ISL Inclusive Language Guidelines

At ISL, all members of our community contribute to creating an environment where diversity is valued. Each individual is committed to ensuring everyone has a strong sense of belonging and feels respected. Source: [ISL DEI Policy](#)

What is inclusive language at ISL?

Definition: "Language that acknowledges diversity, conveys respect to all people, is sensitive to differences, and promotes equal opportunities."[1] A central tenet of inclusive language is for people to think about the impact their words and phrases have on others. Inclusive language avoids terms, phrases, or expressions that could be racist, sexist, or biased against any group of people. In our communications, we consider the needs of our audience concerning neuro and linguistic diversity.

What are the aims of Inclusive Language?

Inclusive language recognises "that words matter and that word choice can be used, intentionally or unintentionally, to include or exclude others. Using inclusive language communicates with people in a way that is respectful and brings everyone into the conversation." Inclusive language also avoids making assumptions about people, steering clear of stereotypes and defaults that could make a person feel alienated or unwelcome.

The ultimate goal of inclusive language is to create an environment in which everyone is empowered to speak and feel confident that their voice will be heard. By choosing to use gender-neutral terms, avoiding terms that make assumptions or revert to defaults, and being mindful of historical context, we are actively working to include and create space for everyone to be their authentic selves.[2]

Why is inclusive language important in the ISL community?

- It makes everyone feel seen, heard, and valued.
- It contributes to an environment of psychological safety and respect for all.
- It underpins ISL's values of respect, care and equality.
- It shows that people are thinking about the impact of their language and behaviour on others, creating a culture of care.
- It sets the stage for the implementation of other inclusive practices.
- It actively discourages exclusionary language and conduct.

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[1] *Guidelines for inclusive language | linguistic society of america* (2016) *Guidelines for Inclusive Language*. Available at: https://www.linguisticsociety.org/resource/guidelines-inclusive-language (Accessed: 10 November 2023).

[2] *What is Inclusive Language in the Workplace? Examples, Steps, & Strategies* (2022) *Workhuman.com*. Available at: https://www.workhuman.com/blog/what-is-inclusive-language-in-the-workplace/#toc-what-is-inclusive-language (Accessed: 5 November 2024).

ISL Inclusive Language Guidelines

How to make language at ISL more inclusive? Simply swap less inclusive phrases for more inclusive ones.

NAMES / PRONOUNS

	Less inclusive	More inclusive
The use of "they/ them" to refer to a single person whose gender identity is nonbinary	Assuming every person's gender.	Use your pronouns in your email signature, for example: Skye Smith (they, them, theirs) John Smith (he, him, his) Sow Fun Smith (she, her, hers) **Examples of use in a sentence:** It was nice to meet your friend. Was their name Skye? Ask people when you meet them what pronouns they use.
Call people by their preferred name as this is a gateway to their identity and relates to gender, family and culture. Affirmational usage of learners' names is essential to them feeling a sense of belonging and empowerment in a community as well as to opening up to deeper sharing.	"Can I just call you X?" "I have a nickname for you." "Do you have an English name?" "I can't pronounce that"	"What name do you like to be called?", "Can you teach me how to pronounce your name correctly?" "I will practice pronouncing that until I get it right."

GENDER

	Less inclusive	More inclusive
Avoid heteronormative language and gendered assumptions	"Mankind"	"Humankind"; "humanity"; "human race"
	"There are significant **manpower** shortages."	"There are significant **staffing** shortages."
	"Man-made"	"Artificial"; or "human-caused"
How do I know if I am using discriminatory language? Reverse the gender. Would reversing the designation or the term from masculine to feminine or vice versa change the meaning or emphasis of the sentence? Would it make the sentence sound odd?	"Women should not seek out leadership positions after they have children." "Men cannot do two things at the same time." "Boys are much more disruptive in class."	
Form of address	Hi guys; Hello ladies and gentlemen; Hello girls and boys	Hi everyone; folks; team; children; or students
Form of address	Do not assume that women want their marital status to be addressed unless they choose to use Mrs /Miss	Ms should be used over Mrs, as the former is more inclusive and can refer to any woman, regardless of marital status

ISL Inclusive Language Guidelines

GENDER continued	Less inclusive	More inclusive
Use the pronoun *one*	"An administrator in Lausanne earns less than **he** would in Zurich."	"An administrator in Lausanne earns less than **one** in Zurich."
Avoid gendered assumptions about family and sexual orientation	Husband, wife, boyfriend, girlfriend Mother or father	Partner or significant other. Parent, caregiver, or guardian.
Avoid gender-biassed expressions or expressions that reinforce gender stereotypes	"She throws/runs/fights like a girl." "Thank you to the ladies for making the room more beautiful." "In a manly way."	
Use a plural antecedent	"A manager must certify that **he** has familiarised **himself** with the organisation."	"A manager must satisfy **themselves** that **they** have familiarised **themselves** with the organisation."
Omit the gendered word	"A person must reside continuously in the Canton for 10 years before **he** may apply for permanent residence."	"A person must reside continuously in the Canton for 10 years before applying for permanent residence."
Use the passive voice	"The author of a communication must have direct and reliable evidence of the situation **he** is describing."	"The author of a communication must have direct and reliable evidence of the situation being described."
Using plural pronouns/adjectives	In informal writing, such as emails, plural pronouns may be used as a shortcut to ensure gender inclusiveness.	"Before submitting your document, send it to the focal point for **their** review; **they** will return it to you with comments."

ABILITY

	Less inclusive	More inclusive
Ableist words are associated with a history of denigrating and dehumanising those with physical and mental disabilities. Avoid using these words generically to stop perpetuating their systematic exclusion.	"crazy", "insane", "mental", "lame", "dumb", "mad", "spaz", "psycho", "OCD"	"misguided", "absurd", "ridiculous", "clumsy", "disappointing", "unreal", "outrageous", "meticulous"
Students acquiring English as an additional language	English is not their "mother tongue"/ "native language"	English Language Learners
Support classes	Academic Coaching (what sessions were previously called)	Learning Support
Students with learning differences		Neurodivergent, Neurodiverse

ISL Inclusive Language Guidelines

Put the person before the disability and avoid terms that imply the person is less than or weak."The disabled" removes humanity from a group of people by referring to them solely by generalised disability status. Note that "disabled person" may be an acceptable term for individuals embracing identity-first language. When in doubt, ask!	The disabled or handicapped person. Wheelchair-bound.	People with disabilities or a person with a disability. Wheelchair user or person who uses a wheelchair.
CULTURE	**Less inclusive**	**More inclusive**
When talking about origins and places, be sensitive and curious because, for some people, it can be a difficult question to answer.	"Where are you from?" "But where are you really from?" "You look like you are from …"	"What are some of the places in the world that are important to you and why?"
These terms equate "black" with "bad" and "white" with "good," which is a problematic and racist association.	Blacklist and whitelist	denylist and allowlist
"Tribe" becoming popularised and associates it with primitiveness or savagery offensive to African peoples. For Native American (First Nations) peoples, the term "tribe" is a bureaucratic word assigned by the U.S. government.	Tribe	Group, crew, community, or circle
Used in Buddhist and Hindu religions to refer to a spiritual guide or leader, a Guru is a title of high esteem. To use it as shorthand for your experience with social media trivialises the importance of the title and its origins.	Guru	Expert or authority
When referring to a diverse group of people, if you cannot be specific, Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) is the preferred broad term.	Minority or minority group.	Marginalised groups, underrepresented groups, people of colour (POC), Black, Indigenous and people of colour (BIPOC); UK terms: Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) or Black and Minority Ethnic (BME)
MENTAL HEALTH	**CLINICAL MENTAL HEALTH VOCABULARY**	**Emotional vocabulary**
Be aware of utilising the correct descriptors for difficult emotions to avoid social-contagion and mis-appropriation	anxious, depressed, suicidal, anorexic	hard, sad, angry, frustrated, disappointed

ISL Inclusive Language Guidelines

Email communications / Forms of address at ISL

- Internal between colleagues: first names
- Optional use of pronouns in email signatures
- Communications with families of students
    - 1st email: check Veracross/ "Related People" record for preferred terms, if in doubt use:
    - "Dear Mr/Ms/Mx X,"
    - Response: use first names.

[Visual resource for staffrooms/classrooms](#)[3]

Other sources: We based our use of inclusive language on the UN Inclusive Language Guidelines for [disability](#).

The Guidelines have been produced in the five other official languages of the United Nations. They reflect the specificities and unique features of each language, recommending remedies that are tailored to the linguistic context in which staff work, whether in [Arabic](#), [Chinese](#), [French](#), [Russian](#) or [Spanish](#).

 Updated January 2024, KEdmunds on behalf of the DEI Coordinators

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[3] Wickner, D. (no date) *Resources for Educators: Identity-centered learning, Resources for Educators*. Available at: https://www.identitycentered.com/resources (Accessed: 05 November 2023).