



Top 5 tips for using the DE-BIAS vocabulary

1 - Multilingual, but not translatable

Understand that bias results from a complex mix of cultural, social and historical influences. These are different from one language context to another, i.e. bias doesn't always translate. A term might be contentious in one language, but its direct translation might be used with a different, non-contentious connotation or there might not be a direct translation at all. Hence, the DE-BIAS vocabulary includes five language versions, but not each holds the same terms.

2 - It's all about context

Use the DE-BIAS vocabulary to understand the context of a contentious term, its historic evolution, and why it should not be used anymore or only in specific contexts. The vocabulary also provides suggestions for alternative terms to use - not only when describing collections, but also when engaging with them as part of your research or creative activity.

3 - Focus on the linguistic level

The DE-BIAS vocabulary focuses on bias on the linguistic level, i.e. the descriptions of cultural heritage collections. Remember that bias can, however, also appear on the visual level of the object itself, result from the relation between linguistic and visual levels, or be in what isn't said or shown. The vocabulary hence only represents one part of a 'debiasing' journey.

4 - Levels and intersections of bias

Understand that the terms in the DE-BIAS vocabulary represent different degrees of bias at the linguistic level, from derogatory language, misappropriation, stereotypes, and outdated expressions to diminutive language, omission, erasure, selectivity and distortion. In addition, different types and categories of bias often intersect, which might again affect the degree of bias a term represents given a specific context.

5 - Thematic co-creation

Remember that the vocabulary has been developed in the specific context of the DE-BIAS project. It hence focuses on the themes of migration and colonial history, gender and sexual identity and ethnicity and ethno-religious identity and has been co-created with affected marginalised communities in relation to these themes. It is considered a living document.

Read more about the [DE-BIAS vocabulary](#) and discover its versions in [Dutch](#), [English](#), [French](#), [German](#) and [Italian](#).

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