Inclusive Language

In our lessons and handouts we aim to use gender- and non-binary-inclusive language when we address or refer to students and colleagues, both in writing and in speech in English and in German. In German this can be achieved for instance by using the following forms with plural nouns: *Lehrende/ Lehrkräfte/ Lehrer:innen/ Lehrer*innen/ Lehrer_innen*.

In German-speaking countries there is a clear ambition to refer to people in a gender-inclusive way, particularly when dealing with job titles and other words which identify individuals. The need to include all possible applicants in job advertisements is enshrined in the law in Germany, leading to examples like the following, which is typical:

Architekt:in / Bauingenieur:in / Bautechniker:in (m/w/d)

Here *m/w/d* is the now standard way of indicating *männlich/weiblich/divers* (= non-binary, in German often also *das dritte Geschlecht*).

In extended German texts grammatical structures can inhibit inclusivity. Relative and other pronouns, for example, are obligatorily marked for grammatical gender, so going gender-free is difficult to achieve. Gender as a grammatical category is part of German speakers' language competence, and overlaps only partly with gender as a real-world phenomenon and a lived identity. For example, Angela Merkel's sentence '*Das Volk ist jeder, der in diesem Lande lebt*' uses the generic masculine in a traditional way. Her intention to be maximally inclusive of the group of people, to whom she is referring, would be clear to proficient users of German, though a growing number would contest that she has effectively realised that intention.

The issue of how to express meaning inclusively in this kind of context is widely discussed, and a range of possible ways forward has been proposed. German publications have taken different approaches depending on their politics and other factors. There is no single widely recognised and used ungendered third-person singular pronoun equivalent to English 'they'. In order to expose students to the kind of variety which you will encounter in the German-speaking world, we use texts in language teaching which represent a diversity of choices. On the same principle, students are free to choose for themselves how to engage with inclusive language when speaking and writing in German.

If you would like more information on the current discussion in Germany, we recommend the following links. The first two are for general reference, the next three from individual universities explaining their practice. The last link allows users to make contributions. All view a move to more inclusive language as a positive goal.

> https://www.bpb.de/kurz-knapp/lexika/lexikon-in-einfacher-sprache/331122/geschlechtergerechte-sprache/
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> https://www.duden.de/sprachwissen/sprachratgeber/Geschlechtergerechter-Sprachgebrauch
>
> https://www.uni-konstanz.de/gleichstellungsreferat/gleichstellung-in-wissenschaft-und-studium/standards/gendergerechte-und-inklusive-sprache/
>
> https://www.oei.fu-berlin.de/institut/_download/leitfaden_gendergerechte_sprache.pdf
>
> https://home.uni-leipzig.de/schreibportal/gender/
>
> https://www.machtsprache.de/sidebar-term/MsFwyP9rk7U3sNoNa1Ei

A lot has also been published on this topic, and there are frequent updates. The following titles may be recommended. Again, all are written from the perspective of promoting inclusion:

Lann Hornscheidt and Ja'n Sammla. 2020. *Wie schreibe ich divers? Wie spreche ich gendergerecht? Ein Praxisbuch zu Gender und Sprache*. Berlin: w_orten & meer, 2020.

Published by Duden:

Christine Olderdissen *Genderleicht: Wie Sprache für alle elegant gelingt* (2022)

Gabriele Diewald and Antje Steinhauer. *Gendern ganz einfach* (2019) and the *Handbuch geschlechtergerechte Sprache: Wie Sie angemessen und verstaendlich gendern* (2020).