

Talking Points for a Discussion on Inclusive Language

1. Given the harsh new standards in the area of inclusive language, how can we effectively differentiate between genuinely harmful language that perpetuates stereotypes or discrimination, and seemingly innocuous phrases that may have historical connotations but are not used with any ill intent in modern contexts?
2. Should we prioritize avoiding any potential offense over the practicality and simplicity of common phrases and expressions, such as "brown bag lunch," that may have no negative intent or impact in their current usage?
3. How important is it to consider the speaker's intent and context when evaluating the appropriateness of language use, especially when it comes to terms like "native speaker" or "Sherpa," which may have specific meanings in certain contexts but are not always intended to be derogatory?
4. How can we maintain effective communication and clarity in language when even seemingly neutral terms like "the college educated" are now being labeled as potentially dehumanizing by language guidelines such as those from the Associated Press?
5. Are there more effective ways to promote inclusivity and cultural sensitivity beyond policing and censoring language, such as education, dialogue, and promoting understanding of different cultural perspectives?
6. How can we strike a balance between respecting the historical significance of certain terms and allowing for the evolution and adaptation of language in a way that fosters communication and connection rather than division and censorship?
7. Research on language evolution and adaptation underscores the dynamic nature of communication and the constant evolution of language over time. How can we balance the need for inclusivity and sensitivity with the natural progression of language and cultural exchange? (Crystal, D. (2000). Language Death.)