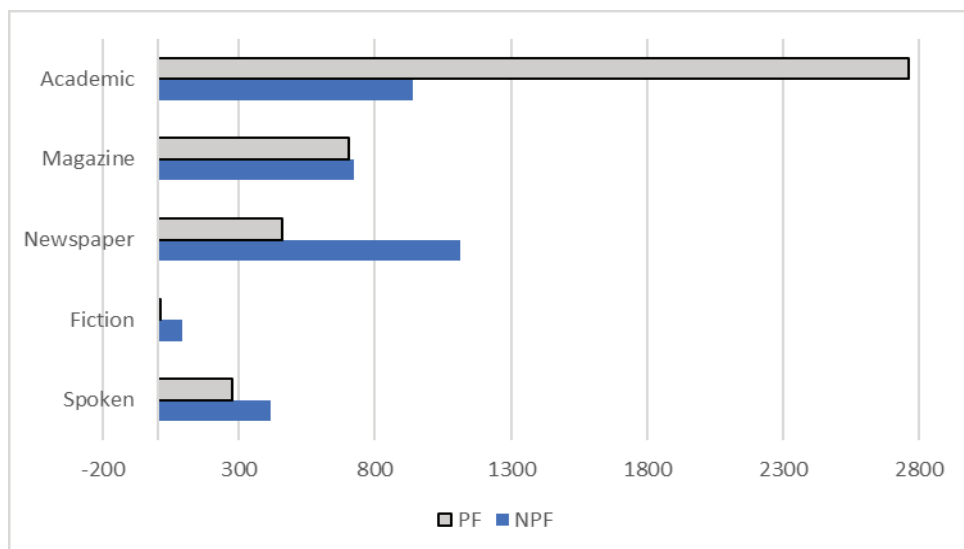


Figure 1. The relative frequencies per 100 million words of expressions regarding people with disabilities

What is noticeable is that the spoken, fiction and newspaper genres favor the non-people-first way of address, while the magazine genre is more balanced.

However, the academic genre shows a strong tendency towards the people-first expressions, which is expected. Namely, it is always the academic community that is first to adopt new and politically correct terminology since many of the editor boards explicitly instruct authors regarding the terminology they should use. Considering that authors of fiction do not adhere to prescribed norms due to the different style of the content they create, the fiction section contains an expectedly low number of people-first expressions, with some of the years not containing a single instance. One discrepancy must be noted when considering genre differences. In Stamenković (2017), the category of people with disabilities was the one where people-first expressions were predominantly used. Since that research only considered press sources, a similar result would be expected in the newspaper genre of the COCA, which proved to be untrue. Nevertheless, this is still in line with Halmari (2011) even though she considers a broader range of expressions. Moving on, Figure 2 shows the relative frequencies of expressions regarding people with blindness.

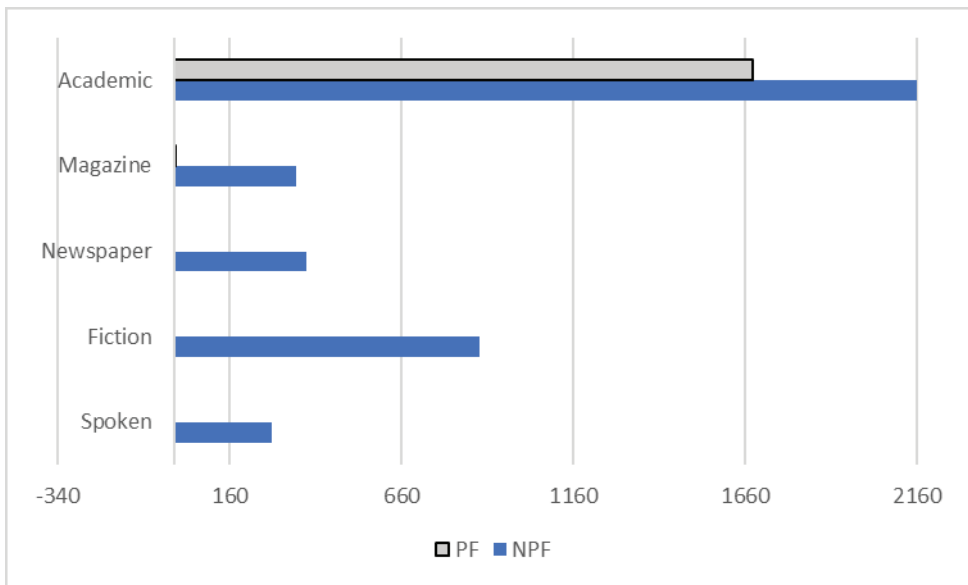


Figure 2. The relative frequencies per 100 million words of expressions regarding people with blindness

The category of expressions about people with blindness shows an even greater propensity towards non-people-first conventions. The spoken, fiction and newspaper genres do not contain any instances of people-first expressions, while the magazine section shows an immense tendency for using non-people-first expressions. Regarding the academic section, there is a noticeable difference from the previous category as the non-people-first expressions are dominant, but not in a manner as extreme as in the other genres. Like the previous category, the academic genre has the largest number of instances, which could be explained by a large volume of researchers dealing with the topics of vision impairment and blindness. The academic genre is more susceptible to

the prescribed people-first norm, but it seems other factors influence the dominance of non-people-first expressions. As mentioned in the Methodology section, the opposition from the community of people with blindness to people-first expressions seems to have influenced their use since people do not view the non-people-first expressions as offensive, which is why many of the mentioned institutions still contain the terms *the blind* or *blind people*. The results for people with hearing impairments are given in Figure 3.

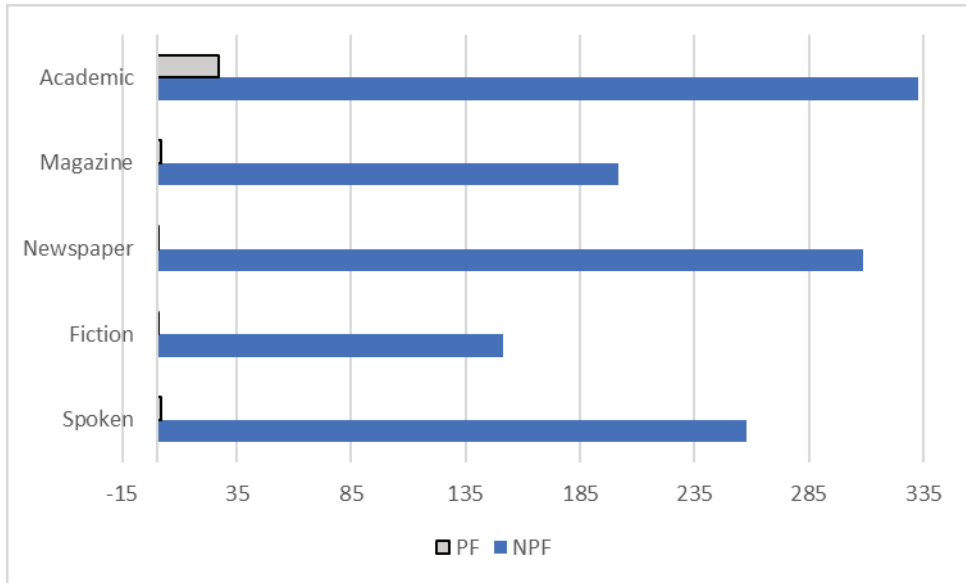


Figure 3. The relative frequencies per 100 million words of expressions regarding people with hearing impairments

This category of expressions again shows the dominance of non-people-first language, but now complete dominance exists in all five genres. Even though there are fewer expressions in total, in every genre for more than 90% of the cases the speakers chose not to use people-first language. Even the academic genre, which was noticeably different from the rest with a higher percentage of people-first expressions, now exhibits over 92% non-people-first expressions. This finding supports the idea that the “Deaf community” overwhelmingly does not see new norms in speaking with them as necessary and sees no stigmatizing characteristics in non-people-first expressions.

6.2 Data analysis by expression category

This subsection will first examine the individual categories of expressions without considering individual genres. The data for the first category, people with disabilities, are given in Table 4.

Year	NPF	%NPF	PF	%PF	Total
1990	253.48	73.75	90.21	26.25	343.69

1991	251.84	66.1	129.17	33.9	381.01
1992	231.13	54.53	192.74	45.47	423.87
1993	202.97	49.98	203.17	50.02	406.14
1994	205.53	41.72	287.09	58.28	492.62
1995	164.35	45.2	199.22	54.8	363.57
1996	192.03	50.72	186.55	49.28	378.58
1997	231.58	68.93	104.4	31.07	335.98
1998	160.23	37.02	272.61	62.98	432.84
1999	115.5	50.6	112.77	49.4	228.27
2000	170.06	49.71	172.07	50.29	342.13
2001	97.2	24.2	304.5	75.80	401.7
2002	123.12	46.58	141.22	53.42	264.34
2003	92.69	46.69	105.83	53.31	198.52
2004	111.82	38.69	177.22	61.31	289.04
2005	116.97	25.85	335.51	74.15	452.48
2006	108.06	14.51	636.76	85.49	744.82
2007	73.47	34.17	141.54	65.83	215.01
2008	119.85	47.23	133.93	52.77	253.78
2009	144.03	55.71	114.51	44.29	258.54
2010	123.44	41.88	171.31	58.12	294.75
Total	3289.35	43.85	4212.37	56.15	7501.72

Table 4. The relative frequencies of all the people-first and non-people-first expressions in the category of people with disabilities

The first noticeable thing in Table 4 is that the total number of people-first examples is larger than the number of their non-people-first counterparts. However, as Table 4 indicates, it is the academic genre that is accountable for this dominance of people-first expressions in this category. Figure 4 shows how the percentage of people-first phrases (relative to their non-people-first counterparts) changed over time.

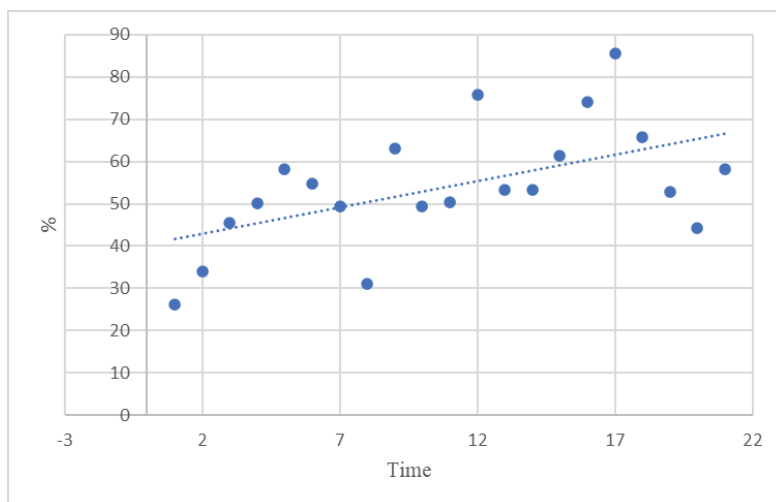


Figure 4. The percentage of people-first expressions in relation to their non-people-first counterparts through time for the category of people with disabilities
The data proved to have a statistically significant positive trend, where the

slope coefficient is $\beta=1.25$ and the P-value is 0.011 ($p<0.05$), showing that there is an increase in people-first terminology over time. Therefore, the category of expressions related to people with disabilities not only generally has more people-first expressions, but their percentage also rose in the 1990–2010 period.

The percentage of people-first expressions was also determined for the category of people with blindness, which is laid out in Table 5.

Year	NPF	%NPF	PF	%PF	Total
1990	157.39	82.72	32.88	17.28	190.27
1991	220.35	98.78	2.72	1.22	223.07
1992	109.26	82.48	23.21	17.52	132.47
1993	126.39	99.29	0.91	0.71	127.3
1994	98.78	97.15	2.9	2.85	101.68
1995	175.6	92.37	14.5	7.63	190.1
1996	357.39	81.84	79.29	18.16	436.68
1997	525.36	81.66	117.96	18.34	643.32
1998	149.96	98.1	2.9	1.9	152.86
1999	108.76	100	0	0	108.76
2000	184.66	82.68	38.68	17.32	223.34
2001	156.6	88.04	21.27	11.96	177.87
2002	87.56	100	0	0	87.56
2003	85.93	100	0	0	85.93
2004	186.96	74.84	62.85	25.16	249.81
2005	106.42	90.91	10.64	9.09	117.06
2006	289.85	77.91	82.19	22.09	372.04
2007	208.57	48.51	221.42	51.49	429.99
2008	206.22	45.45	247.53	54.55	453.75
2009	331.07	47.66	363.56	52.34	694.63
2010	192.35	34.79	360.6	65.21	552.95
Total	4065.43	70.69	1686	29.31	5751.43

Table 5. The relative frequencies of all the people-first and non-people-first expressions in the category of people with blindness

In this case, the overall number of expressions favors the non-people-first variation, with over 70% of the overall expressions belonging to this group. However, the percentage of people-first expressions regarding people with blindness seems to rise from 2004 onward. To visualize this, the percentage of people-first expressions for each year is presented in Figure 5.

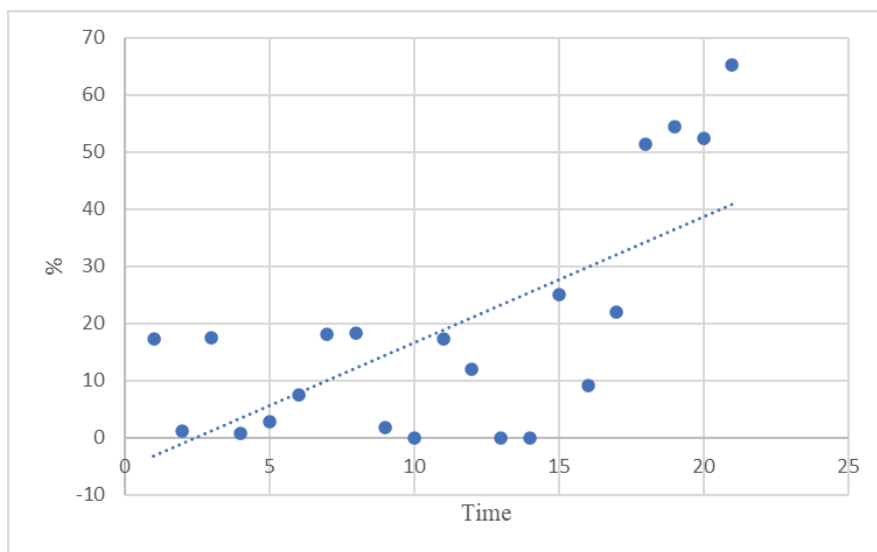


Figure 5. The percentage of people-first expressions in relation to their non-people-first counterparts through time for the category of people with blindness

Linear regression shows a highly statistically relevant relationship between the passage of time and the increase in the percentage of people-first expressions ($p=0.000786$). The slope coefficient (β) of 2.2 reveals a shift towards people-first language, which is in line with one of the initial hypotheses.

The third and final category of expressions is related to people with hearing impairments. The overview of the relative frequencies of both expression categories and their percentage for every year is given in Table 6.

Year	NPF	%NPF	PF	%PF	Total
1990	42.4	97.9	0.91	2.1	43.31
1991	55.76	100	0	0	55.76
1992	96.54	100	0	0	96.54
1993	122.67	100	0	0	122.67
1994	103.79	98.17	1.93	1.83	105.72
1995	20.76	95.8	0.91	4.2	21.67
1996	41.51	91.59	3.81	8.41	45.32
1997	56.3	98.31	0.97	1.69	57.27
1998	42.26	100	0	0	42.26
1999	75.06	100	0	0	75.06
2000	65.78	98.55	0.97	1.45	66.75
2001	54.91	98.26	0.97	1.74	55.88
2002	82.92	98.87	0.95	1.13	83.87
2003	38.73	90.92	3.87	9.08	42.6
2004	42.29	97.76	0.97	2.24	43.26
2005	54.55	91.87	4.83	8.13	59.38
2006	62.99	90.33	6.74	9.67	69.73
2007	34.01	97.23	0.97	2.77	34.98
2008	34.05	97.4	0.91	2.6	34.96

2009	68.02	98.59	0.97	1.41	68.99
2010	56.82	96.71	1.93	3.29	58.75
Total	1252.2	97.46	32.61	2.54	1284.81

Table 6. The relative frequencies of all the people-first and non-people-first expressions in the category of people with hearing impairments

Non-people-first expressions are completely dominant both in the total number of expressions and in the numbers for every individual year, where the proportion of people-first constructions never reaches 10%. The change of the percentages through time is presented in Figure 6.

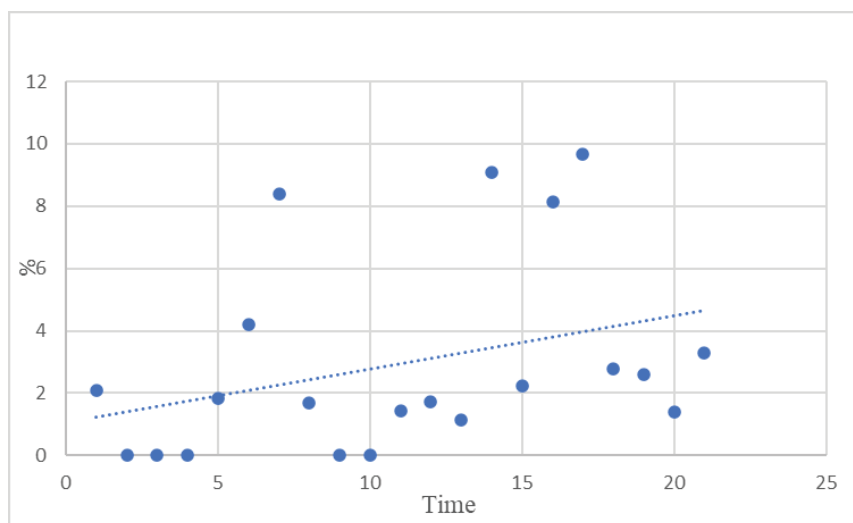


Figure 6. The percentage of people-first expressions in relation to their non-people-first counterparts through time for the category of people with hearing impairments

Linear regression confirms that the slope coefficient is 0.17 and that there is no statistically significant relationship ($p=0.13112$) between this slight increase in percentage and the passage of time.

6.3 Data analysis by expression genre

This final subsection will approach the data from the perspective of different genres and will not consider any expression categories. Table 7 shows how the number of people-first and non-people-first expressions changed over time in the spoken genre.

Year	NPF	%NPF	PF	%PF	Total
1990	42.97	53.41	37.48	46.59	80.45
1991	28.34	79.5	7.31	20.5	35.65
1992	63.98	74.46	21.94	25.54	85.92
1993	47.54	85.24	8.23	14.76	55.77
1994	47.53	83.87	9.14	16.13	56.67
1995	26.51	76.31	8.23	23.69	34.74

1996	55.76	71.76	21.94	28.24	77.7
1997	55.76	78.2	15.54	21.8	71.3
1998	38.4	37.84	63.08	62.16	101.48
1999	34.73	86.37	5.48	13.63	40.21
2000	59.42	83.34	11.88	16.66	71.3
2001	42.97	82.46	9.14	17.54	52.11
2002	87.76	96.97	2.74	3.03	90.5
2003	12.8	77.76	3.66	22.24	16.46
2004	36.56	75.47	11.88	24.53	48.44
2005	45.71	74.63	15.54	25.37	61.25
2006	59.41	92.86	4.57	7.14	63.98
2007	14.62	69.55	6.4	30.45	21.02
2008	31.09	91.9	2.74	8.1	33.83
2009	90.51	95.19	4.57	4.81	95.08
2010	37.47	85.41	6.4	14.59	43.87
Total	959.86	77.55	277.9	22.45	1237.76

Table 7. The relative frequencies of all the people-first and non-people-first expressions in the spoken genre

Once again, the spoken genre shows the dominance of non-people-first expressions. To determine whether there is an increase in the percentage of people-first constructions over time, a scatter plot was created and is shown in Figure 7.

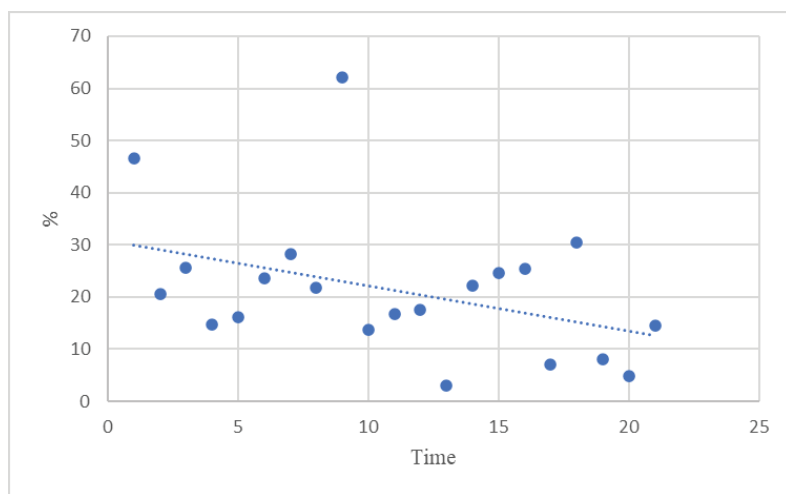


Figure 7. The percentage of people-first expressions in relation to their non-people-first counterparts through time for the spoken genre

Instead of an increasing trend, the spoken genre observes a negative slope coefficient of -0.863; however, this proves to be statistically insignificant ($p=0.07679$), signifying that the alleged trend is a matter of chance.

Moving on, Table 8 shows the relative frequencies of both expression types in the fiction genre of the corpus.

Year	NPF	%NPF	PF	%PF	Total
1990	42.89	100	0	0	42.89
1991	50.52	100	0	0	50.52
1992	40.99	100	0	0	40.99
1993	72.45	98.71	0.95	1.29	73.4
1994	60.06	100	0	0	60.06
1995	27.64	100	0	0	27.64
1996	51.48	98.19	0.95	1.81	52.43
1997	72.45	98.71	0.95	1.29	73.4
1998	57.2	98.37	0.95	1.63	58.15
1999	61.96	100	0	0	61.96
2000	87.7	98.93	0.95	1.07	88.65
2001	31.46	100	0	0	31.46
2002	64.82	97.15	1.9	2.85	66.72
2003	43.85	93.88	2.86	6.12	46.71
2004	40.04	95.45	1.91	4.55	41.95
2005	40.03	97.68	0.95	2.32	40.98
2006	124.87	100	0	0	124.87
2007	41.95	97.79	0.95	2.21	42.9
2008	47.66	100	0	0	47.66
2009	32.41	100	0	0	32.41
2010	39.08	100	0	0	39.08
Total	1131.54	98.83	13.34	1.17	1144.88

Table 8. The relative frequencies of all the people-first and non-people-first expressions in the fiction genre

The fiction genre shows complete dominance of the non-people-first expressions likely because the fiction genre is very slow to accept prescribed norms due to the artistic freedom that is the underlying assumption of the genre itself. As far as a possible increase in the percentage of people-first constructions over time is concerned, Figure 8 shows a possible increase, even though the values are visibly grouped around 0.

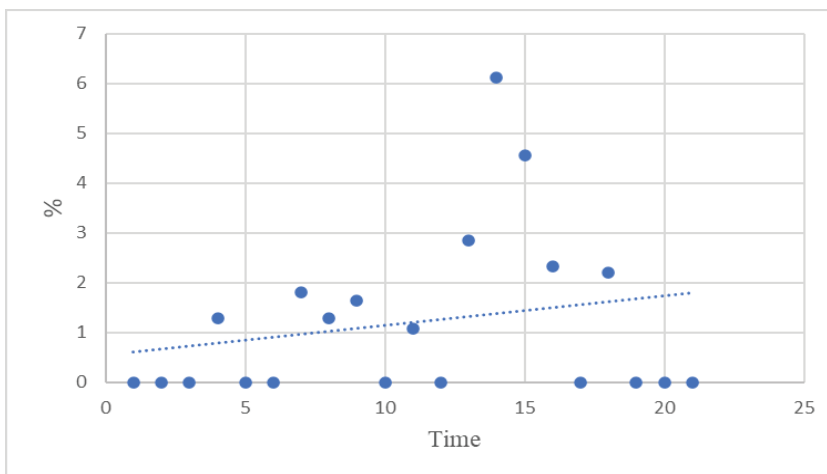


Figure 8. The percentage of people-first expressions in relation to their non-people-first counterparts through time for the fiction genre

However, a very high p-value (0.339034) shows that there is no statistically significant relationship between the passage of time and the alleged increase in the percentage of people-first constructions. A similar situation occurred in the newspaper genre, whose data are presented in Table 9 and Figure 9.

Year	NPF	%NPF	PF	%PF	Total
1990	36.81	90.71	3.77	9.29	40.58
1991	89.65	90.47	9.44	9.53	99.09
1992	80.22	60.72	51.9	39.28	132.12
1993	78.32	88.3	10.38	11.7	88.7
1994	107.59	75.5	34.92	24.5	142.51
1995	95.32	75.94	30.2	24.06	125.52
1996	124.57	80	31.14	20	155.71
1997	132.11	92.11	11.32	7.89	143.43
1998	122.68	75.14	40.58	24.86	163.26
1999	106.64	72.9	39.64	27.1	146.28
2000	88.71	83.19	17.93	16.81	106.64
2001	53.8	81.43	12.27	18.57	66.07
2002	49.08	73.24	17.93	26.76	67.01
2003	81.16	80.37	19.82	19.63	100.98
2004	109.47	86.56	16.99	13.44	126.46
2005	75.49	80	18.87	20	94.36
2006	85.88	87.51	12.26	12.49	98.14
2007	71.72	80.85	16.99	19.15	88.71
2008	100.98	76.98	30.2	23.02	131.18
2009	70.78	75.76	22.65	24.24	93.43
2010	44.35	79.67	11.32	20.33	55.67
Total	1805.34	79.68	460.53	20.32	2265.87

Table 9. The relative frequencies of all the people-first and non-people-first expressions in the newspaper genre

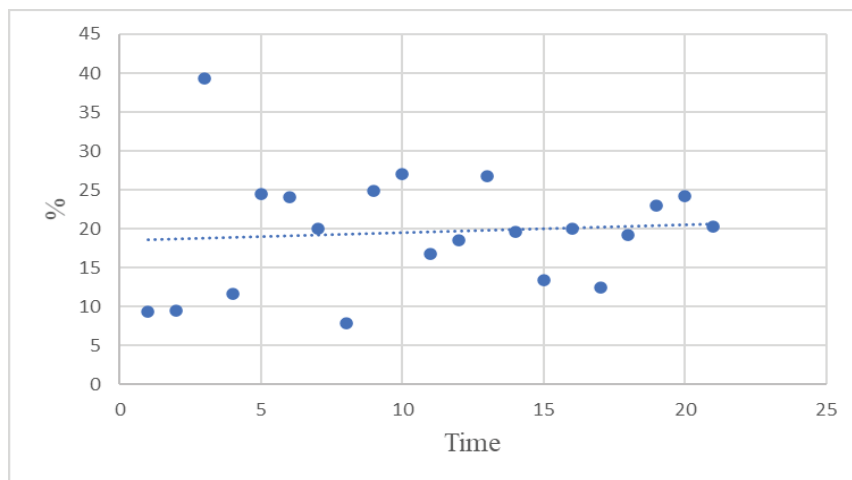


Figure 9. The percentage of people-first expressions in relation to their non-people-first counterparts through time for the newspaper genre

Firstly, people-first expressions are once again not the norm, while the low slope coefficient indicates that there is no significant increase in their acceptance in the newspaper genre. Linear regression shows a very high p-value of 0.71994, showing that even this slight increase is just a matter of chance. These results are in line with the results

of Halmari (2011) and Stamenković (2017), where the press, regardless of their liberal or conservative attitudes, tends to use non-people-first language to decrease repetition, create catchy content, and save on space, among other reasons. As with the newspaper genre, no statistically significant relationship between the passage of time and the increase in the percentage of people-first expressions was found in the magazine genre. Table 10 and Figure 10 illustrate the data that was collected for this genre.

Year	NPF	%NPF	PF	%PF	Total
1990	120.79	76.88	36.33	23.12	157.12
1991	93.54	55.98	73.56	44.02	167.1
1992	84.47	84.55	15.44	15.45	99.91
1993	113.52	51.44	107.17	48.56	220.69
1994	111.7	49.4	114.43	50.6	226.13
1995	82.65	48.93	86.28	51.07	168.93
1996	53.58	64.13	29.97	35.87	83.55
1997	47.22	79.99	11.81	20.01	59.03
1998	33.6	50	33.6	50	67.2
1999	70.84	82.1	15.44	17.9	86.28
2000	59.94	82.51	12.71	17.49	72.65
2001	49.95	73.34	18.16	26.66	68.11
2002	43.59	55.81	34.51	44.19	78.1
2003	40.87	77.58	11.81	22.42	52.68
2004	55.4	87.15	8.17	12.85	63.57
2005	34.51	59.38	23.61	40.62	58.12
2006	40.87	59.21	28.15	40.79	69.02
2007	27.25	69.76	11.81	30.24	39.06
2008	36.32	80	9.08	20	45.4
2009	39.05	78.18	10.9	21.82	49.95
2010	39.96	68.74	18.17	31.26	58.13
Total	1279.63	64.28	711.11	35.72	1990.74

Table 10. The relative frequencies of all the people-first and non-people-first expressions in the magazine genre

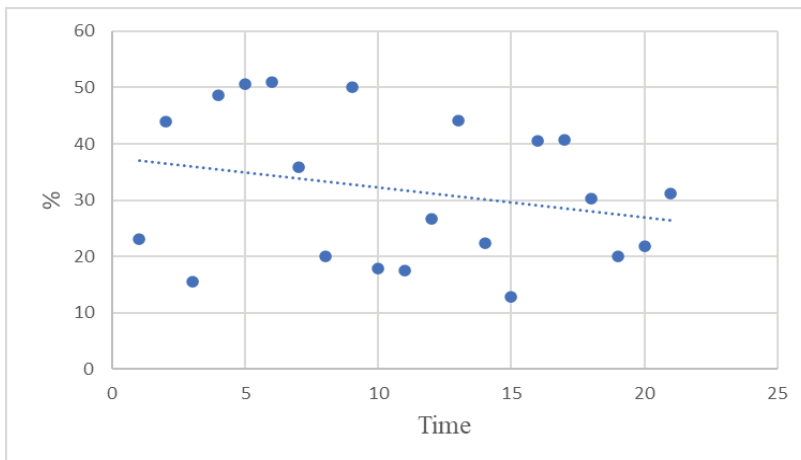


Figure 10. The percentage of people-first expressions in relation to their non-people-first counterparts through time for the magazine genre

The percentage of people-first expressions is significantly larger in the magazine genre than in the newspaper genre. The COCA magazine genre also contains scientific

magazines, which might have contributed to the increase in politically correct people-first terms. However, the trend line seems to show a decrease in their percentage over time. On the other hand, there is no statistically significant relationship between time and their decrease ($p=0.269537$). Finally, the results for the academic genre are shown in Table 11.

Year	NPF	%NPF	PF	%PF	Total
1990	209.81	81.88	46.42	18.12	256.23
1991	265.9	86.48	41.58	13.52	307.48
1992	167.27	56.91	126.67	43.09	293.94
1993	140.2	64.44	77.35	35.56	217.55
1994	81.22	37.84	133.43	62.16	214.65
1995	128.59	58.85	89.92	41.15	218.51
1996	305.54	62.2	185.65	37.8	491.19
1997	505.7	73.35	183.71	26.65	689.41
1998	100.57	42.28	137.3	57.72	237.87
1999	25.15	32.51	52.21	67.49	77.36
2000	124.73	42.57	168.25	57.43	292.98
2001	130.53	31.25	287.17	68.75	417.7
2002	48.35	36.23	85.09	63.77	133.44
2003	38.67	35.08	71.55	64.92	110.22
2004	99.6	33.01	202.09	66.99	301.69
2005	82.2	21.97	292.01	78.03	374.21
2006	149.87	18.04	680.71	81.96	830.58
2007	160.51	32.87	327.78	67.13	488.29
2008	144.07	29.74	340.35	70.26	484.42
2009	310.37	41.31	440.92	58.69	751.29
2010	211.75	29.84	497.95	70.16	709.7
Total	3430.61	43.43	4468.1	56.57	7898.71

Table 11. The relative frequencies of all the people-first and non-people-first expressions in the academic genre

This is the only genre where people-first expressions are more dominant in the total number of expressions dealing with the target groups. This is in line with the findings from section 6.1 and again shows the propensity of the academic community to accept new prescribed expressions of this type and to follow strict regulations when writing their papers. As Figure 11 shows, there is a clear increase in the percentage of people-first expressions.

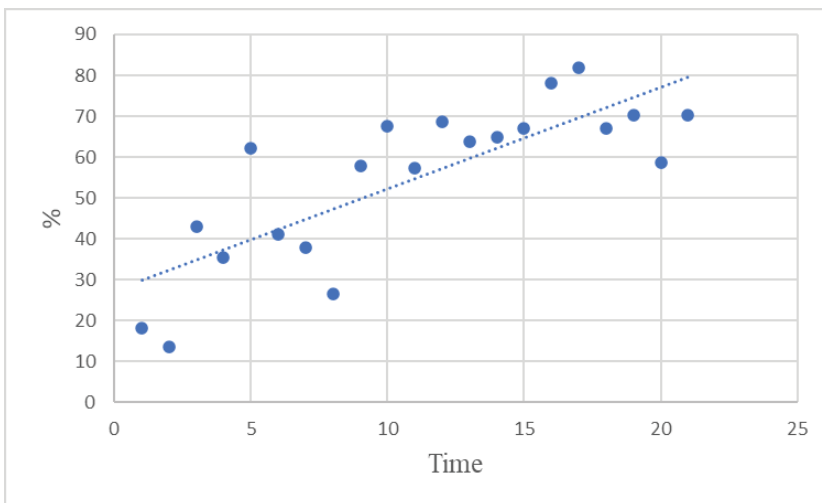


Figure 11. The percentage of people-first expressions in relation to their non-people-first counterparts through time for the academic genre

Regression analysis shows a highly significant correlation between the passage of time and the mentioned increase, with $p < 0.001$, supporting the idea that the people-first convention is becoming increasingly accepted in the academic community.

To recapitulate this subsection, the non-people-first form of address is dominant in all genres of the corpus, apart from the academic genre. The academic genre is also the only one to show a statistically significant relationship between the passage of time and the increase in the percentage of people-first expressions in relation to their non-people-first counterparts.

7. Conclusion

This analysis explored the phenomenon of people-first language from different perspectives. Firstly, an overall examination of the search results divided into expression categories and genres indicated that non-people-first expressions were dominant, apart from the academic genre in the people with disabilities category. Secondly, when only the expression categories were considered, the category of people with disabilities had more people-first constructions and exhibited an increasing trend in the percentage of these expressions compared to their non-people-first counterparts. The category of people with blindness also showed a statistically significant increase in the percentage of people-first expressions but showed an overall dominance of non-people-first constructions. The category of people with hearing impairments showed neither people-first dominance nor an increasing trend of these expressions. Thirdly, the analysis of the data categorized by genres proved that out of the six genres, only the academic genre displayed a greater overall percentage of people-first expressions and a statistically significant correlation between their increase and time.

Therefore, the present research proved neither that the people-first standard was introduced into all aspects of American English, nor that this change is underway. This research opened new questions and could provide suggestions for further research. To confirm these findings, it is necessary to explore more categories of expressions apart from the three studied here. Apart from that, the COCA contains only the American variety of English, making this issue an example where further corpus research should be conducted to shed new light on this constantly fluctuating issue.

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ALTERNATIVNI EUFEMIZMI: ISTRAŽIVANJE PRISUSTVA IZRAZA „PEOPLE-FIRST“ U KORPUSU COCA

Rezime

Čini se da je politički korektan jezik postao norma u poslednje tri decenije; međutim, to je tip jezika koji karakterišu stalne promene, pri čemu alternativni izrazi zamenjuju stare. Jedna od grupa izraza u okviru politički korektnog jezika obuhvata eufemizme, reči ili fraze koje se koriste kao alternativa manje poželjnom izrazu. (Allan 2001: 148) Ovo istraživanje se fokusira na politički korektne eufemizme koji se koriste za osobe sa invaliditetom, a koji su uvedeni da bi se stvorio neutralniji stav prema ovim osobama i sprečila njihova diskriminacija. Podgrupa politički korektnih eufemizama o osobama sa invaliditetom koja se istražuje u ovom radu je „people-first” jezik, koji zamenjuje

premodifikovane imenice njihovim postmodifikovanim ekvivalentima („slepa osoba” se zamenjuje terminom „osoba sa slepilom”). Cilj rada je da utvrdi nivo do koga su ove preskriptivne smernice o upotrebi termina sa postmodifikacijom usvojene u svakodnevnom američkom varijetetu engleskog jezika na osnovu istraživanja njihove distribucije u Korpusu savremenog američkog engleskog jezika (engl. Corpus of Contemporary American English, COCA) u poređenju sa izrazima koji ne koriste termine sa postmodifikacijom u periodu 1990–2010. Hipoteza je da će istraživanje pokazati veći udeo politički korektnih izraza sa postmodifikacijom zajedno sa neuvredljivim leksičkim eufemizmima, kao i da će se protokom vremena povećavati upotreba termina sa postmodifikacijom u poređenju sa terminologijom sa pre.

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