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U.K. charity hopes to 'decolonise' English vocabulary – 27th March 2023

Level 4

English vocabulary has been changing for centuries. Language from the Middle Ages is difficult to understand today. The charity Oxfam has issued a guide suggesting more changes. Oxfam considers English to be, "the language of a colonising nation". Its 92-page "Inclusive Language Guide" aims "to decolonise our ways of working and shift power". The guide advises charity workers on the use of language "to feel empowered to be inclusive in their work".

Oxfam works to reduce poverty in 80 countries. It says English is the dominant language used by its workers in ex-British colonies. The guide is to help workers communicate in English "as part of a colonial legacy". The guide focuses on inclusivity for the disabled, the LGBTQIA+ community, and refugees. It suggests avoiding "colonial" words like "mankind". It said this word can be patriarchal. People can misunderstand it "as only referring to men".

Level 5

The English language has been evolving for centuries. Conversations from the Middle Ages would be difficult to understand today. The meaning of vocabulary is always changing. The charity Oxfam has issued a guide proposing more changes. Oxfam wants to "decolonise" English, which it considers to be, "the language of a colonising nation". It said English needs to change "to decolonise our ways of working and shift power". Its 92-page "Inclusive Language Guide" advises charity workers on the use of language "to feel empowered to be inclusive in their work".

Oxfam began in 1942 to try to reduce poverty. It operates in 80 countries. It says English is the dominant language used by its workers in former British colonies. It issued its guide "to support people who have to work and communicate in the English language as part of a colonial legacy". The guide focuses on inclusivity for the disabled, the LGBTQIA+ community, migrants, refugees, and others. It suggested changes like avoiding "colonial" phrases such as "mankind". It said this word could be viewed as being patriarchal as "it is often misunderstood as only referring to men".

Level 6

The English language has been evolving for centuries, if not for millennia. Conversations from the Middle Ages would be almost unrecognisable today. In particular, the use and meaning of vocabulary is in constant flux. The British charity Oxfam has issued a guide that further pushes for changes in how the language is used, especially by charity workers. Oxfam wants to "decolonise" English, which it considers to be, "the language of a colonising nation". It said English needs to change "in order to decolonise our ways of working and shift power". Oxfam has issued a 92-page "Inclusive Language Guide" to advise employees on the use of language "to support everyone to feel empowered to be inclusive in their work".

Oxfam was founded in 1942 to help alleviate global poverty. It now operates in more than 80 countries worldwide. Its new guide recognises the reality that English is the dominant language used by charity workers in former British colonies. Oxfam said: "This guide aims to support people who have to work and communicate in the English language as part of this colonial legacy." The guide focuses on inclusivity for the disabled, the LGBTQIA+ community, migrants, refugees, and others. Suggested language changes include avoiding "colonial" phrases like "headquarters" and "mankind". It said the latter word could be viewed as being patriarchal as "it is often misunderstood as only referring to men".