Welcome

A principled workshop space

The BARC (Building an Anti-Racist Classroom) collective begins each session with a practice laying the foundations for the workshop space.

Activist Hanalei Ramos has called into question the idea of the 'safe space'. While the safe space is noted at most events discussing the experiences of marginalised people, we do not know how the discussions will unfold.

So, it is important to acknowledge that it is not possible to guarantee complete safety. Instead, Ramos suggests that principled spaces are better suited to creating environments where we wish to develop.

By committing to a set of principles that guide and shape the space, together we can increase the possibility of safety for all involved.

Principles of today's workshop

1. Be aware of your privilege and take a step back so marginalised people can lead [without putting the onus on them to do so].

2. Believe people's accounts of their experiences of marginalisation, and honour people's vulnerability by not disputing their lived experience.

3. You are free to decline to comment at any point, you don't have to share if you feel uncomfortable.

4. Experiences shared here may be personal and should be treated in confidence. You are not permitted to make derogatory comments or posts about anyone in the room or share experiences that are not yours without explicit consent.

5. While these principles are intended to apply to all, they are written in recognition of existing power structures that continue to marginalise people of colour and reinforce anti-Blackness. This should be kept in mind throughout the workshop.

Credit: BARC Collective

Desired outcomes of today's workshop

1) Awareness of why inclusive language matters

2) Framework to test if language is inclusive

3) Commitment to continuous growth

To get the most out of this journey, consider the following.

*Tools and resources developed by the Center for Equity, Gender & Leadership (EGAL) at UC Berkeley's Haas School of Business.

Why do you think inclusive language matters?

If language isn't actively inclusive it is excluding.

Microaggressions = Subtle Acts of Exclusion

Even well intended remarks can be harmful.

WHAT IS GENDER NEUTRALITY IN LANGUAGE?

Gender-neutral language is a generic term covering the use of non-sexist language, inclusive language or gender-fair language. The purpose of gender-neutral language is to avoid word choices which may be interpreted as biased, discriminatory or demeaning by implying that one sex or social gender is the norm. Using gender-fair and inclusive language also helps reduce gender stereotyping, promotes social change and contributes to achieving gender equality.

https://www.europarl.europa.eu/cmsdata/151780/GNL_Guidelines_EN.pdf

Context is key

- Consider who is speaking and who holds the power in the interaction.

    - Who gets named and who doesn't?

- Meanings and connotations of words can change.

- Even well-meaning statements can reinforce negative stereotypes or be microaggressions:

    - "Girls are as good at maths as boys."

    - "Your English is excellent."

Reflecting on existing language

- Where does this term come from and why am I choosing to use it?

- How well does this description capture the specific group or experience that I am referring to?

- Do the descriptions used, share only the characteristics pertinent to the discussion?

- Is this terminology or phrasing used by the people concerned? If not sure, verify it.

- Who is my audience - is this language welcoming and accessible to that audience?

- Are terms or acronym used widely understood, or would simplified language suffice?

- Are there wider implications of the language used beyond this immediate piece of work?

Language betrays our biases

o Language is a crucial part of unconscious bias – what we have heard and experienced.

o Also, judgements and evaluations are made about us, based on language we use and how we construct phrases.

"Girls are as good as boys at maths".

A study shows that well-meaning statements can reinforce stereotypes. ©Chestnut & Markham – Cognitive Science 2018

Examples of non-inclusive vs more inclusive language

Not inclusive

- Hey guys
- Chairman
- to cripple
- hold down the fort
- Turn a blind eye/Falling on deaf ears
- Man up
- Lame
- Crazy/mental

More Inclusive

- Hi all, Hey everyone
- Chair, Chairperson
- to hinder, to impede
- Manage, cover
- Ignore
- Toughen up
- Uncool, cheesy
- Ridiculous/outrageous

A handy framework to check your language

Step 1 – Setting the right intentions

We want our language to be inclusive:

- Respectful
- Easy to understand
- Causing no harm

Set Intentions

Step 2 – Consider the context

- Does the expression acknowledge and indicate respect for a diverse range of experiences?
  - Who are we excluding?

- Does the term convey the intended meaning precisely and effectively?
  - e.g. "Office hours"

Consider Context

Step 3 – Center inclusion (and consider preferences)

- Is there another expression that's more precise and effective?

  - Office hours -> Drop-in hours

Center Inclusion
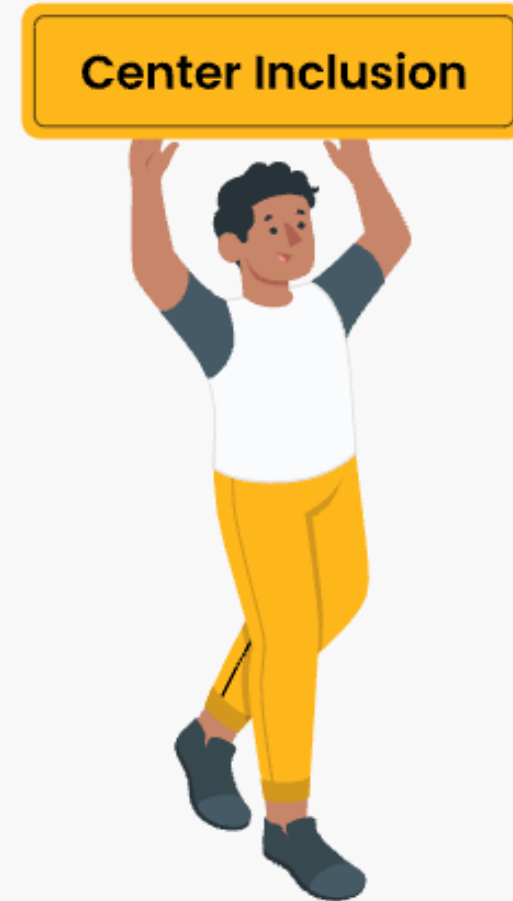
Step 4 – Make a choice, or get more context

- Decide it's ok to use expression with caution
- Or decide not to use initial expression

Choose Inclusive Language

Practice Inclusive Language Framework in groups of 2 or 3

Set Intentions

Start from a place where you feel ready and open to learning. Then ask the following questions:

Consider Context

Does this term centre dominant groups as the default, and/or perpetuate harmful stereotypes?

Does this term have a harmful history or association?

No both

Does this term contribute to communication in which everyone feels respected and seen?

Does this term convey the intended meaning to all people precisely and effectively?

yes both

Keep using the term

Either **Yes**

Either **No**

Center Inclusion

Is there an alternate term that more precisely and effective?

Yes

No

Implement Positive Change

Use the more inclusive term.

Use the term with caution or decide not to use it

Good Language Practices

1. Be precise.

2. Replace harmful terms that have racist, ableist, or sexist histories or connotations with more neutral language that conveys the same message.

3. Listen to how people describe themselves and honour their identity.

4. Update specific language practices that can reinforce stereotypes. Avoid using unnecessary modifiers (e.g., "female engineers" but not "male engineers").

5. Be mindful of patterns in how you tell stories — including replacing passive language with active language and use present tenses to describe ongoing actions.

6. Examine the expectations you have for how people should talk.

7. Recognize that communication is a two-way street and work on your own communications skills.

8. Keep learning!

What are your main takeaways?

Questions/Discussion

Additional Resources

1 Page - framework to check your language

Set Intentions

Consider Context

Center Inclusion

Choose Inclusive Language
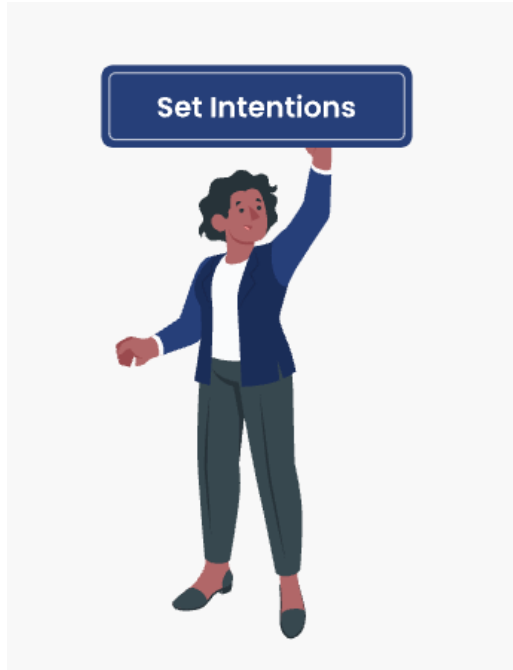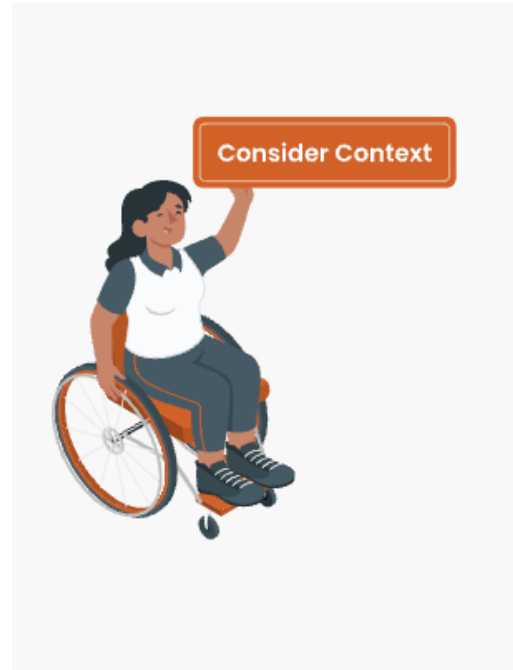
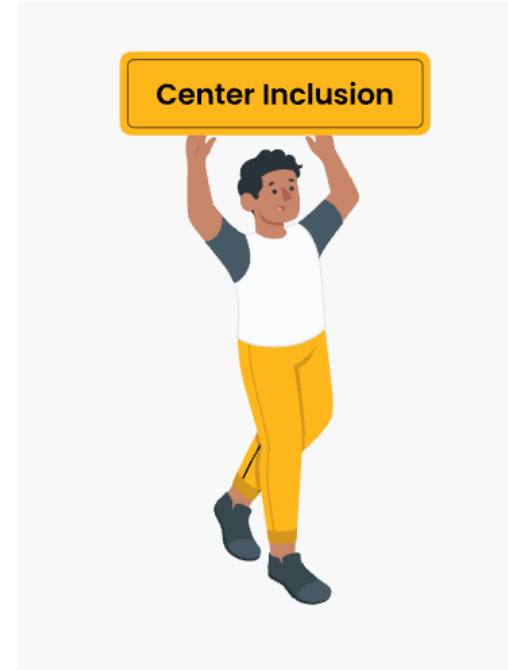**Set the right intentions**

We want our language to be inclusive:
- Respectful
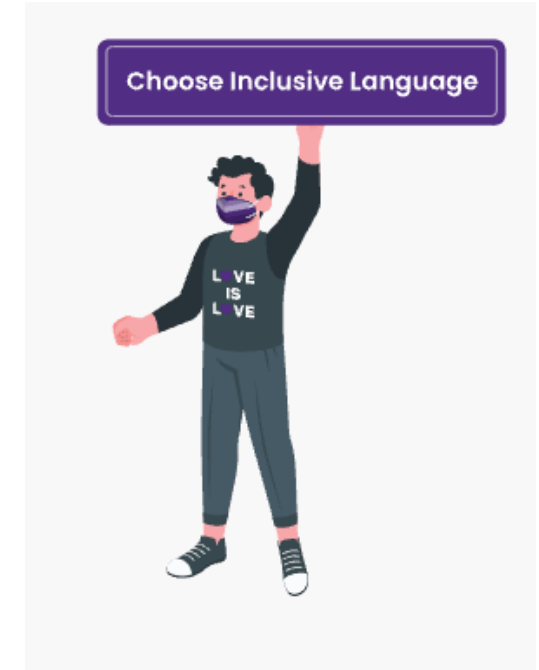- Easy to understand
- Causing no harm

Consider the context

- Does it cover a diverse range of experiences?
- Is the term precise and effective?
  - e.g. "Office hours"

Center inclusion (and consider preferences)

Is there another expression that's more precise and effective?
- Office hours -> Drop-in hours

Make a choice, or get more context

Either:
- decide it's ok to use expression with caution
- or decide not to use initial expression

7 Recommendations for inclusive language

1. Use metaphorical and other figurative language thoughtfully
2. Learn to distinguish borrowing terms from other languages from appropriating terms
3. Avoid language with harmful associations
4. Honour how people identify themselves
5. Understand inclusive language across different identities
6. Consider intersectionality
7. Work with others to adopt inclusive language

Consider:

- ✓ **The way you use language**: Is it accessible and easily understood by everyone?
- ✓ **Participation**: Do people from a variety of backgrounds interact in your class – both in academic and social contexts?
- ✓ **Barriers**: What barriers may prevent some people from being active members of a learning community?

Developing personal best practices

1. Unless necessary, try to not to describe people by their 9 Grounds
2. Focus on behaviours not characteristics
3. Never assume – gender, race, sexuality, ability etc.
4. Challenge non-inclusive language – but don't humiliate
5. Think "people first" – is often a beneficial principle
6. Contextualise your use of language
7. Check words/phrases you're not sure of – how important is derivation and etymology?
8. Be empathetic – try to put yourself in the other person's place

Further resources

https://haas.berkeley.edu/wp-content/uploads/Understanding-IL-Playbook-3.pdf

https://www.fingal.ie/sites/default/files/2023-05/Notes%20on%20%20Inclusive%20Language.pdf

https://www.un.org/en/gender-inclusive-language/guidelines.shtml

https://buffer.com/resources/inclusive-language-tech/

https://news.stanford.edu/2019/08/22/the-power-of-language-how-words-shape-people-culture/

https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/blog/2021/08/inclusive-language-health-and-care

https://www.europarl.europa.eu/cmsdata/151780/GNL_Guidelines_EN.pdf

https://studentengagement.ie/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Representing-Diversity-Slides-2022.pdf

https://hbr.org/2022/03/how-to-make-your-organizations-language-more-inclusive

https://www.gsma.com/aboutus/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/GSMA-Inclusive-Language-Guide_2020.pdf