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# Research on Teaching Materials and Teacher Training

## Authentic Models and Usage Norms? Gender Marking in First-Year Textbooks

**Ilona Vandergriff, David Barry, and Kimberly Mueller**
San Francisco State University

### Gender-Inclusive Discourse and Grammatical Gender

Reflecting the larger trend towards more "politically correct" language, German usage has changed in the past decades. As a result, speakers and writers now show greater sensitivity toward minorities and women, especially in public contexts where avoiding gender-exclusive discourse is becoming the norm.

Since the 1960s, a large body of research has focused on the problem of gender-exclusive discourse in German (e.g., Braun; Clyne; Gallmann; Glück and Sauer; Hellinger, "Gebrauch," "Language"; Karsta; Pusch, "Diagnose," "Aufsätze," "Menschen"; Schlichting; Trömel-Plötz; Wodak et al.). At the basis of the linguistic and public discussion on the issue are two related notions. On the one hand, language is viewed as a mirror of society. As such, it reflects existing inequities such as the asymmetrical representation of the sexes in many professions (e.g., *Pilot, Krankenschwester*). More importantly, language is said to function as a lens which colors society's perception. In this way, according to Hellinger ("Gebrauch"), gender-exclusive language, including generic masculines and other asymmetrical usages serve to maintain the inequities and to restrict women's participation in society (e.g., Braun, Glück and Sauer; Hellinger, "Gebrauch" and "Language"). Gender-exclusive discourse can take many forms. Addressing a mixed group as *liebe Kollegen* excludes the female members of the audience by not explicitly including them, while the introduction *Herr Meier mit Frau* suggests the asymmetrical dependence of the wife on the husband. Portraying women in purely traditional roles, for instance, by referring to household chores as *Hausfrauenpflicht* and to women as "*das schwache Geschlecht*" (Braun 58) also reduces the possibility of achieving true gender equality.

Human nouns present a particular challenge for inclusive usage. Because German has grammatical gender, the gender marker typically triggers the association of the referent's biological gender. As a result, *der Student* is not gender-neutral like its English counterpart "the student." Since the German system avails the speaker of the feminine *die Studentin,* the equivalent for gender-neutral English "the student" is actually *der Student/die Studentin.* Traditionally, masculine forms have been used in a generic sense to denote either a male or female referent (e.g., Eisenberg et al., *Duden* 7th, Listen and Vandergriff). From this perspective, the masculine plural in *alle Lehrer sind hochgebildet* (cited in Clyne 143) includes both men and women. The use of the generic masculine remains controversial, however, because the use of a gendered form is typically associated with that gender rather than gender neutrality (see, e.g., Clyne, Hellinger). To illustrate that generic masculines are still more likely to denote male referents, Clyne (143) discusses constructed examples such as "Man erlebt seine Schwangerschaft" and "Wer hat seinen Lippenstift im Bad gelassen?" The use of these generic masculines (here: *man, seine/n*) in a

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context typically associated with feminine referents strikes native speakers as odd. Clyne concludes that so-called generic masculines are more likely to be interpreted as referring to males than to females and should therefore be characterized as "pseudo-neutralizations" (Pusch, "Männersprache" 64). In sum, the German system of grammatical gender marking makes available fewer gender-neutral forms than English. Hellinger states: "The risk of linguistic discrimination is higher in a language such as German, where the well-established morphosyntactic markers of grammatical gender naturally lead to sex specification" ("Language" 294).

Because of the differences in the morphology and morphosyntax of German and English, German makes use of different strategies to avoid gender-exclusive usage than does English. In the next section we provide an overview of commonly used strategies to avoid gender-exclusive human nouns, followed by a look at some examples of usages and guidelines in public discourse.

### Gender-Marking in German

In German, gender may be marked lexically, morphologically, or morphosyntactically (Eisenberg et al., *Duden* 6th and 7th; Wahrig; Weinrich, *inter alia*). Lexical marking includes compounds with a gender-specific human noun, e.g., *Hausfrau* or *Kaufmann,* while morphological marking involves suffixation (*Movierung*), e.g., *Sportlerin* or *Sportler.* **Die** *Studierende* versus **der** *Studierende* is an example of morphosyntactic marking.

While the *in*-suffix is highly productive and the most frequent marker of feminine gender in German, it is subject to some constraints. It is blocked, for example, in some foreign loans such as *Souffleuse*, which takes the original French feminine suffix. More frequently used loanwords, however, now accept the *in*-suffix, at times resulting in parallel derivations. *Friseurin* and *Friseuse, Masseurin* and *Masseuse*, for example, both denote a female member of the profession, yet the different feminine suffixes trigger different connotations (Hellinger). In order to avoid gender-exclusive language, speakers often use paired forms (*Paarformeln*) such as *Student und Studentin* (Eisenberg et al., *Duden* 7th). In writing, such paired forms are frequently abbreviated as orthographically paired forms. These so-called *Sparformeln* use the forward slash as in *Student/Studentin, Student/-in, Student/in* (Eisenberg et al., *Duden* 7th), the capital

I (*Binnen-I*) as in *StudentIn* (Mayer), or capital R as in *StudierendeR*. In some contexts, especially job announcements, the abbreviations *m/w* denoting <u>*männlich*</u> [male] and <u>*weiblich*</u> [female] can be found following a masculine form such as in "*Kaufmann, m/w*". An alternative strategy to avoid gender-exclusive forms is neutralization either through pluralization of nominalized adjectives/ participles such as *Studierende, Angestellte* or neutral abstracts such as *Bürokraft* or *Lehrkraft*.

### Public Discourse: Usage and Guidelines

Gender-inclusive human nouns appear to be highly frequent in certain types of public discourse, e.g., in administrative texts or job ads. For example, Arthrex Medizinische Instrumente GmbH was seeking a "*Produktmanager Medizin-Technik (m/w)*" and Kendrion Magnettechnik GmbH a "*Key Account Manager/in.*" The Telekom Austria Gruppe addresses itself to "*Kundinnen und Kunden.*" While such *Spar-* and *Paarformeln* appear to be normative in certain contexts, it must also be noted that many texts do not use gender-inclusive language consistently. In fact, the majority of longer texts show some inconsistencies, with generic masculines popping up in texts which also show paired and neutral forms. The Free University of Berlin, for example, uses the gender-neutral plurals *Studieninteressierte* and *Studierende* on its website but the gendered *Studienbewerber* (masculine plural) remains unpaired. Such inconsistencies within texts seem to result when the desire to avoid gender-exclusive forms is weighed against other stylistic considerations. The reference grammars hint at possible explanations, stating, for example, that paired forms are sometimes avoided for simplicity's sake. The 6th edition of the *Duden* grammar from 1998 points to the principle of economy ("*sprachökonomische Gründe,*" Eisenberg et al., *Duden* 6th 749), while Weinrich's *Textgrammatik* acknowledges that paired forms may seem pedantic ("pedantisch," Weinrich 333).

While stylistic considerations may explain some usage variation, other variables such as context, register, medium, sex of speakers and writers (Listen and Vandergriff) and even geography (Listen and Vandergriff; Schönfeld and Schlobinski) are also likely to play a role. In the context of discussing linguistic variation in the reunified Berlin, Schönfeld and Schlobinski write: "Die Ostberlinerin sagt: ich bin Kaufmann, Lehrer oder Direktor, während die Westberlinerin Kauffrau, Lehrerin,

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Direktorin gebraucht" (205). Results from a 1997 study (Listen and Vandergriff) point to the same trend. In their responses to a questionnaire, students from Berlin and Jena used gender-inclusive forms at different rates. The Berlin respondents chose paired forms at an average of 28.7%, while the Jena respondents chose such forms at an average of 8.2%. In sum, the research has shown that there is significant variation in the usage of gender-inclusive forms. In an effort to prescribe gender-inclusive usage, some parts of the public sector have developed usage guidelines. At the federal level, for example, one of the provisions of the *Gleichstellungsdurchsetzungsgesetz* of 30 November 2001 states:

> Rechts-und Verwaltungsvorschriften des Bundes sollen die Gleichstellung von Frauen und Männer auch sprachlich zum Ausdruck bringen. Dies gilt auch für den dienstlichen Schriftverkehr. (Bundesregierung 2)

Similar guidelines have been developed in Higher Education, ranging from general provisions against gender discrimination in discourse (e.g., at Johannes Kepler University, Linz) to a set of rules (e.g., at the Swiss *Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule* Zürich). The University of Heidelberg's guidelines are cited here to illustrate the type of language prescription in place at many educational institutions:

> Nach Senatsbeschluss muss an der Hochschule geschlechtergerechte Sprache genutzt werden, d.h. es müssen ggf. entweder geschlechterneutrale Formulierungen oder männliche und weibliche Sprachformen gewählt werden. (Methfessel)

Elsewhere, this institution even recommends that the grade be lowered for any assignment that violates the guidelines (Methfessel).

Based on the prescribed and actual usages we referred to above, we will claim that in some contexts gender-inclusive forms constitute conventional usage.[1] In this study, we will analyze first-year textbooks to see how these texts introduce gender marking to novice learners. To what extent do the textbooks reflect the usage conventions and norms? If so, what specific strategies, e.g., neutralization versus specification, are introduced in the

textbooks? And finally, do the textbooks provide models of different types of markers of gender-specification, such as "-*in*" or capital "*I*"?

## Analyzing First-Year Textbooks

For this study, we chose seven popular college-level beginning textbooks by US publishers: *Alles Gute* (4th ed.), *Alles klar* (2nd ed.), *Deutsch heute* (8th ed.), *Deutsch Na klar* (here: *Na klar*) (4th ed.), *Kontakte* (5th ed.), *Neue Horizonte* (5th ed.), and *Vorsprung* (updated ed.). The glossaries of the seven (7) textbooks analyzed list a total of 1488 human noun tokens, with an average of 213 tokens listed in each. With respect to gender marking the data fell into the following nine categories: (1) orthographically reduced forms of morphological pairs with capital *R* or *I*, e.g., *AngestellteR* or *StudentIn*, (2) orthographically-reduced form of morphological pairs using forward slash with alternative ending, e.g., *Student/-in,* or *Student/in*, (3) full forms of morphological pairs using forward slash, e.g., *Student/Studentin*, (4) full forms of morphological pairs as separate entries, e.g., *Student, Studentin* (5) lexical pairs, e.g., *Großmutter/Großvater*, (6) paired or plural deadjectival nouns, e.g., *der/die Studierende*, and (7) neutral plurals or abstracts, e.g., those with *–leute*, (8) feminine-only forms, e.g., *Fräulein*, (9) masculine-only forms, e.g., *Professor*. Figure 1 shows the results of the analysis by type of human noun.[2]
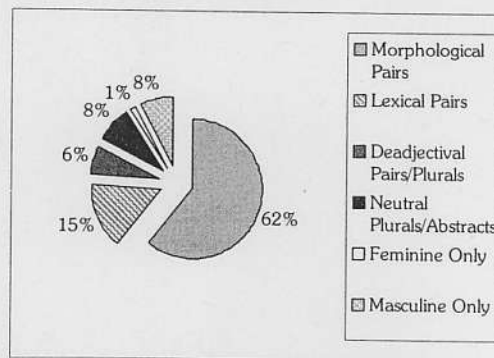
Figure 1. Human Nouns, by Type.
Read clockwise, from largest category.

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[1] Ascertaining to what extent these forms are actually used in various contexts would require a large-scale corpus-based analysis which goes beyond the scope of this study.

[2] See Appendix for the raw data.

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The textbooks surveyed show a strong tendency towards representing gender-inclusive language as evidenced in the use of paired or neutral forms for over 90% of all human noun entries. Less than 10% of the human nouns found in all textbooks were gender-exclusive entries. Of those, the majority were masculine-only (at 7.81%), with feminine-only entries making up only 1.29% of all human noun entries.

More than three quarters of all human nouns were listed in pairs (77.06%) as indicated by the dark shading, including morphological pairs, e.g., *der Student, die Studentin* (60.1%) and lexical pairs, e.g., *Großmutter, Großvater* (16.96%). No orthographically reduced morphological pairs (*Sparformeln*), e.g., *StudentIn, Student/in* (0%) occurred anywhere in the corpus. Gender-neutral forms (shown in light grey) occurred at a rate of 13.85%. Here, we included paired or plural adjectival nouns such as *Studierende* (5.95%),[3] along with gender-neutral plurals e.g., *Eltern, Leute* (7.9%). Gender-exclusive forms made up 9.1% of the human noun data (shown in white).

Given the prevalence of paired forms in the textbooks we were curious why gender-exclusive forms occurred at all. If materials developers systematically included gender-inclusive form why did they not do so consistently for all tokens? We then analyzed these masculine-only and feminine-only tokens in the corpus to look for answers. First of all, many of the gender-exclusive tokens were not part of the core vocabulary and had found their way into the glossary because they occurred in the realia or other authentic texts. Approximately 60% of these gender-exclusive tokens appeared to be intended for reception only as learners were not asked to use them actively. In one case, for example, *Opi* was not paired lexically with *Omi* (*Kontakte*). The editor might have considered it superfluous since *Oma* and *Opa* already had a place in the glossary. In other cases, single-gender tokens occurred because no second pair-part exists. This is the case with *Fräulein*. None of the gender-exclusive tokens appear to contribute core vocabulary.

Next we compared the textbooks. Figure 2, below, breaks down the overall results by textbook.

Across textbooks, the numerical results show slight variations. Gender-inclusive forms (i.e., gender-paired and gender-neutral forms) made up between 80% and 96% of human nouns in each textbook. However, the resulting percentages conceal the fact that textbooks differ considerably in the number of human nouns listed in the glossary, ranging from 99 entries in *Neue Horizonte* to 356 in *Na klar*, with a median of 202 entries.

| Table 1. Human Nouns, by Type of Glossary and Two Editions of *Neue Horizonte* | | |
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| *Neue Horizonte* | 5th Ed. (1999), % | 6th Ed. (2003), % |
| 1. orthographically reduced forms of morphological pairs with capital *R* or *I*, e.g. *AngestellteR* or *StudentIn* | 0 | 0 |
| 2. orthographically reduced form of morphological pairs using forward slash with alternative ending, e.g. *Student/-in*, or *Student/in*, | 0 | 0 |
| 3. full forms of morphological pairs using forward slash, e.g. *Student/Studentin* | 0 | 0 |
| 4. full forms of morphological pairs as separate entries, e.g. *Student, Studentin* | 46.91 | 62.03 |
| 5. lexical pairs, e.g. *Großmutter/Großvater* | 3.96 | 3.03 |
| 6. paired or plural adjectival nouns, e.g. *der/die Studierende* | 4.94 | 3.8 |
| 7. neural plurals or abstracts, e.g., those with *-leute* | 11.11 | 10.13 |
| 8. feminine only forms, e.g., *Fräulein* | 2.96 | 1.01 |
| 9. masculine only forms, e.g., *Ober* | 33.33 | 22.78 |

In light of changes in language use and norms by native speakers of German, we were interested to see whether subsequent editions of textbooks might provide some evidence of longitudinal

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[3] N.B. Even though they show gender when used in the singular, adjectival nouns such as *der/die Studierende* are grouped with gender neutral forms in our overview because they also show neutralization.

change. To this end, we compared subsequent editions of the same textbook *Neue Horizonte*. At under 60%, its 5th edition yields the lowest number of gender-paired forms of all textbooks analyzed along with the highest rate of gender-exclusive forms (29.7%).

Across editions of *Neue Horizonte*, we observed an increase in the number of morphologically-paired separate entries of 15.12% and a decrease in the masculine-only entries of 10.55%. There are 9 fewer masculine-only nouns in Edition 6. Some gender-exclusive tokens from Edition 5 have been deleted in Edition 6 (e.g., *Präsident*), others are now matched with their counterparts (*Oma, Hausfrau*). The term *Fräulein* is the sole feminine-only entry in Edition 6. The results suggest that we may be glimpsing a trend toward avoiding gender-exclusive language altogether.
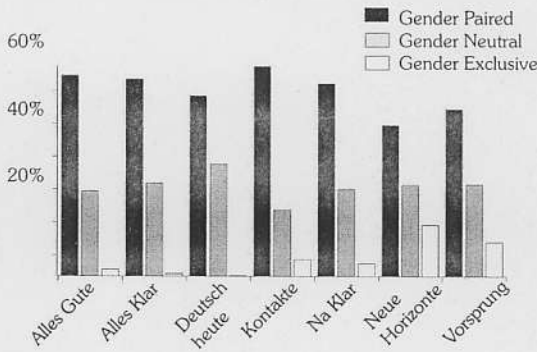


Figure 2. Human Nouns, by Group and by Textbook

By and large, the textbooks analyzed strive to teach gender-inclusive language, yet none makes any mention of orthographically reduced pairs (e.g., *Student/in, StudentIn*). This exclusion is surprising, especially since the textbooks typically draw on situations and contexts where such forms occur frequently. For example, many first-year texts include a unit on student life in the German-speaking countries along with realia illustrative of campus life where orthographically reduced forms abound. Moreover, all the first-year textbooks we analyzed expose students to job announcements. In these two contexts, among others, orthographically-reduced forms (*Sparformeln*) are frequent, typical, perhaps even normative. Yet not one textbook uses one *Sparformel*.

These findings point to a larger issue. While there is widespread agreement that learners should be taught frequent, typical, natural, and useful language, materials developers typically make deci-

sions on what to teach based on intuition alone. It has only been recently that the development of language learning materials has been informed by empirical analysis of language corpora (see, e.g., McCarthy, McCarten, and Sandiford's ESL materials). This new approach affords materials developers the opportunity to derive vocabulary, structures, and language functions from hard data rather than their own impressions. Such corpus searches provide clear and often surprising answers to questions of actual usage. For English conversation, for example, McCarthy, McCarten, and Sandiford found that "'yeah' is 10 times more common than 'yes'" (9). For this reason, they include *yeah* side-by-side with *yes* as a less formal alternative in their first-year textbook, providing the model alongside information on usage norms. With respect to orthographically reduced morphological pairs (*Sparformeln*) such as *StudentIn*, *Student/-in*, or *Student m/w* corpus research would likely confirm their status as a highly context-dependent pattern. While these forms do not rank high on general frequency lists, we might expect these to occur with high frequency in specific contexts. Yet, even in such contexts, the textbooks surveyed neither include reduced forms nor authentic usage norms. We would argue that omissions like this one reduce the richness of the language and constitute a missed opportunity to raise awareness in the novice-level classroom of how social meaning is expressed through language.

## Conclusions and Implications

Our survey of seven first-year, college-level textbooks shows that, by and large, textbook developers are avoiding gender-exclusive usage. Almost ninety percent of human nouns were found to be gender-inclusive pairs or gender-neutral forms. Orthographically-reduced pairs, however, which appear to be normative in some contexts, were found in none of the textbooks.

It is hoped that this study with its focus on gender marking can contribute to a larger discussion of textbook materials and inspire other narrowly focused textbook analyses in the area of vocabulary, grammar, and language function. The findings warrant taking a closer look at *what* we teach to see whether the linguistic content can hold up to a rigorous corpus-informed approach which could help generate authentic models for vocabulary, structure, and language functions as well as usage norms.

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**Appendix**

| Human Nouns, by Type, Number, and Percentage of Tokens | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Type | Tokens, No. | Tokens, % | | Type | Tokens, No. | Tokens, % |
| *Alles Gute* | | | | *Alles Klar* | | | |
| Morphological pairs | Gender paired | 167 | 64.73 | Morphological pairs | Gender paired | 84 | 63.64 |
| Lexical pairs | | 34 | 13.18 | Lexical pairs | | 26 | 19.70 |
| Deadjectival Pairs/Plurals | Gender neutral | 14 | 5.43 | Deadjectival Pairs/Plurals | Gender neutral | 11 | 8.33 |
| Neutral Plurals/Abstracts | | 28 | 10.85 | Neutral Plurals/Abstracts | | 5 | 3.79 |
| Feminine Only | Exclu-sive | 1 | 0.39 | Feminine Only | Exclu sive | 1 | 0.76 |
| Masculine Only | | 14 | 5.43 | Masculine Only | | 5 | 3.79 |
| Total | | 258 | | Total | | 132 | |
| *Deutsch heute* | | | | *Kontakte* | | | |
| Morphological pairs | Gender paired | 76 | 58.46 | Morphological pairs | Gender paired | 210 | 67.52 |
| Lexical pairs | | 33 | 25.38 | Lexical pairs | | 35 | 11.25 |
| Deadjectival Pairs/Plurals | Gender neutral | 7 | 5.38 | Deadjectival Pairs/Plurals | Gender neutral | 20 | 6.43 |
| Neutral Plurals/Abstracts | | 9 | 6.92 | Neutral Plurals/Abstracts | | 19 | 6.11 |
| Feminine Only | Exclu-sive | 2 | 1.54 | Feminine Only | Exclu-sive | 6 | 1.93 |
| Masculine Only | | 3 | 2.31 | Masculine Only | | 21 | 6.75 |
| Total | | 130 | | Total | | 311 | |
| *Na Klar!* | | | | *Neue Horizonte* 5th Ed. | | | |
| Morphological pairs | Gender paired | 222 | 62.36 | Morphological pairs | Gender paired | 38 | 37.62 |
| Lexical pairs | | 48 | 13.49 | Lexical pairs | | 20 | 19.80 |
| Deadjectival Pairs/Plurals | Gender neutral | 25 | 7.02 | Deadjectival Pairs/Plurals | Gender neutral | 4 | 3.96 |
| Neutral Plurals/Abstracts | | 34 | 9.55 | Neutral Plurals/Abstracts | | 9 | 8.91 |
| Feminine Only | Exclu-sive | 5 | 1.40 | Feminine Only | Exclu-sive | 3 | 2.97 |
| Masculine Only | | 22 | 6.18 | Masculine Only | | 27 | 26.73 |
| Total | | 356 | | Total | | 101 | |
| *Vorsprung* | | | | *Neue Horizonte* 6th Ed. | | | |
| Morphological pairs | Gender paired | 109 | 54.50 | Morphological pairs | Gender paired | 49 | 49.49 |
| Lexical pairs | | 31 | 15.50 | Lexical pairs | | 20 | 20.20 |
| Deadjectival Pairs/Plurals | Gender neutral | 12 | 6.00 | Deadjectival Pairs/Plurals | Gender neutral | 3 | 3.03 |
| Neutral Plurals/Abstracts | | 20 | 10.00 | Neutral Plurals/Abstracts | | 8 | 8.08 |
| Feminine Only | Exclu-sive | 4 | 2.00 | Feminine Only | Exclu-sive | 1 | 1.01 |
| Masculine Only | | 24 | 12.00 | Masculine Only | | 18 | 8.18 |
| Total | | 200 | | Total | | 99 | |

**Handlungskomp**
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