

THE LANGUAGE OF POLITICAL CORRECTNESS: From English to Romanian: James Finn Garner's Politically Correct Bedtime Stories

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Abstract:

*The trend of political correctness, which originated in the United States and spread through academia and mass media, has now taken over public policies in the European Union. Similar to what is happening in some Western nations, the norms of speech are being reshaped to conform to political correctness. This transformation starts with the use of a new language to alter the appearance of reality. Certain words, such as mother, father, madam, miss, husband, wife, and others that highlight the distinct roles of men and women in society and family, will be prohibited. Meanwhile, other words like gender instead of sex, partner instead of spouse, and person with needs will become more common. These changes aim to create a discrimination-free reality, where people cultivate and enforce various politically correct norms. Over time, political correctness has garnered both supporters and detractors, and has also captured the attention of artists who use it as inspiration for their work, such as James Finn Garner, an American satirist and writer residing in Chicago. He has gained recognition for his work, *Politically Correct Bedtime Stories* (1994), remaining a bestseller for 65 weeks on the New York Times Best Sellers list. This article aims to provide a thorough analysis and comparison of the original text and Felicia Mardale's 2005 Romanian translation, with a focus on understanding how meaning is constructed in both versions as a parody of political correctness language. Our corpus showcases a selection of words related to gender inclusivity, gender-neutral language, circumlocutionary phrases, and unusual derivations. Using Chesterman's (1997) taxonomy of semantic and syntactic translation strategies, we will analyse the way of construction, meaning, and effect on the readers of this language, which represents an effort to minimise, if not completely eliminate, offensive expressions. To identify any areas that may have been lost in translation, or any inaccuracies or misunderstandings that occurred during the translation, we provide a back translation of the passages selected for analysis. The purpose of this study is to explore how satire shapes language to accommodate the sensitivities of marginalised groups by eliminating offensive elements. We will also examine how this process is reflected in the Romanian language, which belongs to a cultural space that is still in the early stages of finding suitable terminology for certain groups or people.*

Keywords: *Political correctness; Translation strategies; Fairy tales; Parody of language; Linguistic innovations.*