What Can You Say? DEI in Your Language

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Today's speakers need to be aware of potential microaggressions in academic work, the job-search context, and even in everyday communications.

- Language shapes the way we see the world -- and that language is constantly changing.
- Language is a key element of diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- Never have languages had to adjust so quickly to address these growing concerns.
There is no shortage of guides for inclusive language in all fields, especially in higher education in the US.
And this phenomenon is not limited to the US.
What Is Inclusive Language?

A definition is easy to generate:

“Inclusive language avoids excluding particular groups of people and is designed to be inclusive of all individuals, regardless of their race, gender, sexual orientation, age, ability, religion, or any other characteristic that may result in exclusion or marginalization.”
Is Your Language Inclusive-Able?

Is it easy to know what can you say in English, Finnish, and other languages in order to remain inclusive in your communication?

Some language have certain advantages, and others can adjust

- Finnish, Mandarin Chinese, and Turkish have no gendered pronouns in the 3rd person (i.e., he/she).
- Swedish has introduced the gender-neutral pronoun "hen" to complement the traditional gendered pronouns "han" (he) and "hon" (she).
- English has been converting for decades the “man” professions that were traditionally masculine (mailman → mail carrier).
And many languages have disadvantages...

For example, French...

• a very long language history
• gendered nouns and pronouns
• gender in the 3\textsuperscript{rd}-person plural is masculine by default
• gendered job titles: "doctor" (médicin) is masculine, while "nurse" (infirmière) is feminine
• a conservative language-governing body: the Académie française

Inclusive language goes well beyond gender inclusivity, however.

Inclusive language avoids assumptions and stereotypes based on gender, race, ethnicity, age, disability, sexual orientation, or other characteristics that may marginalize individuals or groups.
This seminar is predicated on **DEI in Higher Education**.

Why should we be concerned about DEI-sensitive language at the university level?

- It involves our interactions with staff and faculty: hiring, work environment, etc.
- It involves our work in the classroom with students: developing a future generation

We will speak about English (AM) and Finnish, but these principles apply to all.
Some non-inclusive language in all languages is obvious and easy to avoid with common sense:

- **Racial slurs**: terms referring to race or ethnicity.
- **Gender-based slurs**: terms referring to gender or sexual orientation.
- **Ableist language**: terms used towards people with disabilities.
- **Ageist language**: terms used towards people based on their age.
- **Religious slurs**: terms referring to religion or beliefs.

*We will not be talking about this language now, however. In Higher Education, we should be beyond intentional derogatory language.*
Let’s concerns ourselves with *unintentional* non-inclusive language:

- Eeny, meeny, miney, moe. Catch a tiger by the toe. If he hollers, let him go. Eeny, meeny, miney, moe.
- We were gypped out of our money!
- You can have several days of paid vacation, and Christmas days off.
- Hold down the fort until I get back.
- I am low on the totem poll in this department.
- Handicapped parking is available.
- Housekeeping will assist you in a moment.
- Anne will be manning the front desk this morning.
- “I have a lot of experience dealing with men who sometimes get off the reservation in the way they behave and how they speak.” --Hillary Clinton
Equating disability with negativity: Using disability-related terms in a negative or derogatory context, such as using "sokea" (blind) to imply ignorance or "kuuro" (deaf) to suggest a lack of understanding.

Unintentional non-inclusive language is not limited to English.
Good practices?
Inclusive language in HE management?

Johtoryhmän jäsenet:

Minna Hiillos, rehtori
Anne-Mari Karppinen, johtaja (kaupallinen toiminta ja kansainvälisyyys)
Salla Hutunen, vararehtori (TKI ja digitalisaatio)
Katja Komulainen, vararehtori (opetus ja oppiminen)
Hanna Ilmonen, henkilöstöjohtaja (henkilöstö ja kulttuuri)
Satu Koivisto, tutkimuspalvelujohtaja (tutkimus- ja tietopalvelut)
Jari Laukia, johtaja (opettajankoulutus)
Virpi Peltoniemi, talousjohtaja (talous)
Teppo Rantala, johtaja (osaaminen)
Kari Salmi, hallintojohtaja (turvallisuus ja vastuullisuus)
Ari Hälkkä, strategiajohtaja (toiminnanohjaus), johtoryhmän sihteeri

https://www.haaga-helia.fi/fi/organisaatio

Johtaja – Manager/Director
Pääällikkö - Chief/Head/Manager
Tiiminvetäjä - Team leader
Lähiesimies - Immediate supervisor
Yksikönvetäjä - Unit leader
Vastuuhenkilö - Responsible person
Opintohjaaja – Student advisor
Hallintojohtaja (administrative director/manager)
Talousjohtaja - Talousjohtaja (financial director/manager)
Tutkimusjohtaja - Tutkimusjohtaja (research director/manager)
Kehitysjohtaja - Kehitysjohtaja (development director/manager)
Henkilöstöjohtaja - Henkilöstöjohtaja (human resources director/manager)
Viestintäjohtaja - Viestintäjohtaja (communications director/manager)
Laatupääällikkö - Laatupääällikkö (quality manager)
Opintopääällikkö - Opintopääällikkö (study affairs manager)
How is your non-inclusive language recognition?

**NOTE:** The poll was conducted during the presentation. The results were given at the end of the presentation (and listed at the end of this document).
Recognizing unintentional non-inclusive language must be your objective.

The problem? Expressions are language-dependent

- I can say this in Finnish: Pitkästä aikaa!
- I should not say this in English: Long time no see!

And the disadvantage for native English speakers? These expressions are ingrained.

Recognition is an essential step to achieve DEI in your language.
Now we just need to agree...
How Do You Know What You Can Say?

Advice is common and easily found.
There are European equivalents and glossaries translated into Finnish:

European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE)’s Gender Equality Glossary and Thesaurus

TERMS TO AVOID

Most of the time, a person’s gender is irrelevant. If it is relevant with a transgender person, there are ways to be respectful. Terms vary by region, ever-evolving language and other factors. In some cases, a person may find that one of the following terms best describes their experience. But in general, these terms are outdated, and we avoid them.

BEST PRACTICES

- If you’re unsure what name or pronoun someone uses, politely ask. It’s usually OK to ask: “What pronouns do you use?” Remember, it’s not what pronouns they “prefer.”

- Do your best to use someone’s name and pronouns consistently, even if you knew the person by another name.

- Acknowledge any language mistakes you make and how it may make the person feel.

- Talking about a transgender person’s previous identity is called deadnaming. It’s disrespectful. If you don’t know how to refer to someone in the past, ask. If the person doesn’t want to discuss it, respect that.

- **Identity is personal:** Every individual has the right to describe themselves as they wish.
- **Respect:** Not everyone wants to share their identity.
- **Ask:** When interacting with people for the first time, describe your intention to use respectful language and ask, “How do you wish for me to refer to you?”
- **Be thoughtful and intentional:** When is it even appropriate to call out a person’s race or physical or mental attributes?
- **Be kind and affirming**
  - People-first language
  - Avoid labels
  - Use asset- not deficit-based language: The goal is to focus on strengths
- **Gender neutral language**
POLL RESULTS
Here are the poll instructions and questions.

Categorize these as **OK** or **Not OK** to say to your staff, faculty, and students:

- As you can see, the answer is complicated.
- What are your preferred pronouns?
- Let’s pow wow today and figure this out.
- We can grandfather you into this course.
- Hey, all, long time no see!
- I can’t finish this in time. No can do.
- That’s going to be a black mark on your record.
- I’m sorry, but I’m a basket case today.
- The master template is updated every year.
- A student must always prepare for his or her test.
- We should help any elderly faculty member.
- The syllabus must address a special needs person.
- How many freshmen are enrolled in the course?
- Give these corrections to the webmaster.
- When addressing a group of women: “Ladies, your progress is good.”
- We seek diverse staff for our program.
- This is an option for hearing impaired students.
- Our brown bag lunch series continues this Wednesday.
POLL RESULTS from 16 participants, including 6 native-English speakers.

NOTE: None of these is “OK” to say according to existing DEI guides.

Which of the following statements is OK to use in English?

- As you can see, the answer is complicated. 53%
- What are your preferred pronouns? 80%
- Let's pow wow today and figure this out. 0%
- We can grandfather you into this course. 0%
- I can't finish this in time. No can do. 40%
- That's going to be a black mark on your record. 13%
- I'm sorry but I'm a basket case today. 13%
- The master template is updated every year. 33%
- A student must always prepare for his or her test. 13%

We should help any elderly faculty member. 13%
The syllabus must accommodate special needs students. 67%
How many freshmen are enrolled in the course? 20%
Give these corrections to the webmaster. 33%
Ladies, your progress is good. (When addressing a group of women.) 7%
We seek diverse staff for our program. 93%
This is an option for hearing impaired students. 40%
Our brown bag lunch series continues this Wednesday. 40%
QUESTIONS/DISCUSSION