**Using Inclusive Language**

This document is designed to help both teachers and students reflect on language behaviour in class. It seeks to reflect on how we talk to each other, other scholars and about our research. As language is expressed both verbally and non-verbally, this part of the tool aims to connect to the different layers of language relevant to an academic classroom climate. It is aimed at discussions about literature, political opinions, worldviews, news outlets, discrimination, violence and so on. It also invites to think critically about words that may be offensive, violent, discriminating or collide with each other’s ontological truths.

**When to do it?**

This Language list is specifically relevant during debates, but will also prove its importance during discussions on literature, lecture talks and daily interaction on campus.

**Who should do it?**

As both students and teacher partake in the classroom, with responsibilities on both ends, this list addresses both teachers and students. The idea is that you as a teacher as well as your students will gradually come to embody a sensitive language towards fellow scholars and be able to apply this critical attentiveness to your own scholarship.

*be attentive*: being sensitive to opinions and vulnerabilities does not equal losing your freedom of speech. The point is not to agree on what to do, but it is to be mindful and critical of how we are present in our space of learning.

You don’t have to come up with the list on your own. We have put together a list of questions and tips that has proved itself relevant to any type of university classroom. You'll find below this text. At the end of this document, you will also find an empty list to be filled out accordingly. We do recommend you consider including some of the examples presented here. You may also want to use the Ground Values list as an entrance point or, consult students and colleagues to make recommendations for the list.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS** | **TIPS** |
| Do you know if you use correct pronunciation of students’ names? | When asking how to pronounce a person’s name, be mindful of the suggestion that names with particular cultural backgrounds are often stereotyped as ‘difficult’ or ‘exotic’. |
| When discussing a sensitive topic in class about a historically marginalized group, is there a tendency to affiliate certain students to that group and expect them to respond as a representative? | Example: If the discussion is about lgbtqi+ rights in Asia, do not assume the queer student from India to present a point of view on behalf of the ‘Asian queer community’. Similarly, if the discussion is on blackface and racism, do not assume the black or brown student to petition their point of view. The suggestion that they should, could and will, is offensive as it limits and essentializes their identity to one that is structurally discriminated against. |
| Are students in this class expected to subdue to the moral values or ideology connected to the literature? If so, how are outliers of popular opinion being dealt with? | Is there space for disagreement on the core values that bind the course curriculum? How to allow space for, or protect the class from opinions that are hurtful or violent to others? Consider a conversation among each other on how to deal with this. |
| Are arguments presented as self-evident and thereby discouraging listeners to think differently? | If you use phrases in your lectures/presentations such as “as you all should have noticed”, or “obviously this is…” you are implicitly marginalizing the listeners that do not understand or agree with your point. |
| Does the course setup allow room for students to relate the literature to their experience of reality? And in that case, is that experience accepted as knowledge? | Allowing students to express themselves and relate to academic themes and concepts based on their real life experiences and creativity may encourage them to shape and develop their scholarly and vocabulary skills. |
| During any conversation in class, are students allowed to interrupt each other? | Be mindful of what is most suitable for the particular classroom and consider including it as a ground rule. |
| How are students encouraged to protect and support one another in the case of hurtful comments in class or in literature? | When discursive violence, discriminating comments or microaggressions are noticed, it is essential to discuss why it is hurtful and how to protect the learning environment from this. |
| In terms of proficiency, how is bilingualism of students perceived? Are ‘informal’ languages credited as academically valuable with regards to the students performances? | Proficiency or fluency in the most dominant or relevant languages (for example, Dutch, English or Spanish) sometimes leads to implicit exclusion of those who are less proficient. Discuss to what extent fluency is instrumental to academic performance. |
| Can you mistake style differentiation for a lack of proficiency or quality? | To what extent do students express themselves creatively in assignments? For example, by acknowledging different writing styles for cultural, symbolic or political reasons? |
| Do you assume the gender, ethnicity or other identifies of fellow scholars? How do these assumptions enter the classroom? | To critically engage with identifiers, we recommend reflecting on the outcome of the Critical Self Positioning tool. |
| Do you balance the use of the words ‘he’, ‘she’ and ‘they’? | Aim to be mindful of when you ‘gender’ persons and interpreting their existence within the gender binary, whereby excluding other ways of identifying. |
| When gender is unidentified, do you tend to describe by always using the word ‘he’? | Try using the word “they”, for example, when describing groups and individuals. It works as both a singular and plural gender neutral pronoun. |