

LANGUAGE MATTERS

Language is one of the elements that shape culture and reality. It plays a key role in building relationships and intercultural understanding. The language you use says a lot about you, and you represent your family, your University, and your entire environment.

We recommend

Consciously choose words and phrases that show respect for everyone, regardless of their gender, age, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, ability, or any other characteristic. Use inclusive (equality-oriented) language both in professional and private settings.

What is INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE (EQUALITY LANGUAGE)?

It is a way of communicating that strives to avoid expressions that exclude or discriminate. The essence of inclusive language is respecting diversity, which means it does not favour any single group but instead creates space for everyone. It takes into account the diversity of experiences, identities, and perspectives of all people. Using inclusive language helps build a more open, fair, and welcoming environment – both at work and in everyday life. Inclusive language recognises differences in characteristics that may affect how people are perceived and treated. It is not only about choosing more neutral words, but also about consciously using language in a way that ensures no one feels left out or discriminated against.

What is DIVERSITY?

It encompasses all the ways in which people are similar and different from one another, such as: gender, age, skin colour, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, non-belief, (dis)ability, skills, education, professional experience, job position, place of residence, neighbourhood, etc.

Here are some practical tips and tools to help create communication free from prejudice, stereotypes, and exclusion. The table below presents examples of inclusive language:

AVOID (non-inclusive / discriminatory expressions)

USE INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE

With regard to gender

cries like a girl, man-to-man talk

- using both feminine and masculine forms: female students and male students, female PhD candidates and male PhD candidates, etc.
- feminatives – use only if the person wishes so
- gender-neutral terms: person instead of man or woman – this makes statements more open and welcoming

AVOID (non-inclusive / discriminatory expressions)

USE INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE

With regard to disability

Nutcase, lunatic, madman, crazy, nutter, psycho, wacko, cripple, invalid, defective, maimed, flawed, special needs, differently abled, mentally underdeveloped, retarded, deaf-mute, wheelchair-bound/confined to a wheelchair

persons with disabilities persons with intellectual / physical disabilities... Deaf people (capital D when referring to the Deaf community) neurodivergent persons persons on the autism spectrum persons with experience of mental health crisis persons with individual / diverse needs (in...)

With regard to ethnic / national origin

Negro, nigger, slant-eyed, gypsy...

Do not highlight skin colour. Identify people by country or region of origin, e.g. people / students from... (Africa, Asia, North America, South America, southern Europe, Afghanistan, Sweden, Seoul, etc.) residents of...

With regard to religion

Papists, Bible-thumpers, Mohammedans, Pagans/Heathens, Jews/Kikes

Catholic, Christian, Muslim, Jew (use the standard, respectful terms)

With regard to sexual orientation and gender identity

Homosexual, hermaphrodite, people with homosexual tendencies/preferences (implies choice or pathology), "homo", pederast (very offensive, implies paedophilia)

LGBTQ+ people / community or specific terms: gay men, lesbians, homosexual people, bisexual people, transgender people, non-binary people, etc. Prefer adjectives: a gay person, a transgender person (nouns)

AVOID (non-inclusive / discriminatory expressions)

“transseksualista” → transsexual (outdated and stigmatising noun)

USE INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE

are more stigmatising). For transgender and non-binary people, always use the name and pronouns they indicate (he/she/they or others) – ask if unsure.

With regard to age

“stara” / “stary” → old hag / old fart “staruszka”

/ “staruszek” → little old lady / little old man

(patronising) “babcia” / “dziadek” → grandma / grandpa (when not actual grandparents –

patronising) “małolat” → kid / brat

senior (m/f), seniors, older persons, older adult, young person

Let us learn to take responsibility for our words and together build the culture of our academic community. Remember: we are all different.