

Debate

Tanjev Schultz

Trial phase

The discussion about gendering is fierce – instead of strict specifications, we need the courage to allow diversity

Gender-sensitive language remains a political issue. For some it is essential, for others just a temporary fad. In academic, and increasingly also journalistic, contexts, attention is paid to whether male and female forms are used. The asterisk is also becoming ever more widespread as a way to overcome binary gender classification. Despite the growing popularity of such forms, language use is inconsistent across different social spheres and ideological environments. In some cases, there is strong resistance to any form of gendering. Many editorial offices continue to use the generic masculine form as standard.

It is by no means only the right-wing extremists of the AfD that rage against linguistic change with often polemic exaggeration (»gender gaga«). Many publishing houses consider gendering to be (too) cumbersome. The conservative Verein Deutsche Sprache (Society for the German Language, VDS) and some linguists criticize gender formulations as unnecessary and confusing in terms of the language system (cf. articles in Meinunger/Baumann 2017). There is no fixed connection between the »natural« and »grammatical« gender, argues a proclamation by the VDS (2019).

While many women are fed up with always being implicitly meant when the generic masculine is used, there are others who do not mind at all. WELT journalist Hannah Lühmann, for example, writes that she believes in the right »to be largely spared ideological impositions in everyday language use« (Lühmann 2019). The question of whether or not gendering is good cannot be resolved through linguistic argumentation, she continues. After all, it is a question of worldview. »It is to do with whether one believes that language is a kind of ›instrument‹ that one has to carefully protect and obsessively guard, or, like me, one tends towards the view that language is something both wild-growing and

archaic and, at the same time, ultimately limiting, which is not there to treat us ›well‹ or ›fairly‹ (ibid.).

Although I personally like the idea of gendering, I also see it as correct and important to listen to those who think like Lühmann. It is not true that she and other opponents of gendering do not have a sense of equal rights. Literary scholar Dagmar Lorenz actually sees gender-sensitive formulations as anti-emancipatory: »In that they restore precisely the discrimination of the feminine that they allegedly want to eliminate. While the traditional form of the generic masculine has developed towards an abstracting word meaning over time, feminization is far behind this historic development. It points again to the meaning – the natural (not generic) gender – from which it is to be abstracted in certain contexts in order to satisfy the principle of equality« (Lorenz 2017: 235).

There is undoubtedly much to respond to in Lorenz's argument. For example, experiments show that, when the generic masculine is used, people really do often only see male representatives (e.g. of a profession) in their mind's eye. But this is not true in all contexts. In compound words, few people will even notice if gendering is not used consistently, for example when a text uses the term »Bürgermeisterin« [mayor] instead of »Bürgerinnen- und Bürgermeisterin.« Lorenz's point relates to a fundamental dilemma of many fights for emancipation: the fact that categorizations, which can be used in a discriminatory way and need to be overcome, are first brought (even more) into consciousness and perhaps perpetuated and strengthened as soon as they are addressed and made explicit in the language.

It is ultimately down to the language community to decide how to deal with this challenge and what the meaning of certain forms is. When it comes to the way gender forms are handled, we are currently in an interesting phase of a potentially fundamental linguistic change. It can be observed that many younger people (students) already use the ›gender_gap‹ fluently. However, it is important not to forget that practices that are a matter of course in specific academic circles are worlds away from what is practiced elsewhere. Of course this alone is not an argument for or against a certain practice. I simply consider it presumptuous to believe that linguistic change can simply be decreed in this way.

An academic journal can make specifications, including for gendering. However, in the present constellation, I consider it neither clever nor appropriate to prescribe something that the various authors may not approve of at all, or that contradicts their own sense of the language. I am therefore in favor of allowing a diverse range of formulations and styles. Perhaps the language community will one day reach a point where a new standard emerges. We are currently still in a phase of trial and discussion. For me, that also means that I would welcome more editorial offices in journalism, too, giving their authors the freedom to decide whether and how they use gendering.

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Translation: Sophie Costella

Martina Thiele

»... and always just think of the reader«?

Journalism Research, visibility and language

The problem

In his day, Focus Chief Editor Helmut Markwort demanded not only »facts, facts, facts,« but also a focus on the »readers.«^[1] That was in the 1990s. Today, in 2020, there is disagreement about whether *Journalism Research*, an »academic journal under the principle of independent publishing,« should, indeed must, use gender-sensitive formulations – whether we three male and two female publishers should in future encourage authors to write in a gender-sensitive way. So far, the style sheet has kept quiet on this. Other aspects, such as the form of citation and the length and form of potential papers, are prescribed, but there is no mention of gender-sensitive, non-discriminatory language.

Gender-sensitive language

What does it mean? Simply that we ask that ›women‹ and ›men‹ ›and others‹ are made visible in the text (and try to stick to this ourselves!). This is done by naming both the ›male‹ and ›female‹ grammatical form, such as using an intermediate ›I,‹ an underscore, a gender asterisk... We want to allow the greatest possible freedom in the choice of form, knowing that the intermediate ›I‹ and naming both the ›male‹ and ›female‹ grammatical form can be read as heteronormative while the gender asterisk, for example, allows greater openness and diversity, as does the form »Journalistinnen*,« which has a different meaning than »Journalist*innen.« Some people might be unaware of the differences. Is it a question of age? Of gender? Of wanting to know? Or perhaps a fundamental aversion to this »gender nonsense?«

1 In German, the plural form »Leser« is identical to the singular form »Leser,« whose grammatical gender is masculine: »der Leser.« Thus, female readers are not explicitly addressed. Correctly, Markwort should have demanded, in addition to »Fakten, Fakten, Fakten,« that both female and male readers are always considered.

Freedom or compulsion

We publishers would accept many different versions, but we expect gender-sensitive formulations to be used. Exclusive use of the male form, indicating the generic masculine or that women are meant implicitly, is not enough. And it would be new for *Journalism Research* in 2020!

But is it OK for us to do this? Can we tell »our« authors how to write? Is it not compulsion? And could these specifications prevent wordsmiths and linguistic royalty from publishing their work with us?

My view: 1. Yes, we publishers can inform the authors in the style sheet and especially in direct discussions that implicit inclusion is not enough. That is our right and our duty. Equally, authors then have the right not to publish their work in *Journalism Research*. 2. We should not only think of the wordsmiths, who might look for other publication options due to our specifications, but also of those authors that we have perhaps not looked at in the past and who might be bothered if these minimum standards of democratic language use do not apply in *Journalism Research*. 3. The question arises of why this topic – gender-sensitive language and its compulsory use – in particular triggers fundamental discussions on freedom of expression, artistic freedom, comprehensibility, inclusion, and exclusion, but the functions and effects of language are barely addressed. Does it reflect power structures; can it change them or create awareness? Who decides what is »good« journalism and what is appropriate or comprehensible language?

In my opinion, resistance to inclusive language indicates resistance to the fact that diversity in society is reality. Incredibly, it is often those who deal a lot with language professionally and who see themselves as creative minds who are not creative when it comes to linguistic expression, the search for alternatives, and the further development of language.

What triggered the debate

The composition of the publisher team has changed, putting this topic – language and inclusion – on the agenda. The specific trigger was a paper submitted to *Journalism Research*, in which the author spoke exclusively in the masculine form of the journalists, the reader, the followers, the opponents etc. »there,« in a country in the southern hemisphere. Although in many societies around the world men do hold the important positions, make the decisions, and set the rules, there are still »more people,« »further people involved,« not only those affected, but also active actors. Do they not have a voice, not even the right to be heard? Should those who write about others not at least try to ensure their visibility?

Processes of self-understanding

But before inclusive writing can be considered, it is down to us, as those who publish a journal, to decide – on the authors, their topics, their language, their perspectives. It is not only about gender-sensitive language, but also about depicting diversity and complexity in general, with the aim of breaking through the limitations of our perception. This can succeed if we offer a range of authors a forum, accept different experiences, and enable various views on journalism and journalism studies.

Following weeks of arguments and an entrenchment of the various fronts, a solution was suggested: We should make our debate public. But does going public help, if we cannot even agree in our small group? Would it not make more sense to clarify the issue ourselves first, and then to vote on a passage stating that »we expect our authors to use non-discriminatory formulations and ensure the visibility of diversity?«

We had almost got that far, and a majority had even been found for including the sentence in the information for authors. But it was then that the discussion really heated up, ending with this proposal: publishing position papers. They at least give an insight into a debate whose timing, extent, duration, and indeed intensity, have amazed me. I had assumed that the most non-discriminatory language possible was already a matter of course in academia, and thus also in *Journalism Research*. After all, the arguments are well-known and countless studies in linguistics, cognition psychology, sociology, and communication studies have shown that it does make a difference whether I speak of readers as »Leser« or »Leserinnen und Leser.« Practical guides and websites also provide plenty of useful information about how to write both inclusively and comprehensibly.^[2] The fact that, despite this, there is repeated, and indeed increasing, public discussion about »gendering,« the word »compulsion« is used, and tolerance of ignorance is demanded, is symptomatic of the general unease at things that are perceived as »new,« »complicated,« or apparently »incomprehensible,« and rules that are considered »ideological« and as going too far. Examining this unease in more detail and asking who is stoking it, who feels it, and why, appears to me more useful than spending weeks arguing over whether to add a point about gender-sensitive formulations to the style sheet. Yet this argument also brings clarity – I am in favor of the information for authors including the sentence: We expect gender-sensitive, non-discriminatory language.

Translation: Sophie Costella

2 Examples are collected by the website www.genderleicht.de/gendergerecht-schreiben-in-sieben-schritten/, a project by the Journalistinnenbund [Association of Female Journalists]. Further tips on formulations come, e.g., from the »Neue deutsche Medienmacher*innen« [new German female media creators], an initiative for diversity in the media: <https://glossar.neuemediemacher.de/> or <https://geschicktgendern.de/>

Horst Pöttker

Gender-sensitive language in Journalism Research – recommendation or binding regulation?

Our discussion revolves around two questions: suitable means for enacting a linguistic change that overcomes paternalistic writing traditions; and the level of obligation with which we make rules that (are intended to) lead to this linguistic change compulsory for authors in our journal.

In order to answer the first question, it is crucial to know how language as a system of symbols is understood. In my understanding, it serves primarily to enable communication between subjects, which may necessarily differ in gender, age, origin, religion, profession, education, political views and many other characteristics. This function calls for the language used by arts and social sciences, which have a particular interest in comprehension, to be as comprehensible as possible.

Comprehensibility depends on text qualities such as simple sentence construction and vocabulary, a clear structure, concise expression, and presentiveness.^[1] Minimum requirements of comprehensible language use include grammatical accuracy, the use of common symbols, and – in written texts – ease of reading.

As well as communication, however, language also has other, potentially problematic functions. The question of gender sensitivity directs attention to its problematic function: representing and legitimizing conditions of social inequality between the traditionally privileged male and the traditionally disadvantaged female gender (paternalism).

I consider the goal of helping to overcome the traditional power imbalance between the genders through a change in language use important. But the interest in communication must not be neglected. Here, too, a balance between obstinacy and understanding of other people must be attempted^[2] – in this case between the interest of emancipation and the function of communication.

1 Cf. Langer, Inghard; Schulz von Thun, Friedemann & Tausch, Reinhard (2019¹¹): *Sich verständlich ausdrücken*. Munich/Basel: Ernst Reinhardt Verlag (first edition 1974).

2 Cf. Pöttker, Horst (2004): Maßstab: Balance von Eigensinn und Fremdverstehen. In: Imhof, Kurt; Blum, Roger; Bonfadelli, Heinz & Jarren, Otfried (Eds.): *Mediengesellschaft. Strukturen, Merkmale, Entwicklungsdynamiken*.

The latter suggests that forms that do not correspond to the elementary features of comprehensibility – grammatical accuracy, common usage, and ease of reading – should be avoided. Although Duden now permits the use of an asterisk to denote persons of all genders, it is – like the gender gap and the intermediate »I« – difficult to read and not in common use in journalistic practice. Furthermore, these forms emphasize a particular interest in emancipation, which in my view should not be allowed to crowd out the practical (empirical) interest in communication with journalistic practice, particularly in journalism studies as an academic discipline that supports journalism as a profession.

At the same time, however, I do not believe that a one-off indication of the generic masculine is sufficient for the task of emancipation, even in view of creating a balance with the function of communication. This justifies, for example, the general use of male pronouns (»jeder,« »einer«) that are longer than the female equivalents and thus cannot be explained by the comprehensibility features of simplicity and conciseness.

I therefore advise the following

- Where corresponding pronouns stand alone, alternating with the shorter feminine form (»jede,« »eine«), perhaps even when male persons are meant;
- Where possible and useful, using neutral forms (»journalism« instead of »journalists«) or
- Referring to persons of both genders (»Journalistinnen und Journalisten,« »eine Journalistin oder ein Journalist«). (However, as the latter comes at the cost of conciseness, conscious use is needed, and perhaps occasional omission when the subjects involved in journalism are meant);
- I also see naming the opposite gender in each case in brackets, i.e. »Journalist(inn)en, jede(r), eine(r)« as useful, if not easy to read, since brackets are an acceptable short form for denoting variants of meaning of equal significance: »Journalism should (be able to) be practiced as independently as possible.«

My response to the second question is also connected to the idea of balancing obstinacy and understanding of others. There are arguments and concepts that I do not share, yet do not find unreasonable. For example, I do not find the use of the gender asterisk, the gender gap or the intermediate »I« unreasonable, as they can be justified with the task of emancipation. Likewise retention of the generic masculine, which can be justified to some extent with the quality of comprehensibility, which is crucial to public language use.

John Rawls put the background to my opinion into words:^[3] Rationality does not have to lead to a consensus on content. We should accept that different rational conceptions (can) exist alongside one another and – due to their rationality – respect one another despite this. Rawls' theory persuasively explains the idea of integrative pluralism, which is becoming more important as the complexity, globalization, and coarsening of public life increases. This idea of pluralism has established itself in the program of *Journalism Research*.^[4]

For the reasons I have explained, I am against creating a binding rule on the use of gender-sensitive language in *Journalism Research*. The discussion between the publishers documented here can give authors sufficient inspiration and freedom to choose their own path in this question.

Translation: Sophie Costella

3 Cf. Rawls, John (2003): *Politischer Liberalismus*. Translated by Wilfried Hinsch. Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp (English: *Political Liberalism*, 1993/5).

4 <https://journalistik.online/ueber-journalistik/> [11.2.2020]

Gabriele Hooffacker

Notes on the gender debate in Journalism Research

Journalistic language should be as precise as possible. Its purpose is communication. Yet journalistic language can also encourage one-sided views. It makes a difference whether a news report speaks of »freedom fighters« or »rebels,« a »government« or a »regime,« »migrants« or »refugees.« Those who have good journalistic training or relevant practical experience increasingly know this and take it into account.

In contrast to this, there are differing language traditions in North and South, East and West, in different social groups, in the former Federal Republic and the GDR. Barely anyone today remembers that the use of the term »FRG« by someone in Bavaria in the 1970s would have had them suspected of being a communist. A woman who gained engineering qualifications in the DDR would have proudly referred to herself as an »Ingenieur« [masculine form], seeing it as a sign of equal rights. On the other hand, people under 40 today find it impossible to understand why some people refuse to stop using the traditional names for marshmallow sweets or schnitzel with pepper sauce [Negerkuss/Zigeunerschnitzel, now considered racist terms].

For centuries, people spoke of »Bürger« [citizens, masculine form]. This was correct, as women did not have the vote for a long time. The formulation »Bürgerinnen und Bürgern« implements the societal change in language form. Yet few demands split society like that for equal linguistic treatment of men and women in society – and this split is by no means merely between »right« and »left,« however it is instrumentalized by circles with relevant interests.

Current language use does not make visible those who switch from one identity to another, or who cannot be classified in a clear identity of »man« or »woman.« Society and legislators are still learning here, and there is some catching up to be done.

Journalistic media helps society to communicate about itself. In this process, the audience must accept that there are some groups in society whose beliefs and ways of life are not shared by others. The limits of this are defined in law. As society changes, so do they. Academic media primarily serve to enable discussion

within the academic community (and yes, there is passionate debate here, too, including on the gender issue). Dedicated researchers use new topics and active discussion with society to counteract the danger of academic discourse becoming too far removed from reality. These processes take time.

In its role as an intermediary between practical journalism and the science of journalism, known as journalism studies, Journalistik positions itself on the side of enlightenment, pluralism of society, and inclusion. Efforts at inclusive, gender-sensitive language are seen in many German-language media – at every level. This is not the case elsewhere. Academia accompanies these processes in society, without being able to encourage or stop them. Yet academia can provide findings and enable answers and orientation.

For me, working towards gender-sensitive language that is as non-discriminatory as possible is an obvious step. I would see it as a mistake to marginalize all those who do not yet, or are hesitant to, implement the societal change in language. That is why I welcome the recommendation of gender-specific language in *Journalism Research*, with the precise implementation – be it neutral formulations, asterisks, colons, or other methods – left to the author.

Translation: Sophie Costella

Bernhard Debatin

Some thoughts on prescribing inclusive, non-discriminatory language

We are living in a time of linguistic transformation. Yet, this is not because our times might be particularly stormy, even though one could assume that, given the impact of climate crisis, pandemic, increasingly uneven distribution of wealth, and speedy development of disruptive technologies. Rather, the issue is that language is constantly changing. And here, just as in many other areas of society, Ernst Bloch's dictum of the synchronicity of the asynchronous holds true. Not only is language changing, the change also occurs in a way that new forms of language will be accepted and familiarized in some areas of society, while it may take much longer in other areas.

There's no doubt that this is the case, too, with the question of whether and how gender-sensitive language should be practiced. This is why any debate that simply pits the pros and cons against each other, regardless of how prominent the supporters of each side might be, fails to address the real issue. Fact is: gender-sensitive language has found its way into most areas of society. But it is also true that it is not supported by everybody and that some are even vehemently fighting against any kind of gender-inclusive language.

This resistance is usually justified with three main arguments: First, there is protest against intervening in language because people feel language should not be regulated. Second, gendered language is often dismissed as ugly or cumbersome. And finally, from a quasi value-conservative position, some people conjure up the need for protecting our language.

Starting with the latter, we first need to ask, which language might be meant, as there is no fixed standard form or even original form that we could refer to. Not too long ago, children in Germany were supposed to address their parents with the honorific second and third person plural (»Euch« or »Sie«). And it is not even that long ago that class distinctions had to be communicated by the use of specific titles.

Is that the linguistic form that we're supposed to protect? Or might it be what could be called the »pre-gendered« contemporary language? But what distinguishes a (however determined) contemporary language from those before and

after? Actually, only habit and preference, but these are both not very convincing justifications.

Also, let's not forget that linguistic change is always a reflection of societal change. Patterns of force and power relationships that are deeply entrenched in society are always expressed in language, too. And when those conditions change, language will change as well, even though often with a certain delay, as the synchronicity of the asynchronous applies here, too. The reference to a language that ought to be protected is thus twice problematic: It fails to recognize the historicity of language and it denies the power structure in obsolete linguistic forms.

The allegation that gendered language be ugly or cumbersome has similar flaws. The question of the aesthetics of a language certainly matters, but when it comes to bureaucratic language or nominal style, this concern has not caused the kind of protests that have accompanied the debate about gendered language from its inception. Bureaucratic acronyms and shorthands, such as the German »BAFÖG« (a law regulating student loan) or »Hartz 4« (the German labor market and unemployment reform law, named after the committee chairman), are not particularly beautiful. Bureaucratic and technical language also tend to be cumbersome, but they are part of our language and also reflect specific societal realities and practices.

Admittedly, there's always a point where such linguistic forms become peculiar or even hard to understand. A great example would be the term »geflügelte Jahresendfigur« (winged end-of-the-year-figurine instead of angel, as a Christmas tree ornament), an ironic neologism crafted to satirize the official language regime in the former German Democratic Republic. And of course, one could find such peculiarities in some attempts to establish gender-neutral language, too, if one only looks long enough. But this should not lead us to treating exceptions as the rule. Beauty and clarity are crucial criteria for the evaluation of language, particularly in journalism, but they must not be absolute exclusion criteria. And that even more so, when double standards are applied: what's perfectly acceptable in other areas of language, appears to be forbidden for gender-sensitive language.

Let's move on to the issue of intervening in language. First, one has to concede that regulation of and intervention in language and its use are no rarity. Some of it is even legally regulated, including certain aspects of gender-neutral language. Although many German legal texts still predominantly use the generic masculine, the *Handbuch der Rechtsförmlichkeit* (Handbook of Legal Formalization), edited by the German federal ministry of law, strongly recommends gender-neutral terms for individuals, as well as alternative phrasing and double designations (i.e., explicitly naming the female form, usually indicated by a noun's ending with -in). And on the level of the German *Länder* (States), but also in some areas

such as employment laws, there are clearly prescribed linguistic forms in order to prevent gender-specific discrimination. In addition, there are also many informal linguistic conventions in all sorts of areas, such as politics and a variety of societal groups.

And for editors, regardless of whether it's a journalistic or academic publication, the question also arises, which style and linguistic rules and norms should be imposed on authors and used when editing texts. Indeed, it is part of the editors' privilege that they can set standards and guidelines for the language used in their publication. Consequently, the respective style sheets and editing rules for authors do not only include rules for citation and format of submissions, but also details about which forms of inclusive language are expected. Moreover, editors always intervene in the authors' texts, as that is the very nature of editing. The spectrum of such interventions reaches from minimal corrections, such as adjusting punctuation and citation style, and shortening or rearranging of sentences or smoothing stylistic inconsistencies, to changing of unfortunate word choice or ambiguous expressions. The latter would include adjusting a text to gender-neutral linguistic standards.

Opponents of gender-sensitive regulations will now object that editing work should be purely formal, while prescribing gender-sensitive language changes the content and thus would violate the decision autonomy of authors. This objection, however, ignores the fact that editing is never only dealing with »neutral« language that only needs formal editing. Language is never neutral but always also a reflection of societal power relations. For instance, we would also intervene (at least I hope we would!) if an author were constantly using passive constructions. And this would not simply be a formal question of good style (following the rule that active language sounds better), but an issue of content, too: Passive constructions make the agent disappear and therefore veil responsibilities and causes. In Critical Discourse Analysis, this issue is known as *actor deletion*. Thus, there are first and foremost content-related reasons that speak against the use of passive constructions.

Exactly the same mechanism is at work when it comes to using the generic masculine. This has been studied for decades by now and we will hardly need to get into an argument about that. The suggestion that women are implicitly also meant with the generic masculine is not only a degradation of women to second class status, it is also effectively a de-naming (»Entnennung«), a removal of the woman as a recognizably acting agent from language. Generally, this choice of language genders all actors as male, while female actors only appear if one specifically and only refers to women. In other words, what's happening here is gender-specific *actor deletion*.

In addition, we should also consider that the generic masculine, even if meant to include women, can always be reinterpreted as masculine only, for purposes

of power. From German history, we know that this was exactly used during the National Socialism to exclude women from the legal profession. The argument was that term »der Richter« (the generic masculine for »judge«) clearly referred to a male person. The problem of anything that is implicitly expressed is that it is a tacit allusion only, which can easily be ignored and denied, which then has, as the example of the Nazis shows, massive consequences for the societal reality of women.

All in all, the point here is to make clear that the opponents of gender-sensitive language apply double standards, because the editorial intervention in other cases of author deletion appears to be unproblematic. But when it comes to gender-inclusive language, then the authors' decision autonomy is suddenly invoked and the objection that such standards would exclude or discriminate against these authors.

The exclusion argument is particularly interesting. Let's remember that the request for gender-neutral language is nothing but the insistence on *inclusive* language. After all, using the generic masculine means excluding half of the population by making them invisible. This is very effective, because it is deeply rooted in the structure of language, deep enough that it appears quasi-natural and that it can be talked up as the core of language that is worth protecting. As Roland Barthes and others have shown, this naturalization neutralizes and mythologizes power relationships and renders them invisible. Long time ago, the term »structural violence« was introduced for phenomena like this. And the paternalistic apology, »but they are implicitly meant,« only makes this type of violence even more clear.

In light of this, the allegation that prescribing gender-sensitive language is creating an unacceptable regulation because it compels the authors into submission or excludes them, seems almost amusing, but at a minimum paradoxical: After all, insisting on continuing to use exclusive language is justified by stating that prescribing inclusive language were to exclude those who use exclusive language. In addition, this alleged exclusion is rather harmless, as it is easy to remedy, by simply adopting inclusive language.

In the end, this is all about imposing one's standards on others, and the question of which imposition is more painful. Are we as editors allowed to impose our standards on the authors, standards they may deem unacceptable? Or, should authors be allowed to impose their gender-exclusive language (and the implied messages) on the editors of a publication and its readers?

At this point, it makes sense to remember what the main issue at hand actually is: After all, the request for gender-inclusive language is not simply some sort of an expression of disapproval or a complaint about bad taste. And it is also not an issue of personal concern. Rather, it is about basic human rights, such as equality and dignity, just as it is the case with sexism in general other forms of exclusive

and discriminatory language. The exclusive generic masculine is not merely a stylistic nuisance – instead, it communicates a concept of the human being that paints women as second class, which is hardly reconcilable with the idea of dignity. And it supports a value and power hierarchy that is in opposition to the (still insufficiently realized) equality of women in our society. Making women invisible by means of the generic masculine entrenches and perpetuates these power structures.

For this reason alone, it is not only allowed but also ethically required for editors to create binding standards that prescribe inclusive and non-discriminatory language. Those who believe that this is too much pressure, may be reminded that ultimately, any and every editorial standard exerts some pressure. There could be writers who may want to capitalize every word, or who think that citation rules are superfluous, or who hate the 1996 German spelling reform and would rather follow the standard that was introduced in 1944. Here, too, one could conceptualize editorial standards as an intervention in the authors' decision autonomy. And here, too, the editors would obviously draw on the editors' privilege, which means that the editors define the standard that is binding for the publication.

Therefore, I hold the view that the imposition of subjugating oneself to the linguistic standards of a publication is, so to speak, part of the language game of publishing. Indeed, it would be absurd if authors were to expect that only their own standard applies. And, of course, it is also always up to the author to publish their works elsewhere. This, too, is usual practice, because authors always have to figure out, which publication is best for their intents and purposes. For example, one needs to know if a particular journal finds enough readers, whether it targets the right audience, whether one likes the orientation of this journal, with regard to both its content and its methodological direction, and not least, whether one agrees with its linguistic standards.

From my point of view, it would not only desirable, but ethically required (as explained above) that our journal *Journalism Research* adopts an appropriate, binding linguistic standard. This could look like as follows:

We use inclusive language and avoid forms of language that exclude certain groups, make them invisible, or denigrate them. In addition to avoiding racist, sexist, and otherwise discriminating language, this also entails in particular the active usage of gender-sensitive and non-xenophobic language.

This, then, could be operationalized in the following way:

Gender-sensitive language can be realized in a variety of ways, for instance by naming both genders (rather than the generic masculine), by using gender-neutral expressions, the capitalized »I« (which creates a both masculine and generic feminine word, as in »RichterIn«), or gender star or gender gap. We deem insufficient the blanket reference that the usage of (generic) masculine forms includes both genders.

Non-xenophobic language means that discriminating generalizations and stereotyping of specific groups are to be avoided. For instance, naming a person's nationality or skin color should have actual informational value. Information that only fosters the formation of prejudice should be avoided, for instance when assuming supremacy due to biological, ethnic, or geographic origin.

This standard offers a broad and flexible framework as a guideline for authors. At the same time, it allows editors to operate with a clear standard. Thus, they don't have to face authors' protests with every little change of non-inclusive language, which could easily happen if one failed to make these expectations explicit in form of a binding linguistic standard.

A final argument should be considered, too: With the project of this journal *Journalism Research*, we have embarked on the attempt to provide a bilingual journal in order to overcome linguistic barriers of reception in the Anglo-American market. The usage of inclusive language in Anglo-American academic publications is an unquestioned standard nowadays. A misguided understanding of tolerance toward stubborn opponents of gender-inclusive language would do us no favor with regard to the attempt of overcoming such reception barriers.