

Ziauddin Sardar

The Language of Equality

A discussion paper



Ziauddin Sardar

The Language Of Equality

A discussion paper

Text © Ziauddin Sardar

Published 2008

The Equality and Human Rights Commission
Arndale House • The Arndale Centre
Manchester M4 3AQ

ISBN 978-1-84206-057-5

Opinions expressed by the
author do not necessarily represent the
views or policies of the Equality and
Human Rights Commission

Design:

Louis Mackay Design & Illustration Ltd

Printed by Swan Press

Haywards Heath

Introduction

What do we talk about? How do we talk about it? These are the two most basic questions that confront any new organisation. The Equality and Human Rights Commission has begun to consider these questions in an atmosphere of growing concern about the misuse and general lack of understanding of the language of equality and human rights. Inevitably, language – and the fact that the use of language will be a key tool by which the Commission can move people on in terms of vision and understanding of equality and human rights – has been a priority from the start.

The Commission's language group was established several months before the organisation's formal launch in October 2007 in order to examine the issues surrounding the use of language. Our objective was to explore how to develop language in such a way as to transform public debate on equality and human rights, how to overcome the risks of language reinforcing received ideas and how to avoid possible suspicion and hostility. This essay is the outcome of those discussions. We wanted to:

- Explore basic principles.
- Consider the use of language in talking about equality and human rights.
- Examine the concept of political correctness.
- Identify problematic terms and explore new ones.

Our discussions did not take place in a vacuum. We had access to work already done in this field by our predecessors, such as the Commission for Racial Equality and the Disability Rights Commission, as well as other institutions like the British Council. We also had access

to specific reports and documents, such as *Mind Your Language* by Diversity Matters¹ and the TUC/UNISON guide *Diversity in Diction, Equality in Action*,² as well as a growing body of academic studies relevant to our concerns.

We cast our net wide in terms of source material but in the end relied on our own reasoning and analysis. What follows is intended to open up a broader discussion. I should also point out at the outset that this paper is written from an English perspective and would necessarily be different if written from, for example, a Welsh or Scottish viewpoint. The problem here is not limited to the fact that ‘Britishness’ is perceived in different ways across the United Kingdom. It is also that different words are favoured in different parts of Britain. In Wales, for example, the term ‘inclusion’ is much more commonly used than ‘integration’.

Inclusion suggests an amalgam of cultures on an equal basis rather than an incorporation of cultures into a dominant culture. This is part of the prevailing political philosophy in Wales, possibly befitting a nation where 30 per cent of the population was born elsewhere. Translation therefore presents a special challenge.³

Why language?

Language is our most basic tool of everyday communication. It is the medium through which we interact with other people and make ourselves understood. It is also our largest and most flexible store of information, the tool that allows us to learn, to teach, to adapt and to change. Language is an inseparable part of how we shape our perceptions of the world around us – indeed, of how we conceive of ourselves as individuals.

We cannot do without language, yet we must acknowledge our use of language is and can be fraught with ambiguity. Between what we mean to say, what we intend to mean and what our words signify and convey to other people exist multiple opportunities for miscommunication, for saying more or less than was intended or implied: ‘I hear what you say. But that’s not what I meant at all.’ Language is fertile ground for misunderstanding, misinterpretation and offence, intended or inadvertent.

Meaning what we say is not always equivalent to saying what we mean. It is possible to talk at cross purposes in a variety of ways that have significant social consequences: deliberate and positive or unintentional and negative as well as intended and negative. Most significant of all, we can continue to use language that does not accurately reflect or convey our understanding of the kind of society in which we live. Language is a living element of society: if it does not reflect how we live today it may not be able to express our aspirations for the kind of society we wish to become in the future.

The Commission has a mission to promote the practical and conceptual causes of equality and human rights. Yet even such a fundamental notion as human rights, essential to its work, has negative connotations for a significant

proportion of the British population. A market survey carried out on behalf of the Commission by GfK NOP Social Research in September 2007⁴ found that 68 per cent of respondents had a negative understanding of human rights and agreed with the statement that ‘government is more concerned about the human rights of minority groups rather than those of the average person’. In addition, 56 per cent thought that ‘people only talk about their human rights when they are trying to get something they are not entitled to’. Others thought that the term applied mostly to prisoners or terrorists and that it provided an excuse for certain behaviour. Most people also felt frustrated and found it difficult to identify where the boundaries of appropriate and inappropriate language lay.

Making society more conscious of the potential of equality and human rights means overcoming such common perceptions and frustrations as well as transcending conventional and inherited understandings of the language of equality. It also means encouraging the development of new interpretations with practical applications that meet the actual needs of our society today and for the future.

It is important to appreciate from the outset that language is not just a means of communication: it is also a means of control. As Raymond Williams once put it, ‘a definition of language is always, implicitly or explicitly, a definition of human beings in the world’.⁵ The way we define and use words implicitly or explicitly involves defining others in certain ways and can be used to ‘put them in their place’. So language has the power to create and reinforce human barriers. The function of a language of equality is both to undermine the use of language as a tool of power and control and to transcend the barriers it may create. We want language to be used to bring people together, to create a common bond among them, to

promote mutual respect across the areas of race, culture, religion, gender, disability, age and sexual orientation, and hence to promote a society based on equality and fairness where people are confident in all aspects of their diversity.

Communication and fostering greater understanding are central to the Commission's work. Therefore we have considered how language facilitates or impedes the Commission's efforts, how it enhances or restricts understanding of goals and intentions. Our discussions concerned areas of human behaviour and social interaction fraught with misunderstandings and misinterpretations – difficult areas. There is resistance to change, whether piecemeal or radical, owing both to entrenched negative attitudes and to complacency and a reluctance to think things through.

As part of our discussions we identified three cardinal principles that also serve as practical values to guide our activities: consideration, courtesy and civility. We believe these values command support and endorsement across the spectrum of British society. They are common principles irrespective of our individual backgrounds, heritage or beliefs. They define how we as individuals wish to be treated and understood and, ideally, what we consider is due to other people. These values are enduring aspirations for how we would like to live today and for the kind of society we seek to build for future generations. But to make them meaningful we have to be aware of the part language plays in the understanding of our core tasks. We have to reason with the misunderstandings, misinterpretation and offence inherent in our language and we have to look at how to make these principles work in practice.

What is language?

We acquire language. It is something we are taught from the moment of birth. Our capacity to use language grows as we mature. Our store of language, how it is used, the meanings it conveys, is profoundly influenced by our own experiences – where we are born, how we are educated, the community, organisations, employment or profession, religion or even political party we choose or are affiliated to as well as a host of other interests and activities that distinguish our lives as individuals.

Behaviour acquired in society is the classic definition of culture and language is the cultural tool *par excellence*. Language, like culture, has a history; it is layered like some vast archaeological site, the repository of collectively acquired experience. According to Wittgenstein ‘language is like a maze of little streets and squares, of old and new houses, and of houses with additions from various periods; and this surrounded by a multitude of new boroughs with straight regular streets and uniform houses’.⁶ Like an ancient but thriving city, language is alive, lived in, adapting the old to new purposes, keeping venerable words for specific purposes as well as developing new words to express new experience and capabilities.

Our language records the contribution of the various peoples who, over millennia, have settled in these islands. It also reflects the influence of the peoples and places Britons have been in contact with down the ages – language has always been the companion of Empire. An English dictionary is full of loan words for products, customs, ideas, innovations borrowed from people who have contributed to the history of Britain at home and abroad. Our language has never been insular. Our use of language also reflects the rich regional variations within the British Isles, the diversity of lifestyles, status and occupations, ideas and interests.

At times Britons have been divided and defined by their use of language just as they have enjoyed shared sources of words and expressions that convey a common heritage and shared belonging. Even the dominance of the English language in Britain has been a contested and fraught arena. Our language has been and is a work in progress, reflecting the changing times and circumstances of the nation's life.

However, the relationship between language and social change has never been direct and uniform. The likes of *Beowulf* and Chaucer are closed books to all except specialists. The language of Shakespeare is a real challenge for today's school children. Yet the phrases and sayings of Shakespeare, along with the language of the King James Bible, live on in common conversation as well as being sources we turn to for rhetorical flourish and high sentence to say something important or evoke heightened meaning or emotion. Text is always subject to context and context provides for differential rates of change and usage in language and its multiple meanings. And society, like our language, is always a work in progress where ideas and attitudes as well as behaviours preserve, conserve, adapt, progress, liberalise and change according to the diversity of backgrounds and beliefs of the population at large.

The more complex society becomes, the more specialised contexts it develops. This gives rise to more and more specialised groups, professions, disciplines of learning, as well as interest groups and subcultures, each of which can develop their own language to discuss their own business among themselves. At different rates and with varying effects these specialised languages and meanings can either pass into the mainstream or affect the rest of society hardly at all. Complexity means different, even contradictory, meanings of words can continue to exist side by side or be used by different groups simultaneously. As new meanings and implications of language are being

developed there is no inflexible law decreeing that old implications, associations or evocative import disappear.

Society responds to change and our language reflects this fact. But there are different contexts of change. Material change generates new language and expressions with speed and ease. Fads and fashions, entertainment and the media can also generate new words and meanings, seemingly overnight. One need only consider the impact the development of computers and the internet has had on language and the use of words to realise how instantaneous change can be. Information technology has also altered the most obvious meaning of words that have long been in use: when we hear the word 'net', we are far more likely to think of how we email a friend than a hairnet or fishing net. There are now websites entirely devoted to spotting and recording new terms, sifting potential neologisms from the transient chatter and using the emerging terms to detect shifts in technological innovation.⁷

While new words emerge with unparalleled speed, old terms do not always disappear. Recent research has confirmed that the most frequently used words do not change easily – they have to be encouraged to change. A team of evolutionary biologists and mathematicians from Harvard University looked at how English verbs have changed over the past 1,200 years.⁸ Another team of biologists from Reading University examined the frequency of word use and the role this frequency played in how words were changed and replaced.⁹ Despite significant differences in their mathematics, both papers reach the same conclusion: the pattern of change depended strongly on the frequency with which words were used in everyday parlance. This is hardly a surprising result – but the use of sophisticated methods of bioinformatics and genomics does confirm a quantitative relationship between words and change. The research tells us that feedback reinforces

the use of certain words, so the output of one generation serves as the input of the next. As such, certain words with implications for equality could continue to be used for generations, unless conscious attempts are made to replace them with neutral terms. Changes towards more equality in social conduct and human behaviour depend on our conscious effort to change the language we use. The research also establishes an important principle. When talking about equality we need to ‘err on the side of politeness’. The more we use polite terms, the more consideration, courtesy and civility we show, the more language promotes equality and fairness in society.

There is another reason for leaning towards politeness. We know words are signs and symbols with expressive means. But words can also constitute action – and impolite words, argues American lawyer Cass R Sunstein, can lead to offensive or unlawful action.¹⁰ Suppose an employer sacks an employee by saying ‘I don’t want people of your religion to work for me’. The statement ‘you are fired’ is not just speech but an act – and when combined with the previous statement, it is an unlawful act. Similarly an employer who says ‘sleep with me or lose your job’ is committing an act of harassment. The words do not cause the act. The words *are* the act.

It is thus reasonable to assume that there is an intrinsic relationship between words and equality. If words can be acts, then they can also lead. And some words may undermine the self-respect of others and promote fear and racially, religiously or sexually motivated violence. Invective directed against minority groups, such as Muslims or immigrants, gay people or refugees, creates fear and violence and amounts to a denial of the equality that is central to a well-functioning democracy.

Sunstein takes the argument a step further by suggesting that ‘unrestricted speech may contribute to

the maintenance of a system with caste-like features'. Language can shape social behaviour that promotes 'systematic disadvantage' among certain groups in society. Constant use of certain terms, such as regularly describing refugees as 'scroungers' or gay people as 'queer', can place one group systematically beneath another with respect to basic human capabilities and functions. By using words that produce anger or resentment on the basis of someone's race, sex, religion or sexual orientation, we not only stigmatise certain groups in society but produce a system of caste based on the bigoted nature of these words. Words that promote a caste system based on gender, Sunstein says, translate 'women's sexual and reproductive capacities into a source of second-class citizenship'. By emphasising biological and cultural differences, language can encourage social practices that systematically subordinate particular groups. The resulting inequality occurs in multiple indices of social welfare: poverty, education, health, employment, susceptibility to violence and crime, and political influence.

The remedy, Sunstein suggests, is not that everyone must be treated 'the same' but that no group of people should become second-class citizens. Equality means that one group ought not to be systematically beneath another with respect to opportunities and power and that self-respect and its social bases ought not to be distributed along the lines of race, culture, religion, sexual orientation, disability, age or gender.

But the effects of language are not limited to shaping conduct or creating social outcasts. Language influences a whole range of institutions in society. It has an impact on aesthetics, philosophy and epistemology; it provides the main social institutions of a nation state, such as law, cities, schools and welfare system with their basic characteristics.¹¹ It influences morality as much as planning. Words like 'assimilation', 'vernacular'

and ‘pluralism’, for example, have a direct bearing on the planning process and eventually influence the built environment of our cities.¹² As the historian and philosopher JGA Pocock has argued, the mere acceptance of certain words, a vocabulary through which data is conveyed, is to commit oneself to a world of interrelated ideas, to a deeply structured way of thinking, doing or saying – and hence living.¹³

There is another context to language which reflects what the anthropologist Margaret Hodgen describes as ‘the mind’s fidelity to the old’.¹⁴ We conceive of our world, of society, of abstract ideas, through word pictures. Ideas about the nature of things, their diversity and divisions, are bundled together in concepts which may have considerable lineage. And the claims of such lineage and ancestry may continue in meanings laden with implications and associations that are contested even while they continue in current use. Race, nationality, class, gender roles, disability and Britishness are all concepts of considerable antiquity that trail their history of meanings into the present. How these concepts were used as ways of reasoning, social organisation and behaviour in the past are implied and contained in their usage today. Just as importantly, since history is a shared process differently experienced by people from different backgrounds, how people hear and react to words is varied. Responses to the latent implications of words can vary from indifference through shades of ignorance to considering such history as irrelevant, innocuous or really a thing of the past, to profound offence or proof of the continuity of unjust inequity.

These issues are of particular concern to the Commission. It has to consider how to use language adequately and effectively to express contemporary aspirations for improving mutual understanding and social cohesion and promoting good relations.

What does it mean to see language as a living ecology, with different segments in different states, certain parts in a state of decay and beyond redemption, other parts new and emerging, and still others with deep roots in tradition and custom? It means that language is not separate from the context that shapes it. What we see or hear is not always 'out there'; sometimes we see and hear what the structure of the language has made us sensitive to or what it has trained us to look for in experience. As the American Philosophical Association tells us, it is not just that we shape our language but that language also shapes us. Language 'influences thought and behaviour', it may 'blind us to our having adopted a particular value-laden perspective', and may 'systematically distort our theories' and actions.¹⁵ Thus there are important reasons why we must interrogate language – and should continue to do so.

If we acknowledge our attachment to old usages and meanings we must also acknowledge how social life and attitudes have changed. Attitudes to gender roles, sexual orientation, marriage, child rearing, disability, mental illness, ethnicity and race relations have all undergone significant change and are still being reformed and re-evaluated.

The four decades since the 1960s have seen a radical transformation in society and its attitudes. Today, your nurse is quite likely to be a man while your doctor is a woman; there are as many male as female philosophers; and a plumber could be a man or a woman – a situation virtually unheard of 40 years ago but now taken as normal. The question is whether our language and how it shapes our thinking has caught up with changes we find perfectly acceptable, indeed preferable because they are more equitable in the opportunities they offer to men and women.

Back in the 1970s in a seminal study the sociologists Sally Hacker and Joseph Schneider¹⁶ asked 300 college

students to select pictures from magazines and newspapers to illustrate different chapters in a sociology textbook. Half the students were given chapter headings like 'Social Man', 'Industrial Man' and 'Political Man'. The other half were given different but corresponding headings such as 'Society', 'Industrial Life' and 'Political Behaviour'. Guess what? The first group of students, from both sexes, consistently choose pictures with males only. The second group, working without 'man' selected images of both males and females.

We continue, however, to use the common generic 'man'. In a sentence such as 'the ordinary man in the street' the speaker is actually referring to everyone: men, women and children. But what do we actually think of when we hear a phrase like the following: 'What should rational man do in this situation?' The fact is, regardless of the author's intentions, the generic 'man' is not interpreted as gender neutral. The words still carry the implicit assumptions that everyone on our streets is a man and that rationality is limited to men. Yet these are not premises on which our society operates. We are, in effect, continuing to talk at cross purposes. Or, to put it another way, we have not developed a common language that accurately reflects our aspirations and expectations for our daughters and sons.

Should we worry about this? What is the effect of this kind of language gap? Surely, even if we talk at cross purposes, we basically know what we mean or at least what we intend to mean. Such complacency can be as common as it is misplaced. In tabloid papers, popular magazines and across the whole gamut of the mass media old language, with all its load of implicit meanings, is actually sending conflicting messages to young women and men and saddling them with conflicted attitudes about the choices they should or perhaps should not make about their lives. And the common currency of old language can make it

much more difficult for these ideas of self-image to be discussed and resolved.

The language gap is not merely an unconsidered consequence of words and their old associations. It can also be an important signal of matters on which society is conflicted, a pointer to unresolved issues that are obstacles to greater social cohesion. And in these areas language itself may impede debate.

From the perspective of equality and human rights, sometimes the structure of the English language is problematic. Consider colour, which in itself is meaningless. Unlike religion or nationality, colour does not suggest any pattern of meaning. Yet meaning is attributed to it by the English language. Take the colours white and black. According to *Roget's Thesaurus*¹⁷ white means clean and pure. It provides over 134 synonyms for whiteness – only ten are mildly negative. The thesaurus also tells us that black equates to dirty, prohibited and funereal. It provides 120 synonyms for black and blackness, 60 of which are distinctively unfavourable; none are positive. So we end up with a white lie that is excusable and a black lie that is wicked and evil.

Race and gender bias is also an intrinsic part of the structure of the language of certain disciplines. Philosophy is a good example. What does a philosopher do? A standard text tells us: 'The philosopher uses his reason to guide him'. Moreover: 'For Aristotle, man is, above all, Political Man'. Knowing the political status of women in ancient Greece and Aristotle's views on women, we can take it that by 'man' Aristotle actually means men, and not women at all. But there is still a common assumption that not only philosophers, but also plumbers, engineers and members of many other professions are male.

Unless the Commission is alert to the conflicting ideas held in society and how they relate to the language

we all use, it can neither facilitate the debate nor help to transcend the impasse. At times, serving the cause of consideration, courtesy and civility by fostering dignity and respect may require creative strategies to bring forward new language in which to conceive and debate the manners and mores of our society and how it operates.

If language shapes how we understand the world, then inclusive and fair use of language can make a positive contribution to society. The trouble is the landscape of language is not static. Fidelity to the old contends with the shock of the new and the interface between continuity and change can be subtle, conflicting or just an addition to unresolved ambiguity or euphemism. Perhaps the greatest problem is a lack of awareness. All too often people do not consider the deeper meaning conveyed by the words and phrases they use. It is also true that we can talk without being aware of the very different meaning common words or sayings have for people whose background, history and experience have been other than our own. To achieve consideration, courtesy and civility we have to become aware of words and their history as we build commitment to cohesion, inclusion, equality and good relations as principles and lived reality for all members of our society.

Language reflects the characteristics of the society in which it is used, and the complexity and incoherence of social relations are reflected by complexity and incoherence of language. Effective change in society ultimately relies on conviction – in the sense of the phrase ‘Quaker by conviction’: discovering and coming to a truth through questioning and being convinced of its cogency. We feel the Commission needs to engage everyone and convince the majority of the rightness of a new course of action. If change in society is not reflected in changed language then the work is only part done.

Political correctness

Political correctness first emerged in the US during the 1960s to combat the use of inherently sexist and racist words and terminology. Feminists sought to challenge words and phrases seen as reflecting and reinforcing harmful stereotypes about conventional gender roles and race relations. The proponents were mostly academic sociologists who used ideas originally developed by the Frankfurt School of sociology in the 1920s – pilloried by George Orwell in *Nineteen Eighty Four*. To be politically correct, they argued, is to be sensitive to the unconscious racism and sexism of words used widely both in society and academia.

Nowadays political correctness has acquired pejorative meaning. It is used almost exclusively in the context of, to quote the *Sun*, ‘politically correct policing’ gone mad. The *Daily Express*, for example, sees political correctness as ‘nonsense, piffling nonsense but dangerous nonsense too’.¹⁸ Media stories ascribing the ditching of piggy banks and banning of Christmas to political correctness abound.

However, the assault on political correctness, from both the right and the left, does not mean the concept itself is fatally flawed. At worst, the attack on political correctness is used to justify bigotry and prejudice. At best, the abuse of the notion is employed by those who wish to avoid the moral obligation to consider why the very idea of political correctness first appeared. As Gary Younge of the *Guardian* has pointed out, the term ‘PC’ has not only been misappropriated and mistranslated – it is also constantly and mischievously employed by ‘those who realize they are never going to win arguments about equality if they tackle their opponents head-on’.¹⁹

‘Since individuals and social practices can cause injustice’, writes Bhikhu Parekh in *A New Politics of Identity*,

‘how we treat and speak about others becomes a matter of justice’. This is the main reason for the emergence of political correctness, Parekh suggests.

It represents a protest against stigmatization, intended or unintended humiliation, subtle and crude ways of keeping others in their place, triggering their painful personal and collective memories, and perpetuating inequalities of power and esteem. Forms of expression and modes of address are never politically and culturally innocent. The objection to them can, of course, be taken too far and bring itself to ridicule, because language cannot easily be sanitized, and the divided line between light-hearted humour and the manipulation of others’ insecurity is often fairly thin. However, the basic concern underlying political correctness is valid. All speech is action, and reflects and reproduces a particular way of structuring social relations. There are just and unjust ways of talking about others and laughing at their foibles and idiosyncrasies. Since language is a powerful tool of regulating and determining human behaviour, a just society may rightly subject it to formal and informal checks.²⁰

Unjust ways of talking about others, however, have not stopped attacks on political correctness. These attacks shroud hostility or suspicion towards anti-discrimination measures and legislation and policies aimed at promoting equality and human rights, and any over-zealous or uninformed use of such measures. They are averse to any notion that individual words are capable of embodying and perpetuating stereotypes and that such terminology should therefore be challenged, modified or changed.

It is instructive, however, to examine some of the ways in which political correctness has failed if future interventions are to be more successful. Beginning in the

academy, political correctness was an assault on words disassociated from changes in structures in wider society. The pen may often be mightier than the sword but words are powerful only in so far as they prompt, promote or capture the mood of wider social movements. Words have to engage sympathy and support across society. New words emerge to describe new realities; invented words struggle if they are not related to the practicalities of actual change. It is by consent of the speakers, not at the directives of higher authority, that language changes most effectively.

'PC' language has not been without success. It has become the official speak of many administrative agencies. Yet it has failed to make a breakthrough into common usage. It remains a specialised language of discrete groups within society, of civil servants, non-governmental organisations, of local authorities and statutory agencies. In the main, as a specialised language, the lexicon of PC represents what society expects from these agencies. But in general terms we often find the terminology of PC uncomfortable and ungainly; it does not trip mellifluously off the tongue. It bears all the hallmarks of having been invented in a laboratory rather than in the wear and tear of daily common usage as a 'people's language'.

Political correctness sought to create change by insistence and often neglected to build popular support through explanation and awareness-raising. Language changes through usage and the use of language is an educative process. The important consideration is how society at large is most comfortable with learning. When political correctness appears as pedantry tackling questionable yet innocuous targets while more major substantive problems seem to be neglected, it forfeits the sympathy of ordinary people. Worse, in such ways PC speak does not always serve or even at times engage

with the real needs of those it was supposed to benefit.

We need to accept that attacks on political correctness have so debased the term that it is now quite useless to the Commission. It was recognised as early as the mid-1990s that we need to move on from political correctness.²¹ We need to surmount the impasse created by the term, move past the frozen iteration of dispute. We need to progress toward a place where the original principles of political correctness – that language contains ideas about people, that moral choices are involved in the language people use – are not only acknowledged but enhanced.

The emergence of political correctness was based on several concerns which are just as valid today as they were when the notion first appeared:

1. Certain people have their rights, opportunities or freedoms restricted as a result of being members of groups about which society holds negative beliefs.
2. Such beliefs are often reflected both in everyday language as well as in the language of certain disciplines and professions – that is, these beliefs shape everyday perceptions and learned discourses.
3. If the language is changed these beliefs (and the assumptions they are based on) may become weaker and it may be easier in consequence to challenge discrimination.
4. If the labelling terminology is rendered problematic, people may be more likely to think consciously about how they describe and treat others and less likely to act unfairly or unlawfully.
5. Thus the individual merits of a person, rather than their membership or perceived membership of a group, will become the principal factors affecting perceptions and expectations of them.

What could be a viable alternative to political correctness? The answer depends on the goals we seek to achieve.

Basic goals

We all felt that, in its engagement with the language of equality and human rights, the Commission should pursue the following goals:

1. **Awareness:** it has to make people aware of the inherent bias of English, the discriminatory nature of certain words and phrases, and the importance of language in promoting community cohesion, good relations and shaping a just and fair society.
2. **Perception:** it needs to change people's perceptions about difference – about the ways that difference enriches life – through creative use of the language of equality. But changes in perceptions cannot be limited simply to appreciating difference: the Commission needs to use the language of human rights to enable people to perceive the common values that are encapsulated in and enacted through our differences.
3. **Recovery:** it needs to rescue certain words and concepts that have been debased but are essential for performing goals 1 and 2, such as 'human rights', 'faith' and 'discrimination'.
4. **Articulation:** it needs to find effective ways of encouraging people to develop and use new vocabulary as well as to articulate exactly what it means by terms such as 'independent living' and 'good relations' that may look familiar, but to which particular definitions are given beyond their commonly understood meanings.

The prime principle

We explored alternatives to political correctness, focusing on respect for individuals rather than prescribing a set of rules. We wanted to avoid anything that might simply be seen as a new version of PC, with the attendant risk of a backlash. But this risk cannot be avoided entirely. So rather than shy away from it, we considered what better label there might be.

The idea of a culturally correct or a culturally sensitive language was discussed. But the problem with culture is that it is open to multiple interpretations and hence can be easily abused. Moreover, accepting cultural sensitivity may also imply accepting certain cultural practices that violate the basic tenets of human rights.

The prime principle we advocate is that of an ethically sensitive language. ‘Ethical’ is defined here in terms of four moral precepts – equality, dignity, respect and value – which draw on and are embedded in the framework of human rights. In practice, this means everyone has the equal right to be described in a dignified and respectful way. However, equal treatment here does not mean the same treatment; that is why equal value is a necessary component of the project. In this framework, labels and descriptions of individuals, groups and communities should enhance their human dignity and value while respecting their self-descriptions and cultural concerns and practices. But this is not a relativistic framework; it is embedded in human rights. Cultural practices that violate the basic principles of human rights, such as female circumcision and forced marriages, cannot be ‘respected’ or ‘valued’.

The overall aim of ethically sensitive language is to promote the use of words that enhance a person’s human dignity and value. This also applies to the person a subject may be associated with – for example, the term

‘carer’ points to the ‘cared for’ person and denies their independence, if used in the wrong context to describe a paid personal assistant. The correct use of carer tends to refer to the informal or unpaid provider of care and should therefore be an identity in its own right. Persons, groups, communities – all need to be seen as a continuum, as a network of relationships, deserving of dignity, respect and value.

General principles

Ethically sensitive language works in conjunction with the following general principles.

Visibility: we need to be aware of the hidden bias of the English language. Language makes the general assumption that people are white, male, heterosexual, non-disabled, married and of European extraction. The gender bias of English often makes women invisible by, for example, assuming that those with certain occupations or roles are only one gender, ignoring women’s different points of view, or embodying explicit or implicit sexual stereotypes – as when contrasting female beauty with male accomplishment.

Minorities feel excluded when certain well-intentioned but exclusive words are used: for example, ‘European’ often connotes whiteness and leaves many feeling isolated. The principle here is that we should make visible what the language renders invisible by using specific but also inclusive terms.

Self-definition: it is the right of all individuals, groups and communities to describe themselves as they see fit. The correct label is the one they give themselves. Muslims, for example, describe themselves as Muslims – and not

as Islamists, fundamentalists or Jihadis. But sometimes self-description can be problematic. For example, disabled people sometimes make fun of themselves by using certain terms, a point well illustrated in the 2005 film *The Ringer*, in which a young man pretends to be disabled to take part as an athlete in the Special Olympics as a way to make money. But if the same terms were used by outsiders, they would definitely be considered offensive.

The Roma, whose origins are in north-western India, have been known for centuries as Gypsies – a word that many Roma themselves accept. It is found both in the name of one of the principal organisations representing Roma people in Britain, The Gypsy Council, and in the term ‘Gypsies and Irish Travellers’, by which the ethnicity of Roma people is recognised in English law (similar but slightly different terms are used in Scotland and Wales).²² This, however, does not dispose of the problem that the word, derived from the misplaced notion that the Roma were Egyptians in origin, has acquired negative connotations. We have to be aware of this even though the term continues to be used as self-description. Moreover, we need to remember that nowadays it is normal to have multiple identities; and that people may choose to describe themselves by a number of different labels. In general, self-definitions are to be preferred to imposed labels. However, just because members of a group may describe themselves in a specific way, this does not mean that the same description is always appropriate for others to use.

Insider/outsider: not all self-definitions are equal or equally acceptable – particularly when they violate the prime principle of ethically sensitive language. While insiders may describe themselves in particular ways, outsiders should be wary of using the same terms. Black people, particularly comedians and musicians, often use

the 'n' word. But it is taboo for the rest of us – and indeed is not always accepted by those who are themselves insiders. Phrases like this one, as well as 'bitch' and 'ho', are an integral part of the routine of the American comedian Eddie Griffin (of *Date Movie* and *Undercover Brother* fame). During a recent performance, however, he found himself on stage with the microphone turned off. Both the organisers and the audience objected to the use of the terms.²³

'People first': in general, ethically sensitive language focuses on the individuals and groups rather than what makes them different. Speaking of someone as a diabetic or an AIDS sufferer reduces the person to a disease. It is better to refer to them as 'a person with diabetes' or 'a person living with AIDS'. The general principle here is to name the person as a person first, then use the qualifier if – and only if – it is relevant. Again, we need to be sensible here: a woman is not a person with gender!

Initials: reducing groups and communities to initials – such as BME or LGB – demeans their humanity. As a general principle we should avoid acronyms and spell out what we mean.

Generic terms: we need to avoid the generic male – he, mankind, brotherhood, chairman, and the like. Where possible, males and females should be treated in the same way: if John Smith is called Smith, then Kay Brown should not be called Kay. It is also good to vary the order sometimes both to counter any implication that males always take priority and to enliven the discussion.

Key terms

The Commission's own name suggests two terms that are of utmost importance for us: equality and human rights. The assault on political correctness is also a coded attack on the equalities agenda. Equality is a highly contested term: there are different notions and types of equality (such as formal, moral and proportional) and it should not be confused with sameness. It is worth noting that philosophers and moral thinkers do not on the whole argue for strict equality. Given its complexity, it is necessary for us to explain the term in the specific context we use it.

In general the term equality should be used in combination with the precepts of ethically sensitive language such as respect or equal opportunity. Simone Weil's definition of equality brings this to the fore: 'Equality ... consists in recognition, at once public, general, effective and genuinely expressed in institutions and customs, that the same amount of respect and consideration is due to every human being as such'.²⁴ The definition offered by *Diversity Matters* emphasises opportunity: 'When applied to a society, equality describes a state in which people have similar opportunities in social status, income, wealth, opportunities and living conditions. Equality is the absence of inequality and disadvantage currently experienced by many individuals or groups within society. It is often the aspiration of marginalized and excluded groups.'²⁵

Our discussions emphasised that human rights language is the key to improving the understanding of the equalities agenda. It offers a way to speak about different types of inequality, injustice and discrimination universally while also recognising the distinctiveness of different barriers. However, human rights are often poorly understood and misrepresented and there is a danger that

this agenda could end up in the same position as political correctness. While human rights underpin all the work of the Commission, it is necessary to use human rights language carefully, appropriately and considerately. It should only be used in relation to fundamentals, not for trivial matters, and the term should always be used with an explanation or point of reference.

A key term that has recently been attacked just as much as political correctness and human rights is multiculturalism. We felt that multiculturalism is a great concept. We need to build on its two basic premises: that minorities have the right to equal access to power and opportunities and the right to self-representation. However, we should acknowledge that multiculturalism focused too much on difference at the expense of common values and common ground. But this does not mean that either the idea of multiculturalism or the term itself should be ditched. Various terms suggested to replace multiculturalism, such as the continental term ‘intercultural’, are less than satisfactory, although ‘pluralism’ can often be used as an alternative. We need to mend multiculturalism, not end it. As Tariq Modood points out in his *Multiculturalism: A Civic Idea*,²⁶ those who now emphasise common values don’t appreciate that for the theorists of political multiculturalism, it was always grounded in citizenship. We may need to rebalance the civic against multiculturalism in terms of popular understanding but in doing so we are only returning to what was always present in the theoretical discourse of multiculturalism. The Commission should therefore try to rescue the term but, like human rights, it should be used carefully and sparingly.

The associated term ‘integration’ can also be problematic. We consider integration as a two-way process: it is not just minorities who have to ‘integrate’ –

the majority also has to embrace the minority. Moreover, integration applies to groups and societies, not individuals (so it makes little sense to say of someone ‘she is not integrated’). This is the sociological understanding of theorists like Durkheim. The 2007 annual report of the Emergency Care Research Institute says that it is replacing the term ‘integration’ with ‘an integrated society’.²⁷ We are of the opinion that the Commission should follow their example.

Certain other terms cannot be changed however, even though we may not always like to use them. Terms such as harassment, hostility and discrimination already have a legal meaning. Moreover, terms such as ‘race’, ‘racial group’, ‘religion and belief’, ‘disability’ and ‘sexual orientation’ have statutory and EU-wide definitions, including definition within the European Convention of Human Rights and the Equality Act 2006. It would be problematic to produce definitions for general usage that are too far removed from the legal framework, which is unlikely to change in the immediate future.

Group specific terms

Muslims

Words used about Muslims provide a good example of the point that different words belong to different speech communities and therefore to different outlooks and stances. What some may see as ‘terrorism’ others may see as ‘armed struggle’. ‘Liberation’, said in relation to Iraq, may be seen as ‘invasion’. The choice of words not only tells us which group one may belong to but may also reflect sympathies and a political stance on deeply contested views. Alternatives such as militants, radicals, separatists, etc may be more appropriate and less controversial.

In general, the term ‘the Muslim community’ should be avoided: it’s better to talk about Muslims or Muslim communities to emphasise the diversity of the people we are talking about. It is worth noting that Muslims and Arabs are not synonyms – not all Muslims are Arabs, and not all Arabs are Muslim. In fact, Arabs constitute around a quarter of the world’s Muslims. The adjective ‘Arab’ usually refers to general culture, as in phrases such as Arab history or Arab tradition. Arabic is a language – ‘the Arabic press’ refers to newspapers published in Arabic; ‘the Arab press’ includes newspapers produced by Arabs in other languages such as English. There is however no general definition of an Arab: Egyptians, Saudis, Syrians, Iraqis and Moroccans are all different kinds of Arabs, while some Arabic-speaking groups, such as Berbers and Kurds, do not regard themselves as Arabs.

Similarly there are numerous varieties of Muslims of which Sunnis and Shia are perhaps the most commonly known. In Britain, there are at least five different kinds of Muslim political group whose existence should be acknowledged and who should be referred to by their proper names: the Tablighi Jamaat, an evangelical movement devoted to emphasising the ritualistic aspects of Islam; the Deobandis, both a literalist and overtly political affiliation; the Barelvis, who emphasise the veneration of the Prophet Muhammad; the Sufis (also associated with the Barelvis in the British context) who are mystics; and the Salafiyah who are literalists.

In general, we should avoid the use of the word Islam – because it can have so many different meanings – and instead use Muslims. Islamism, often used to describe extreme ideology, is an unclear term with negative connotations, so it is best avoided. Given that ‘fundamentalist’ is always pejorative, frequently offensive and a blanket term, it should also be avoided. The best

terms to describe Muslims with literalist or socially conservative views is 'pious', 'devout' and 'politically motivated'. This provides options to distinguish between belief and behaviour.

The term 'extremist' also carries a negative undertone. In relation to Muslims the word has come to be associated with the more socially conservative. Yet one can equally be an extremist in the defence of human rights or equal opportunity! The label 'moderate' is also problematic when applied to Muslims: it suggests someone subscribes to a diluted version of Islam. It is better to use conventional political labels: conservative or liberal.

Lately, Islamophobia has gained wide currency thanks largely to the Runnymede Trust report, *Islamophobia: A Challenge to Us All*.²⁸ We discussed Islamophobia at great length but felt that 'anti-Muslim' is a better term, as it can be used in conjunction with racism, discrimination, prejudice and harassment. In this way the nature of the prejudice (anti-Muslim) is linked to the nature of the individual harm that is suffered by individual Muslims (such as discrimination, harassment or violence). This terminology reflects the gradual racialisation of Muslims that is currently taking place.

Sexual orientation

The past two decades have seen an explosion of publications dealing with the ways in which gay men and lesbians use language and how they describe themselves.²⁹ There is evidence of the emergence of what is called 'lavender linguistic', which appropriates and transforms English in creative ways to reflect gay and lesbian sensitivities.³⁰ But the irony is that this has not made describing sexual orientation any easier or clearer.

Indeed there is a lengthy and bewildering list of politically correct tags used by and for gay people. Up to

the late 1970s, 'gay' seemed to describe all those whose sexual and gendered practices fell beyond heterosexuality. But then lesbians pointed out that 'gay' eclipsed women. So gay and lesbian came to be used in conjunction. In the early 1990s, 'queer' came into vogue on the back of 'queer theory' (which produced such classic, groundbreaking works as Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's *Epistemology of the Closet*).³¹ But queer was never embraced by most people and fell by the wayside, although it is making a comeback in the US. Instead we now have a lengthy list of acronyms:

LGB: lesbian, gay, bisexual (or GLB)

LGBT: lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered

LGBTF: lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered and friends

LGBTQQ: lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, two-spirit, queer and questioning

GLBTQ²IA: gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered, queer, questioning, intersex, allies

According to the left-wing American magazine, *In These Times*, GLBTQ²IA is now the official, 'politically correct' way to address non-heterosexuals and 'avoid offending anyone'.³² Where the US goes, Britain soon follows.

These acronyms are not only cumbersome and rather unattractive but in our opinion dehumanising. To have one's identity truncated to acronyms or worse merely initials (Ls, Gs, Bs and so on) is to be reduced as a human being. This is an important issue. A major theme running through much of the discussion of language in the 'lavender' literature is that naming confers existence and acknowledgement of existence leads to acceptance of identity. But the purpose of the whole exercise is defeated if a name is reduced to an initial.

In the first instance, we need to avoid acronyms. Various terms describing sexual orientation should always be spelt out in full. While we can use 'gay' as plain English expression for lesbians, gay men and bisexuals in general, 'gays' should be avoided. The focus should be on people, hence 'gay people' or 'lesbians, gay men and bisexuals'. Lesbian, gay and bisexual should not be used with capital letters (except at the beginning of a sentence of course). They are plain English words. The term 'homosexual' has a nineteenth century feel to it and used alone risks sounding mildly dismissive. However, it does make sense to use it in relation to 'heterosexuals' – and is often used in policy documents. Trans people should be respected as a discrete group; in legal and policy terms, trans issues sit with gender. We need also to distinguish between 'sexual preference' and 'sexual orientation'. Having the lights off, or wearing leopard skin, is a sexual preference. Sexual orientation is the idea that people are sexually attracted to either men or women or both. This leads to the categories of heterosexual, gay and bisexual.

It ought to be possible to use 'straight' as counterpart to gay. After all, it is an acceptable plain English word. But context can change things. In a recent legal case Sharon Legg, a female bouncer in a gay club, claimed that as the only heterosexual person in the club, she found the term 'straight' derogatory. (She was also called 'breeder'.) She won her case.³³

Disability

Conventionally, disabled people have been described using the impairment or condition from which they suffer. But the traditional, individualistic medical explanations for the various economic and social deprivations encountered by disabled people and their families have gradually given way to more social and political accounts widely referred

to as the ‘social model of disability’.³⁴ There is now a wide consensus among disabled people and the organisations that represent them that the language used to describe them should reflect the ‘social model’ approach.³⁵ In contrast to the ‘medical model’, which sees disabled people as the problem and thus requires them to adjust to the world as it is, the social model focuses on society and the barriers it creates that prevent disabled people from participating fully in everyday activities. It focuses on environmental and cultural factors as the primary cause of disabled people’s marginalisation. The social model thus suggests that discrimination against disabled people is socially created; it has little to do with their impairment. It is these barriers and discrimination, created through fear, ignorance and prejudice, which actually disable disabled people. As a result, disabled people are often made to feel it is their own fault that they are different. The social model looks beyond people’s impairment to all the relevant factors that affect their ability to participate fully and equally in society. It also enables disabled people to look at themselves in a more positive way, thus increasing their self-esteem and independence.

So, as a general principle, the terms used for disabled people should, first and foremost, focus on person and people: for example, ‘disabled person’ and ‘disabled people’, ‘visually impaired person’ and ‘blind people’ and the ‘deaf community’. When referring to impairment or a condition, it is important to acknowledge that the person is an individual and not defined solely by the impairment or condition. Hence ‘person with learning difficulties’ should be used for people with learning impairments at the lower end of the spectrum, such as dyslexia; ‘person with a learning disability’ for people with learning impairments at the higher end of the spectrum, such as Down’s syndrome; and ‘person with arthritis, cerebral palsy and Down’s

syndrome' when talking about a person with more than one impairment or condition.

The term 'carer' has come in for a lot of examination – and some stick! What is at issue here is the power relationship between the disabled person and the person who looks after them. Some disabled people find the term offensive, arguing that it infantilises them and suggests that decision-making rests with the person looking after them. But some people who look after disabled people, usually unpaid relatives, use the term as a badge of identity. Alternatives that could be used, in the appropriate context, include professional carer, support worker or personal assistant – these would not of course apply to an unpaid person providing informal support.

The main points here are that disability should be located within the structures of society; decision-making power should belong to disabled people; and impairments or conditions should not be used to define individuals. So a person using a wheelchair is not 'wheelchair bound': rather he or she is simply using a wheelchair, much like so many of us use glasses, as an enabling piece of equipment. If a wheelchair user is disabled because he or she cannot use public transport, we need to make public transport 'accessible' – as well as toilets, parking spaces, entrances, public buildings and so on – so that disabled people are able to participate in society on an equal basis.

Gender

When it comes to gender, language works in a counter-intuitive way. When we examine how certain words have changed in history in relation to gender, we discover that respectable words used to describe women have acquired negative connotations over the centuries. In a recent paper in *Nature*, linguistic psychologist WT Fitch observes:

A ‘hussy’ was once a perfectly respectable housewife, and ‘wench’ just meant ‘young woman’, but both terms now connote a woman of loose morals. And ‘lady’ – once used just for a woman of noble birth – is now the standard term for any woman. Intriguingly, words for men generally don’t suffer the same fate, and sometimes even improve their connotations (‘knight’ originally meant just a boy or a retainer) ... The most obvious explanation for this phenomenon is that language users (or at least those who have historically been responsible for recording language – men) are consistently misogynistic.³⁶

We have to guard against this misogynist tendency.³⁷ We need to talk about spouses or partners rather than husbands and wives, acknowledge that housework is something that men do as much as women, and make the case that whatever our gender we should get equal pay for work of equal value.

Contexts

Language is the product of society holding a conversation with itself. Change in the words and meanings through which the conversation is conducted must come by convincing people that they are not saying what they mean or intend to mean, in particular where equality and human rights are concerned. The process of conviction involves both a communication strategy based on education and awareness, and a call for engagement with social groups and organisations as well as institutions such as governmental and administrative bodies.

The three cardinal principles we have highlighted – consideration, courtesy and civility – can be the basis for promoting education and awareness. The Commission needs to find ways to convince people that these values provide the foundation for a vision of the kind of society

we all aspire to; that through consideration, courtesy and civility we can build a more cohesive Britain, which not only includes all its citizens but provides them all with equal and open opportunity to contribute their skills, talents and abilities to society.

The Commission needs to learn from the failures of other debates, which have littered the landscape with words and concepts that remain sources of misunderstanding, misinterpretation and even offence. It is not sufficient to bemoan the fact that ‘politically correct’ has become a pejorative term. The fact is much of the equality and anti-racism agenda that was the substance of political correctness has gained public support in the sense that people believe it is fair; indeed, it is what they expect for themselves as individuals. But the language of political correctness did not connect with ordinary people in their day-to-day lives. It did not connect merely because it was cumbersome and lacked easy fluency. It did not connect because it did not address difficult questions about our attachment to traditional values and ways of thinking and speaking. Political correctness offered people a polemic language that foreclosed debate on unresolved issues. To adopt the language of political correctness appeared to demand taking a condemnatory stance against custom and usage when what many people wanted was a gradual reforming of language that allowed conflicted attitudes to be acknowledged and debated.

If the Commission is to be effective it must learn how to engage rather than antagonise the sympathies of the general public. Determinist polemic that implies more than ordinary people feel is necessary because it condemns and denies attitudes that retain social credibility is the failure of political correctness we must avoid. We felt that the Commission must take a lead in helping society to debate the anomalies and ambiguities built around ideas and

beliefs about equality and human rights. It must recognise that language gains currency through its fitness to express what people would like to say in ways with which they are comfortable and conversant.

There can be little doubt that the most crucial arena for influencing the language of public debate is the media. If the language of tabloid journalism is cause for concern, as it most certainly is, then in our view a proactive communication strategy to engage with and persuade the red tops is necessary. The media of popular entertainment mediates language and unless the Commission makes a determined effort to communicate with and through such media it will fail to reach the general public.

Social change is always under way. But social change does not always cause language to change. Change in the meanings of words is always negotiated. Often it is most successfully accomplished by being presented as a return to the fuller and more adequate intention of cherished tradition, especially when the tradition is invented for the purpose of occasioning change! Consideration, courtesy and civility are old and traditional values. They exist as concepts that are beyond, over and above polemic; they feel more neutral, approachable and innocuous as well as having positive and desirable connotations. But to acquire currency as vessels for the agenda of equality and human rights they must be given practical meanings that reflect people's lives and concerns. Any changes the Commission seeks to signal through language cannot be just a matter of words. What it offers the general public must explain and comprise real aids to better living and building a fairer and more cohesive society. The ultimate test of language will be that it makes sense to ordinary people and helps them to better describe and explain their own aspirations for themselves and for Britain's future.

Conclusion

The terminology used by the Commission needs to be accessible to the wider world and owned by the public. Hence our emphasis on the importance of using language that reaches everyone and is not rarefied, but can move people to talk in a different way about inequality. Organisations such as the Campaign for Plain English, which offers useful case studies on local authorities' language policies, would be of considerable use here. Plain English guidelines are the bedrock on which this language of equality is based – and, we would suggest, ought to be adopted as standard throughout the land.

When using words and terms related to equality and human rights it is important not to discount or patronise the diversity of the general public. However it is equally important not to go too far ahead of widely held social attitudes.

We have emphasised that language is constantly changing – albeit that sometimes we have consciously to change it ourselves. The ecological landscape of language evolves over time. As such, transforming language is not, and cannot be, a one-off exercise. The evolution and development of a language of equality will always be a 'work in progress'. And we expect to return to this theme periodically.

This has been an initial attempt by the language group to consider the issue of language in the context of equality and human rights. What we argue is right for the Commission may not necessarily be right for other organisations. As I pointed out at the beginning, this paper has been written from an English perspective: not everything we say is applicable to Scotland or Wales. However other organisations throughout Britain may

find some of what we say useful. Equality and diversity managers will be familiar with many of the issues raised here and may find some of the terms we have suggested helpful in advising anyone with questions about the proper use of language. What we offer is not prescriptive but aspirational. We are not telling people how to talk about themselves; rather, we are suggesting what they should consider when they talk about others.

When talking about others there is a golden rule that all of us ought to heed. When in doubt, err on the side of politeness. And plain English!

*

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Fiona Bartels-Ellis (British Council), Professor Tim Connell (City University), Dr Kevin Fitzpatrick (Inclusion 21) and Maleiha Malik (King's College) for participating in the Commission's language group discussions. My gratitude also to commissioners Jane Campbell and Francesca Klug for taking part in the discussion group and commenting on various drafts of this paper. I am grateful to commissioners Ben Summerskill, Baroness Margaret Prosser and Morag Alexander for their helpful suggestions, and to Kate Bennett, the Commission's national director for Wales. Various Commission staff members also participated in the discussions and made useful suggestions including Stephen Brunt, Karen Grayson, Emily Georghiou and Faz Hakim. Omissions and mistakes are, however, all mine.

Notes

- 1 *Mind Your Language*, Briefing Paper (Belfast: Diversity Matters, Disability Action, 2004).
- 2 *Diversity in Diction, Equality in Action* (London: TUC/UNISON, undated).
- 3 Linguists will always dispute translation of terms. But we are fortunate to have the extremely useful *Translating Equality Standard Glossary*, which provides standards for translating into Welsh. It was produced for the Equal Opportunities Commission in 2001 by Professor Gwen Awbery of Cardiff University following extensive consultation. It now needs to be expanded and updated to incorporate new terms.
- 4 The Public Perceptions Survey (London: Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2007).
- 5 Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), p21.
- 6 Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* 18, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1953).
- 7 See, for example, <http://www.wheii.com/termspotting.php>
- 8 Erez Lieberman *et al*, 'Quantifying the evolutionary dynamics of language', *Nature*, no. 449 (October 2007), pp 713–716.
- 9 Mark Pagel *et al*, 'Frequency of word-use predicts rates of lexical evolution throughout Indo-European history', *Nature*, no. 449 (October 2007), pp 717–720.

- 10 Cass R Sunstein, 'Words, Conduct, Caste', *The University of Chicago Law Review*, vol 60 nos.3-4 (Summer/Autumn 1993), pp 795-844.
- 11 See the extensive survey of the impact of language on various disciplines and institutions of society by Kathryn A Woolard and Bambi B Schieffelin, 'Language Ideology', *Annual Review of Anthropology* no. 23 (1994), pp 55-82.
- 12 J Cobarrubias and J A Fishman (eds), *Progress in Language Planning: International Perspectives* (Berlin: Mouton and Gruyter, 1983).
- 13 J G A Pocock, *Politics, Language and Time* (London: Methuen, 1972).
- 14 Margaret T Hodgen, *Early Anthropology in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1964).
- 15 Virginia L Warren, 'Guidelines for the non-sexist use of language', *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association*, vol 59, no.3 (February 1986), pp 471-484.
- 16 Described in Casey Miller and Kate Swift, *Words and Women* (New York: Doubleday, 1977).
- 17 *Roget's Thesaurus of English Words and Phrases* (London: Penguin Books, 150th Anniversary Edition, 2002).
- 18 *Daily Express*, Editorial comment, 24 October 2005.
- 19 Gary Younge, 'The badness of words', the *Guardian*, 14 February 2000.

- 20 Bhikhu Parekh, *A New Politics of Identity* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), p55.
- 21 See Christopher Newfield and Ronald Strickland (eds), *After Political Correctness: The humanities and society in the 1990s* (Oxford: Westview Press, 1995).
- 22 See <http://www.grtleeds.co.uk/information/GypsyCouncil.html> and also <http://www.gypsy-traveller.org/>
- 23 'Black comedian cut short during n-word routine', the *Guardian*, 7 September 2007.
- 24 Simone Weil, *The Need for Roots* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978), p15.
- 25 *Mind Your Language*, p7.
- 26 Tariq Modood, *Multiculturalism: A civic idea* (Oxford: Polity Press, 2007).
- 27 <http://www.ecri.org.uk/>
- 28 Runnymede Trust, *Islamophobia: A challenge to us all*, (London, 1997).
- 29 See, for example, Greg Jacobs, 'Lesbian and Gay Male Language Use: A critical review of literature', *American Speech* vol 71 no.1, pp 49–71 (Spring 1996), and the more recent and even more massive, Don Kulick, 'Gay and Lesbian Language', *Annual Review of Anthropology* no. 29 (2000), p243–285.

- 30 See William Leap, *Word's Out: Gay men's English*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), and William Leam (ed), *Beyond the Lavender Lexicon: Authenticity, imagination and appropriation in lesbian and gay languages* (Amsterdam: Gordon and Breach, 1995).
- 31 Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, revised second edition, 2008).
- 32 Joel Bleifuss, 'A politically correct lexicon', *In These Times*, February 2007, pp 36–37.
- 33 <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/dorset/7171418.stm>
- 34 On the social model, see Gerry Zarb, *Modelling the Social Model of Disability* (London: Policy Studies Institute, 1995); J. Finklestein *et al*, *Disabling Barriers – Enabling Environments* (London: Sage, 1993); and DSS, Disability Unit, *Ending Discrimination Against Disabled People* (London: HMSO, 1995).
- 35 See, for example, the website of British Council of Disabled People:
<http://www.bcodp.org.uk/about/research.shtml>
- 36 W T Fitch, 'Linguistics: An invisible hand', *Nature* no. 499 (October 2007) pp 665–666.
- 37 This concern led the European Commission to produce 'A Glossary of Terms on Equality between Women and Men', produced by the Directorate General for Employment, Industrial Relations and Social Affairs, Luxemburg (1998), which contains 100 words translated into 11 European languages.



The Equality and Human Rights Commission champions equality and human rights for all, working to eliminate discrimination, reduce inequality, protect human rights and to build good relations, ensuring that everyone has a fair chance to participate in society.