

German and Italian human nouns: gender-inclusive language as utopia?¹

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Abstract

Gender is a grammatical category referring to the noun class. In German and in Italian, it manifests itself in words related to the noun such as determiners (*der Mann* and *l'uomo* are masculine; *die Frau* and *la donna* are feminine; *das Kind* is neuter). Terms referring to persons can have a grammatical gender corresponding to the biological one (such as *Mann* and *uomo*) or not (such as *der Star* and *la star*, which can both refer to female and masculine people). In our paper, we analyse German and Italian texts available on official Universities web-sites in order to find what is the relationship between grammatical and social gender in nouns referring to people. It is interesting to compare German and Italian, as German linguistics in the specific form of “Genderlinguistik” has an established tradition of works dealing with gender-inclusive (or not inclusive) language, while Italian linguistics has not yet systematically focused the relationship (or the non-relationship) between gender and language. The main question is: Is gender-inclusion in the language a utopia?

Keywords: gender, gender linguistics, German, Italian, generic masculine, gender-inclusion

1. Introduction

Gender is a fuzzy concept. In German, Italian and several other languages, it can, in fact, be described as a grammatical, biological and social concept, if related to humans. Grammatical and biological characteristics can be interrelated. For example, it is usual that nouns are feminine when referring to female persons (e.g. *die Frau* in German; *la donna* in Italian) and masculine when indicating male persons (e.g. *der Mann* in German; *l'uomo* in Italian). Despite these regularities, there are exceptions both in German and in Italian: *der Vamp* is masculine, but it refers to a woman (e.g. *Carla Bruni, der*

¹ This paper has been written according to common ideas of the two authors. Paragraphs 2, 2.1.1 and 2.1.2 were written by Marina Brambilla. Paragraphs 1, 3, 3.1, 3.2, 4 and 5 were written by Valentina Crestani.

*Vamp im Zentrum der Macht*²); *la sentinella* is feminine, but it usually refers to a man (*Nelle antiche navi romane un uomo (la sentinella) era adibito al controllo costante della sentina e a prosciugare le infiltrazioni d'acqua*³). When nouns describe occupations, there can be inconsistencies between grammatical, biological and social gender, which are evident in adjectives related to the noun. An example in Italian: *Il ministro per le pari opportunità ha dichiarato di essere convinta che la sinistra voterà il provvedimento*⁴. In this sentence, *ministro* is masculine, as can be inferred from the final ending *-o* and from the determiner (*il*); its reference in the world is a woman, as it can be seen from the final ending *-a* of the adjective (*convinta*). The case is different when nouns are used in their masculine plural forms:

1. *Die Arbeit, die Lehrer leisten, wird von vielen unterschätzt oder zu wenig wahrgenommen.*⁵

2. *Per gli insegnanti del liceo classico di Lacco Ameno, il ragazzo era una "perla rara".*⁶

Lehrer and *insegnanti* can be interpreted as generic masculine including both male and female persons or as masculine excluding female persons. The above-mentioned examples can be related to the question of a gender-exclusive or a gender-inclusive language. In the present paper we aim to discuss the following question: is gender-inclusive language a utopia? It is interesting to compare German and Italian, as German linguistics has an established tradition of works dealing with gender-inclusive language, while Italian linguistics, with some exceptions, has not yet systematically focused the relationship (or the non-relationship) between grammatical, biological and social gender. Before dealing with the main question, we report about

² Example taken from corpus Dereko (<https://cosmas2.ids-mannheim.de>). English translation: "Carla Bruni, the prima donna in the centre of power".

³ Example taken from corpus Paisà (www.corpusitaliano.it). English translation: "In the ancient Roman ships a man (the sentinel) controlled constantly the bilge and drained the infiltration of water".

⁴ Example taken from corpus Paisà (www.corpusitaliano.it). English translation: "The Minister for Equal Opportunities has declared that she is convinced that the left will vote on the measure".

⁵ Example taken from corpus Dereko (<https://cosmas2.ids-mannheim.de>). English translation: "The work that teachers do is underestimated or underappreciated by many people".

⁶ Example taken from corpus Paisà (www.corpusitaliano.it). English translation: "According to the teachers of the classical high school of Lacco Ameno, the boy was exceptional".

important theoretical discourses about the status of gender in German and Italian, taking human nouns into consideration.

2. Gender in German and Italian human nouns

Gender is a category referring to the noun class. Any German noun referring to humans generally belongs to one of the three gender classes: So is *der Vater* masculine, *die Mutter* feminine, *das Kind* neuter. Any Italian noun belongs to one of the two gender classes: *il padre* is masculine, *la madre* is feminine. While the gender system in German is based on three categories, the system in Italian follows the principle of binarity.

2.1 Grammatical and biological gender

2.1.1 Gender according to morpho-syntactic criteria

Both in German and in Italian, classes can be identified according to morpho-syntactic distinctions:

1. The first group includes nouns with a different lexical root (“nomi indipendenti” according to Serianni 2010, 127ff.). They can have a gender-specific ending such as *-a* and *-o* in Italian. There is a direct relationship between grammatical and biological gender, which is typical for kinship terms (Bußmann/Hellinger 2001, 148).

German	Italian
FEM.: <u>Mutter</u> (sg.), Mütter (pl.) ↓ MASC.: <u>Vater</u> (sg.), Väter (pl.)	FEM.: <u>madre</u> (sg.), madri (pl.) ↓ MASC.: <u>padre</u> (sg.), padri (pl.)
FEM.: <u>Schwester</u> (sg.), Schwester (pl.) ↓ MASC.: <u>Bruder</u> (sg.), Brüder (pl.)	FEM.: <u>sorella</u> (sg.), sorelle (pl.) ↓ MASC.: <u>fratello</u> (sg.), fratelli (pl.)

2. The second group includes mobile gender nouns (Marcato/Thüne 2001, 191) with a common lexical root but different endings according to the biological gender of the referent: in Italian *-a* and *-e* for feminine nouns (female persons) in singular and in plural; *-o* and *-i* for masculine nouns (male persons) in singular and in plural. In German, the group includes nouns, which are converted from

participles, if they occur without satellite elements (such as determiners and adjectives).

German	Italian
FEM.: Angestellte (sg.), Angestellte (pl.) MASC.: Angestellter (sg.), Angestellte (pl.)	FEM.: maestra (sg.), maestre (pl.) MASC.: maestro (sg.), maestri (pl.)
FEM.: Studierende (sg.), Studierende (pl.) MASC.: Studierender (sg.), Studierende (pl.)	FEM.: impiegata (sg.), impiegate (pl.) MASC.: impiegato (sg.), impiegati (pl.)

3. In the third class (“nomi di genere comune”, Serianni 2010: 130ff.; “Differentialgenus”, Wienold 1967), the differentiation of gender is only realised through the use of satellite elements (such as determiners and adjectives). There is a direct relationship between grammatical and biological gender.

German	Italian
FEM.: die Angestellte (sg.), die Angestellten (pl.) MASC.: der Angestellte (sg.), die Angestellten (pl.)	FEM.: la nipote (sg.), le nipoti (pl.) MASC.: il nipote (sg.), i nipoti (pl.)
FEM.: die Studierende (sg.), die Studierenden (pl.) MASC.: der Studierende (sg.), die Studierenden (pl.)	FEM.: la docente (sg.), le docenti (pl.) MASC.: il docente (sg.), i docenti (pl.)

Unlike Italian, the German determiner *die* as plural form is not gender-specific, so that a form like *die Angestellten* can be referred both to female and male persons. Italian nouns of this group can be gender-unspecific, if they are used without a satellite element (*nipoti*, *docenti*).

4. The fourth group includes a few nouns (epicene nouns, see Corbett 1991, 67f. and Nübling 2018, 117-118) with a specific grammatical gender, which are although gender-indefinite from a biological perspective. For example, *der Gast* is grammatically masculine and can have the lexical property ‘male-specific’ or ‘female-specific’; *la persona* is grammatically feminine and can be used for all genders.

German	Italian
FEM.: die Person, die Kraft	FEM.: la persona, la star
MASC.: der Mensch, der Gast	MASC.: l'ospite, il membro
NEU.: das Kind, das Mitglied	

5. The latter group includes nouns with a specific grammatical gender, which do not have a direct relationship with the biological gender: *Das Mädchen* has a neuter gender from a grammatical perspective, but it refers to a female person, as it can be seen in the following sentences, where the anaphoric pronoun *sie* is feminine-specific:

3. *Das Mädchen spricht nicht mehr, sie schläft kaum noch.*⁷

Das Männchen is, like *Mädchen*, grammatical neuter, but it refers to a male person.

2.1.2 Gender according to word-formation criteria

If we take word-formation as describing parameter of gender-assignment, we can divide nouns on the basis of the word-formation process: compounding and derivation.⁸

- Compounding: German has a group of determinative compounds, whose second element is *Frau* or *Mann* (e.g. *Kauffrau*, *Kaufmann*; *Postfrau*, *Postmann*). According to gender-assignment rules in determinative compounds, it is the head (i.e. the second component) that determines the gender of the entire compound. A direct relationship does exist between grammatical gender of the noun and biological gender of the referent. In Italian compounds, this kind of construction does not exist. Even if the referent is a female person, the nominal head of the composite word does not vary the ending; gender-class membership becomes evident only from satellite elements: *il capogruppo* (masc., sg.), *la capogruppo* (fem., sg.), **la capagrupo*. Exocentric compounds with the structure ‘verbal root+noun’ demonstrate more evidently that the gender-class

⁷ Example taken from corpus Dereko (<https://cosmas2.ids-mannheim.de>). English translation: “The girl does not speak anymore; she hardly sleeps anymore”.

⁸ The process of conversion (participle → noun) has been considered in the previous paragraph (second and third group of nouns).

membership is marked on the satellite element (*il lavapiatti, la lavapiatti*).⁹

- Derivation: derivation in the specific form of suffixation is reliable in predicting grammatical gender both in German and in Italian. In German, the suffixes *-er* and *-ent* build masculine deverbal nouns (*der Leser, der Fahrer, der Student, der Dozent*). The suffixe *-in* forms feminine nouns (*die Leserin, die Fahrerin, die Studentin, die Dozentin*). *-chen* and *-lein* build diminutive nouns, which are neuter (*das Männchen, das Fräulein*). In Italian a number of suffixes build masculine nouns (*-tore: lo scrittore, -sore: il professore*) and feminine nouns (*-trice: la scrittrice; -essa: la professoressa, la dottoressa*).

2.2 Social gender

While paragraphs 2.1.1 and 2.1.2 were devoted grammatical and biological gender as respectively linguistic and non-linguistic categories, which have more or less direct combinations, this paragraph focuses on a non-linguistic category: social gender. Social gender can be considered a transversal category, as it “reflects social and cultural stereotypes of female and male character traits, behaviors and roles” (Bußmann/Hellinger 2001, 149). Social gender is particularly significant within the occupational lexical field, as in the case of occupational terms such as *der Anwalt* → *die Anwältin*; *il maestro* → *la maestra*. It has to do with stereotypes (and correlated assumptions) about appropriate roles in society for male and female members. It includes also expectations about prototypical members of a particular group of the society such as doctors, teachers, lawyers etc.: are *Anwälte* and *avvocati* male or female persons? These expectations are especially expressed when human nouns are generic masculine in plural forms. An example in Italian:

4. *I candidati sono ammessi con riserva.*¹⁰

The noun *candidati* may have two interpretations:

A. male applicants (gender-specific interpretation);

B. female and male applicants (generic interpretation).

According to the second interpretation, masculine gender is used as the unmarked one¹¹ and can be read as inclusive. Sabatini (1987),

⁹ Marcato/Thüne (2001, 193ff.) consider as compounds also constructions with “*donna*” as specifier on the left or right of masculine nouns: *il magistrato* → *la donna magistrato*; *il giudice* → *il giudice donna*.

¹⁰ English translation: “The candidates are admitted with reserve to the selection procedure”.

whose *Raccomandazioni* is regarded as the major work on gender-neutral language in Italian, has described the second interpretation as a case of grammatical asymmetry: it reflects discrepancies in the treatment of women and men in the grammatical forms. The problems are also how to achieve gender-indefiniteness providing equal chances for all persons or how to achieve gender-specification providing equal chances for women and men so that they feel included. The following paragraphs will concentrate on linguistic strategies dealing with gender-inclusive language.

3. Gender-inclusive language in German and in Italian

3.1 Gender-indefinite forms

Both German and Italian resort to two main linguistic expedients to achieve gender-indefiniteness:

- Neutral forms: lexically and socially neutral forms (such as *Person* and *Individuum* in German, *persona e individuo* in Italian) can refer to a person without marking his/her natural or social gender.

- Collective forms: examples of collective human nouns are *Personal* and *Gruppe* in German and *personale* and *gruppo* in Italian. To this category also belong abstract forms built through collective suffixes like *-schaft* and *-ung* in German (*Belegschaft* in place of *Arbeitnehmer*; *Leitung* in place of *Leiter*) and *-enza* in Italian (*presidenza* instead of *president*).

In German, it is also possible to use plural forms of nominalized adjectives and participles (as seen in paragraph 2.3.1) such as *die Kranken* and *die Studierenden*. In addition to these means, there are the gender-asterisk (e.g. *Forscher*in*) and the gender-gap (e.g. *Forscher_in*), which are intended as neutral forms from a social perspective, but, in fact, are marked by feminine suffixes from a grammatical perspective.

3.2 Gender-specific forms

Both in German and in Italian, there are various strategies, which can be adopted to build gender-specific nouns, so that both women and men are explicitly mentioned. These strategies, which are defined as

¹¹ See also Marcato/Thüne (2001, 201): “The unmarked generic term is always masculine, and the feminine is frequently morphologically derived, as in *professore/professoressa*. This constitutes traditional usage, and, obviously, once such use is established, it acquires the value of a norm.”

feminization strategies (see Bußmann/Hellinger 2001, 154), are the reflection of the principle of gender binarity and of the distinction between feminine and masculine (grammatical perspective) and female and male (social perspective).¹² Among the splitting forms, the following realization forms occur in the written language:

- Pair forms (long forms) such as *Lehrerinnen und Lehrer, ricercatori e ricercatrici*;
- Economy forms such as *Lehrer/innen, LehrerInnen, mediatori/trici*.

4. Gender in German and in Italian texts

In the following paragraph we will devote our attention to the main question of our paper: the connection or lack of connection between the concept of gender-inclusion and the concept of utopia. Leaving aside the long history of the term *utopia*, we see that it is bound to positive images such as that of a dream place, dominated by perfection and happiness for everyone.¹³ In order to discuss the question about gender-inclusion and utopia we will take some examples into consideration, focusing on the language used in official websites of German and Italian universities. It can be supposed that official websites devote particular attention to gender-inclusive language: universities are indeed institutions addressing a socially not homogeneous group of readers, which share the same interest (studying or working in a particular University or knowing more about it). The corpus of analysis consists of texts belonging to German and Italian Universities (1.500.000 tokens for each language) with the highest number of students enrolled in the first year of bachelor's degree.¹⁴

¹² Within linguistic theory, binarity is indeed a common criterion adopted at various levels (for example in morphology in the description of determinative compounds as binary structures such as [Apfelkuchen]+[Rezept] or in phonology, where phonological segments are distinguished according to binary distinctive characteristics such as [+ round]).

¹³ See the definition in *Duden Wörterbuch* (<www.duden.de>): “Traumland, erdachtes Land, wo ein gesellschaftlicher Idealzustand herrscht”.

¹⁴ German Universities: LMU München, Universität Duisburg-Essen, Goethe Universität Frankfurt am Main, Universität Hamburg, Universität zu Köln. Italian Universities: Università di Bologna, Università degli Studi di Milano, Università di Napoli Federico II, Sapienza Università di Roma, Università degli Studi di Torino. See <https://www-genesis.destatis.de> (Germany) and <http://ustat.miur.it/dati/didattica/italia/atenei-statali> (Italy) for the number of students enrolled in the first semester 2016/2017.

German and Italian analysed texts show relevant differences, if compared from a quantitative perspective, but they have also some similarities.¹⁵ Beginning with the similarities, both German texts show a high percentage of collective nouns in singular forms (65% in German on a total number of circa 45.000 singular forms; 69% in Italian on a total number of circa 79.000 singular forms). Some examples of collective nouns in German are compounds built with the heads *Gruppe* (*Forschergruppe*, *Gutachtergruppe*, *Lerngruppe*), *Team* (*Forscherteam*, *Gewinnerteam*, *Managementteam*) and *Kommission* (*Expertenkommission*, *Prüfungskommission*). There are also some derivatives with the collective suffix *-schaft* (*Bürgerschaft*, *Fachschaft*, *Herausgeberschaft*, *Zuhörendenschaft*). The group of collective nouns includes nouns with a collective or locative meaning, such as *Büro*, *Bibliothek* and *Sekretariat*. In this case, only occurrences with the collective meaning are taken into consideration. For example:

5. *Die Universitätsbibliothek bietet in den ersten vier Wochen nach Vorlesungsbeginn Benutzereinführungen an.*¹⁶ (LMU München)

In the excerpt above, the compound *Universitätsbibliothek* is to be interpreted as people working in the university library who will help first-year students, offering them a presentation of the library. The use of the collective compounds instead of individual forms like *Bibliothekare* or *Bibliothekarinnen* can be explained through the need for or desire of vagueness: it is perhaps not sure, who will offer the presentation. It can also be explained through the desire of giving an idea of identity (i.e. all people working in the library are potentially involved in presentation). Similarly, in Italian texts we can notice collective nouns such as *ufficio*, *commissione* and *gruppo*, which are used to refer to various groups of people (e.g. *Ufficio Concorsi Docenti*, *Commissione giudicatrice*, *Gruppo Ricerca*, *Gruppo di lavoro*). An example:

6. *Ogni eventuale variazione che dovesse intervenire rispetto al possesso dei requisiti per la partecipazione dovrà essere tempestivamente comunicata all'Ufficio Concorsi docenti.*¹⁷ (Università di Bologna)

¹⁵ A detailed analysis of the percentages is offered in Crestani (December 2019).

¹⁶ English translation: "The university library organises presentations in the first four weeks after semester begin".

¹⁷ English translation: "Any change regarding the requirements for the application must be promptly communicated to the Office".

The fact that most of the singular forms for nouns referring to human beings both in German and in Italian are collective nouns can be interpreted in various ways:

- A. the need for semantically and syntactically compact forms, avoiding long constructions such as “Mitarbeiter und Mitarbeiterinnen der Bibliothek”, “Mitarbeiter_innen der Bibliothek”, “collaboratori della biblioteca”, “collaboratori e collaboratrici della biblioteca” etc.;
- B. the need for vagueness regarding the biological gender of the referents, because they are not directly mentioned in the text, where the collective noun is used;
- C. the need for vagueness regarding the biological gender of the referents, because this information is not relevant;
- D. the need for considering people as group (for example in the case of the expressions *Kommission* and *commissione*, that refer to people working together pursuing a particular task);
- E. desire to include all genders, but at the same time desire not to mention referents explicitly.

The fact that referents are not mentioned explicitly (for example through the indication of their occupation and of their proper name as in *Maria Bianchi e Mario Rossi, collaboratori della biblioteca, introdurranno all'uso delle risorse online*¹⁸) can provide an explanation for the use of collective nouns. The use of collective nouns can also be interpreted as a strategy of depersonalization which can have a more or less negative impact on the readers. On the other hand, it is not always possible to build a relationship between human nouns used in the text and referents in the reality, so that the producer of the text is compelled to use suitable expressions for all potential referents. Among singular forms used in Italian texts, there are also generic masculines (26%). For example:

*7. In caso di mancato sostenimento della prova finale [...] per problemi di salute, lo studente potrà sostenere tale prova in una sessione straordinaria.*¹⁹ (Università di Torino)

In German texts, only 13% of the human nouns have a masculine gender from a grammatical perspective and, in many cases, there is a direct connection with a real referent:

¹⁸ English translation: “Maria Bianchi and Mario Rossi, members of staff, will introduce you to the use of online resources”.

¹⁹ English translation: “If the student cannot take part at the final exam for health problems, he/she can take this exam in an extraordinary session”.

8. Humboldt-Stipendiat in der Physik

Dr. Rakesh Joshi beispielsweise experimentiert mit dem Wundermaterial Graphen.²⁰ (Universität Duisburg-Essen)

Among plural forms (circa 34.500 in German; circa 74.800 in Italian), the highest percentage belong to the neutral ones in German (such as *Behinderte, Dozierende, Studierende*, i.e. participles as nouns) and to the masculine ones in Italian (such as *candidati, studenti, ammessi*). These masculine forms are to be interpreted as gender-unspecific from a biological and social perspective, as the presence of pictures of male and female students together demonstrate. As pictures are a constitutive part of the texts, they contribute to build the idea of inclusion (see also Brambilla/Crestani 2016). In Italian, we can also find a high percentage (40%) of collective nouns such as *associazioni, gruppi* and *istituzioni*. Splitting forms such as *Doktorandinnen und Doktoranden* and *assegnisti/e* are used significantly more in German (14%) than in Italian (less than 1%). This relevant difference is perhaps due to the fact that German has an established tradition of works dealing with gender-inclusive language not only from a linguistic perspective, but also from a social one.

5. Gender-inclusive language as utopia?

This last paragraph is aimed at providing critical reflections on the quantitative data shown in the previous paragraph. The fact that a number of texts giving advice for using a gender-inclusive language have been recently published both in German and in Italian (e.g. Diewald/Steinhauer 2017; *Gendern - Ganz einfach!*; *Linee guida per l'uso del genere nel linguaggio amministrativo* 2018) is an evident sign that the topic is socially relevant. In German, it is perhaps more evident, as the presence of the verb *gendern* also demonstrates. *Gendern* is a “sprachliches Verfahren, um Gleichberechtigung, d. h. die gleiche und faire Behandlung von Frauen und Männern im Sprachgebrauch zu erreichen“ (Diewald/Steinhauer 2017, 5). It is indeed a verbal strategy to reach equal opportunities for women and men. An equivalent verb does not occur in Italian. Moreover, the definition of *gendern* includes only the male and the female gender, excluding other gender's meanings. Forms like *Dozent*innen* and *Dozent_innen*, which aim to refer to all people identifying with various genders, demonstrate in concrete practice the intention to go

²⁰ English translation: “Humboldt-fellow in physics. Dr. Rakesh Joshi, for example, experiments with the wonder material graphene”.

beyond the differentiation between two genders by using non-verbal elements (i.e. the asterisk and the gender gap). The use of *gendern*, however, depends on important non-linguistic factors, which should be taken into consideration in order to avoid a generalized and overextended use of gender-inclusive forms.²¹ The key factor is reference and, more precisely, the type of reference involved in a text (see Pettersson 2011). Human nouns (and pronouns referring to human beings which could not be considered in this paper due to space constraints) stand potentially for referents in the real world. If the noun refers to a specific person or to a specific group of persons, the use of gender-specific nouns can be justified. It is the case of proper names used together with titles (e.g. *Gli studenti interessati devono mandare la loro candidatura alla selezione alla professoressa Anna Masecchia*,²² Università di Napoli). If the noun refers to a hypothetical person or to a hypothetical group of persons, the use of gender-specific nouns does not seem mandatory, in particular when the text, in which the nouns appear, is a normative one or has at least a regulative function (e.g. *Gli studenti iscritti a una seconda laurea possono chiedere la convalida della carriera pregressa*,²³ Università di Milano).²⁴ In this case, biological gender has no relevance. Another factor to be taken into consideration is the language used: as previously stated, German is different from Italian in building nouns converted by participles. When used in plural, German participles can refer both to male and female persons (but potentially also to other genders). Italian participles in plural have always a gender-specific reference (e.g. *gli iscritti* is masculine, *le iscritte* is feminine): *gli iscritti* can/must, however, be interpreted as indefinite form from a biological perspective (e.g. *Gli iscritti a Dottorato di ricerca [...] possono partecipare a concorsi?*²⁵ Università Sapienza Roma), as it can be supposed that both male and female students as well as students who do not feel included in these two categories can be enrolled in PhD courses.

²¹ See Zifonun (2018, 53), who affirms that *Gendern* makes little sense without consideration of important factors (e.g. kind of reference and type of interaction): “Striktes Gendern ohne Berücksichtigung von referentiellern Modus, aber auch von Kommunikationsgelegenheit und Interaktionsgattung, ist wenig sinnvoll”.

²² English translation: “Interested students must send their application to the selection to Prof. Anna Masecchia”.

²³ English translation: “Students enrolled in a second degree program may request the validation of their previous career”.

²⁴ See although Cavagnoli (2013).

²⁵ English translation: “Can PhD students apply for selection procedures?”

Gender-inclusive language seems to be a utopia, i.e. a problematic issue in real facts. It is utopic because not all language users agree with the idea of gender-inclusive language (see for example Wizoreck/Lühmann 2018) and because the relevance of the topic from a social perspective may vary according to the speaking communities considered. Moreover, it is difficult to find rules which can be adopted in all communication forms and textual genres. And the idea to find rules, which do not contrast with grammatical ones, is perhaps utopic, together with the idea that inclusion from a linguistic perspective must be achieved. Inclusive language does not necessarily imply a correct connection with the real or hypothetical referents in the world. The idea of inclusion should be concretely defined, together with concrete means of realisation, which are not only verbal elements (such as nouns) but also non-verbal ones (e.g. pictures). From a linguistic and social perspective, it would be less problematic if there was a gender-category valid for all genders. So far however, this language category is still to be considered a utopia.

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