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Building inclusion through language

Christine Muscat

Program Coordinator
Psychology & Postgraduate Health

Federation university online



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Federation University Australia acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands and waters where our campuses, centres and field stations are located and I pay my respects to Elders past, present and emerging. I extend this respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and First Nations Peoples.

Wimmera: Wotjobaluk, Jaadwa, Jadawadjali, Wergaia, Jupagulk

Ballarat: Wadawurrung

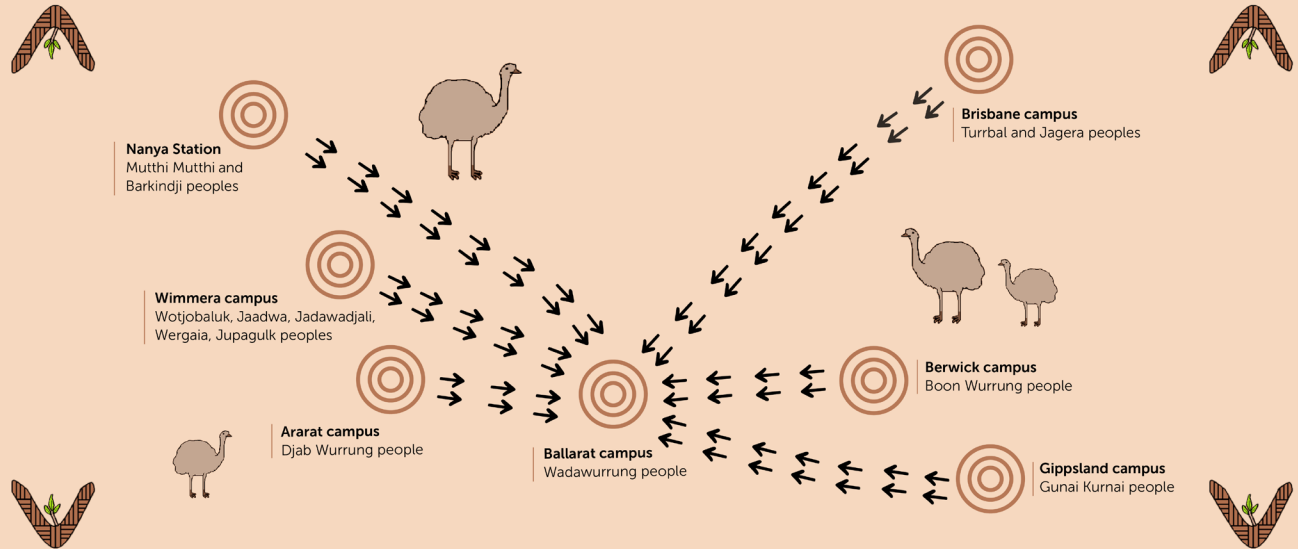
Gippsland: Gunai Kurnai

Brisbane: Turrbal and Jagera

Nanya Station: Mutthi Mutahi and Barkindji

Berwick: Boon Wurrung

Ararat: Djab Wurrung



Geographical Mapping with Language/Clan Group/Clusters Art work developed by Shanaya Sheridan, FedUni AEC

Alicia



Neurodiversity and Neurodivergence

All brains are diverse but not all brains are neurodivergent.

- **Neurodiversity (Singer, 1998):** All brains are different. Used to describe neurological differences amongst all people.
- **Neurodivergence:** Considered outside the range that's considered neuronormative or neurotypical

• ADHD • Autism • Dyspraxia • Dysgraphia • Dyslexia

How many people?

- 2018 ABS data suggests 0.08% of the total population of Australia given a diagnosis of Autism (autismsa.org.au)
- Between 2-3% of adults diagnosed with ADHD (APS, 2023)
- Autistic individuals more likely to drop out of university (Cage & McManey, 2022)
- University students with ADHD are likely to have poorer academic outcomes, regardless of IQ (Sedgwick-Muller et al., 2022).

Autism, ADHD and mental health

- Autistic persons report higher rates of mental health issues (>70% in some research)
- Mental health issues related to poorer quality of life
- Autism acceptance (perceived acceptance external sources) predicted depression and stress, not anxiety
- Autism acceptance (personal) predicted depression, not stress and anxiety (Cage, Di Monaco & Newell, 2018)
- Higher rates of depression found in university students with ADHD. Likely due to lack of support for executive functioning ISSUES (Du Paul et al., 2021)



Masking



Some evidence to suggest camouflaging (masking) is associated with depression for some Autistic individuals (Hull et al., 2021)

Does masking cause Autistic burnout? Cage & McManemy, 2022

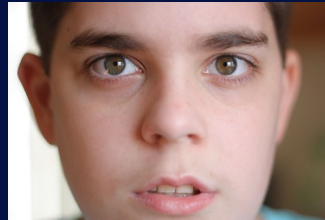
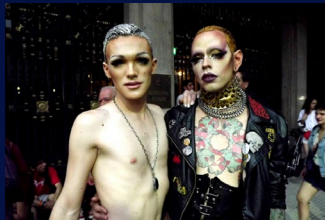
How do we increase feelings of acceptance and reduce the need for masking for our Neurodivergent staff and students?



Start with respectful language

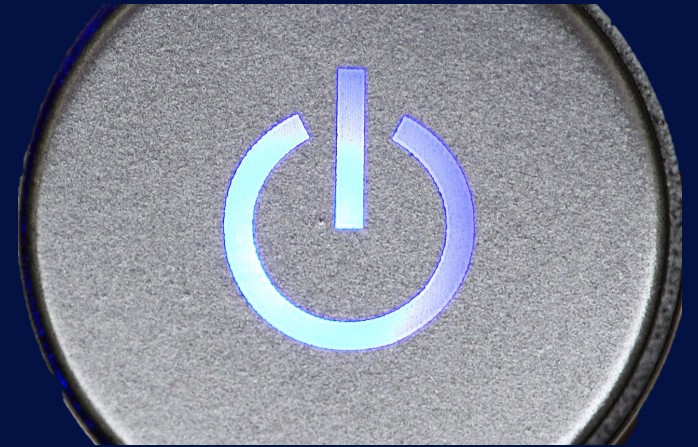
- Belief that language constructs narrative
- ‘Demeaning’ language can prevent open communication and support seeking (Carter, 2021).
- Language choices can reflect Ableist attitudes and can perpetuate discrimination (Bottema-Beutel et al., 2021)

Example: trans-affirming language attempt to used to break down the cissexist attitudes. This comes from the belief that language constructed this narrative (Zimman, 2017).



Language is important

“Language is a powerful means for shaping how people view autism. If researchers take steps to avoid ableist language, researchers, service providers, and society at large may become more accepting and accommodating of autistic people” (Bottema-Beutel et al., 2021, p. 19)



Respectful language examples

Consider this...	Instead of this...	Because...
Autistic person	Person with autism Person on the autism spectrum On the spectrum	Research from the UK, as well as feedback Amaze has received from the Australian autistic community, shows a preference for identity-first language, i.e. 'autistic', as it places autism as intrinsic to a person's identity and helps promote autistic pride and self-acceptance. Always ask the autistic person what they prefer.
Is a (insert job title or other descriptor that conveys their humanity)	Is a hero Is an inspiration	Framing an autistic person's identity as inspirational suggests that it is surprising that autistic people can achieve great success.
Is autistic	Is a victim of autism Suffers from autism	While autism can have its challenges, every autistic person is an individual whose life is valuable and rich. Autistic people have many different strengths and abilities and see autism as something to be celebrated
Has achieved	Has overcome the odds/ adversity to achieve	It implies that people are limited by autism and unable to achieve success.

<https://www.amaze.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Talking-about-autism-a-media-resource.pdf>

Respectful language examples

Avoid	Use
Suffer or Suffering	Lives with or struggles with difference or neurodiversity
Label	Diagnosis
Behaviour	Symptoms, Traits or Characteristics
Naughty or Brat	Unable to self-regulate all the time
Manage a child	Care for, or Support
Manage behaviour	Scaffold or Guide
Deficit	Difference or Neurodiverse
Treatable	Thrive with treatment and support



Person centred approach

Ask the individual
for their preference

“do you prefer person-
first or identity-first or
other?”



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Change in narrative

- From deficit-based model “learn how to fit in with us” to acceptance of behaviour. Only replace behaviour if problematic for the individual (Fennell & Johnson, 2022).
- Increased understanding of strengths
- More acceptance and realistic optimism
- Respectful language guides
- Involving individuals with lived experience
- Challenging harmful stereotypes (e.g., lack empathy, behavioural problem, lacks theory of mind, lacks social interest, low or high functioning) (Fennell & Johnson, 2022).

My actions

- Reflect on my own experience/biases and consider how it informs my approach
- Ensure expectations that are communicated are respectful and consider neurodivergent students' needs
- Introduce respectful language guides for marginalised groups
- Liaise with advocacy groups to have materials approved or to consulted with when I was unsure. Where possible, always involve those with lived experience when creating resources about marginalised groups.
- Ensure I'm using respectful language when considering a particular marginalised group
- Use 'realistic optimism' when speaking about neurodivergent persons, whilst acknowledging inequity
- Acknowledge and address problematic language that comes up in texts and in research
- Share resources with and train educators and admin staff & students
- Use respectful language in my writing. Educate my peers!

Examples

Ensure expectations are communicated respectfully and consider neurodivergent students' needs:

- Make various options for communication/contact clear to students
- Allow students to create boundaries
- Try to be open to behaviours that are not neuronormative. Allow stimming behaviours, headphone wearing when completing an activity, doodling, mental breaks, cameras off.

Note: Any behaviour that is too distracting to others can be discussed respectfully with the student one on one.



Articles

AUTISM IN ADULTHOOD
Volume 3, Number 1, 2021
Mary Ann Liebert, Inc.
DOI: 10.1089/aut.2020.0014

Avoiding Ableist Language: Suggestions for Autism Researchers

Kristen Bottema-Beutel, PhD,¹ Steven K. Kapp, PhD,² Jessica Nina Lester, PhD,³
Noah J. Sasson, PhD,⁴ and Brittany N. Hand, PhD, OTR/L⁵

Autism
Volume 20, Issue 4, May 2016, Pages 442-462
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<https://doi.org/10.1177/1362361315588200>



Original Article





Which terms should be used to describe autism? Perspectives from the UK autism community

Lorcan Kenny¹, Caroline Hattersley^{2,3}, Bonnie Molins², Carole Buckley⁴, Carol Povey², and
Elizabeth Pellicano^{1,5}

Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10803-020-04425-3>

ORIGINAL PAPER

“It Defines Who I Am” or “It’s Something I Have”: What Language Do [Autistic] Australian Adults [on the Autism Spectrum] Prefer?

Simon M. Bury¹  · Rachel Jellett¹  · Jennifer R. Spoor²  · Darren Hedley¹ 

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Language Matters: A Reflection on the Critical Use of Language



Media guides

- **Talking about Autism: Guidelines for respectful and accurate reporting on autism and autistic people:** https://www.amaze.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Talking-about-autism-a-media-resource_web.pdf
- **Talking About ADHD Language Guide:** <https://aadpa.com.au/talking-about-adhd/>
- **WILL YOU PAY #ATTENTIONUK ?:** <HTTPS://ATTENTIONUK.ORG/MEDIA-GUIDELINES/>
- **A journalist's guide to learning disability:** <https://www.mencap.org.uk/journalists-guide-learning-disability>

What's happening in other universities?

- **University of Oxford (UK)**

Neurodiversity at Oxford

“Celebrating, connecting and empowering Oxford University's neurodiverse community.”

<https://neurodiversityoxford.web.ox.ac.uk/>

- **Latrobe University**

Neurodiversity project

Training, co-designing

<https://www.latrobe.edu.au/students/support/wellbeing/resource-hub/Neurodiversity>

- **RMIT**

‘Shut up and Write’

Neurodivergence-Friendly Study Sessions

<https://www.rmit.edu.au/students/my-course/research-students/phd-up/shut-up-and-write>

- **University of Bristol**

Neurodiversity and Digital Accessibility

Resources and support

<https://www.bristol.ac.uk/digital-education/inclusion/neurodiversity/>

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Sedgwick-Müller, J.A., Müller-Sedgwick, U., Adamou, M. *et al.* University students with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD): a consensus statement from the UK Adult ADHD Network (UKAAN). *BMC Psychiatry* **22**, 292 (2022). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12888-022-03898-z>

Questions?

Thank you

Contact us

Christine Muscat

Program Coordinator

