



Schmitz, D., Ochs, S., Rosar, A., Roxas, J., Siegenthaler, A., Stein, S. D., Völkening, L., & Schneider, V. (2025). Defining gender linguistics: A statement from the editorial team. *Gender Linguistics* 1. doi: [10.65020/dr8xah93](https://doi.org/10.65020/dr8xah93)

Defining gender linguistics: A statement from the editorial team

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Gender Linguistics is a peer-reviewed open access journal published by Diversität in der Linguistik e.V. © 2025 The Author(s).

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When launching a new journal, the main objective is to provide a place for the work of others to be published. Yet, we believe that the first issue of *Gender Linguistics* should open with a statement of intent that is itself grounded in scholarship and advocacy. This article is our contribution to that aim: a synthesis of insights from the *Linguistic Intersections of Language and Gender* (LILG) conferences of 2023 and 2025, from our recent edited volume (Schmitz et al. 2025), and from the wider traditions of research on language and gender (e.g. Kotthoff & Nübling 2024; Ehrlich et al. 2014). The title of this statement is intentionally ambiguous: we are defining *Gender Linguistics* both as the name of this journal and as the name of a research field. What we present here is our understanding of gender linguistics – shaped by our collective research interests, experiences, and aims – and it is not the only or universally valid definition. By launching this journal, we set out this position as an invitation to engage, to open dialogue, and to contribute to the ongoing shaping of the field.

In framing our understanding of gender linguistics, we recognise the diversity of traditions from which the field draws. Internationally, research on language, gender, and sexuality has been anchored in sociolinguistics, discourse analysis, linguistic anthropology, and applied linguistics, with strong connections to feminist, queer, and trans studies. In the German-speaking context, *Genderlinguistik* ‘gender linguistics’ has developed a particular profile, often described along three interrelated levels of analysis – system, use, and ideology (cf. Kotthoff & Nübling 2024). While this triad provides a useful heuristic, we acknowledge that there is necessary overlap and interaction between the three levels. We also see gender linguistics as encompassing a wide range of strands anchored in psycholinguistics, discourse analysis, corpus linguistics, computer linguistics, morphology, historical linguistics, onomastics, dialectology, and more, including queer-linguistic approaches. The diversity of projects, publications, conferences, and other events reflects the way the field is increasingly becoming institutionalised. With the launch of *Gender Linguistics*, we actively contribute to this institutionalisation by providing a dedicated platform that brings together these diverse approaches and by establishing a review process that draws on leading researchers across the field. We see the journal as a space that builds on existing traditions while fostering dialogue, intersections, and synergies between them.

Gender linguistics investigates how grammatical, lexical, and phonological structures encode, erase, or challenge gendered distinctions. Recent and ongoing work in this area includes projects on gender-related practices in person reference (Bröder & Rosar 2025), Völkening’s (2023; 2025) construction-grammatical perspective on gender suffixes, and studies of innovative inclusive forms in a range of languages (e.g. for French: Elmiger 2022a,b; for Spanish: Papadopoulos 2021), among others. Schmitz’s (2025) plenary on the phonetic realisation of gender-inclusive forms in German connects gender linguistics with fine-grained phonetic and psycholinguistic research, showing that questions of gender in language are not confined to the visible or orthographic level but can extend to the smallest units of speech. This demonstrates that the work on grammatical, lexical, and phonological structures reaches across different areas of linguistics and increasingly draws on cross-linguistic data.

How gender is discursively constructed, negotiated, and contested in interaction, media, and other communicative settings is also subject to gender linguistic enquiry. This encompasses research on conversation, institutional talk, media discourse, online communication, and multilingual contexts (e.g. Meuleneers 2024). Alongside these discourse-oriented perspectives, experimental work such as Körner's (2025a) studies on the processing of role nouns in German examines whether masculine generics and gender-inclusive forms differ in comprehension, linking gender-linguistic questions with psycholinguistics.¹ Related work is available on a number of languages, e.g. French (Tibblin et al. 2023) and Spanish (Irizarry & Tamargo 2025). Building on this, Schmitz and colleagues introduce computational modelling as another way of capturing gender biases in language (Schmitz et al. 2023; Schmitz 2024). From a corpus-linguistic and interdisciplinary perspective, the projects *Empirical Gender Linguistics*² and *GENELLI*³ investigate gender-related practices in public and institutional communication, including analyses of gender-inclusive language in corporate discourse and debates about pinkwashing (Müller-Spitzer et al. 2024, 2025). Notably, *Empirical Gender Linguistics* is currently the only research project in Germany to carry *Genderlinguistik* 'gender linguistics' in its title – an indication both of the field's emerging institutionalisation and of the hurdles it still faces. Taken together, these studies highlight the field's methodological breadth, combining qualitative and quantitative methods, which range from media analyses to experiments and corpus-linguistic investigations.

Studies on beliefs, attitudes, and political projects surrounding gendered language are also part of gender linguistic research. Such studies include analyses and critiques of prescriptive debates, of the ideological framing of language reforms, and of the ways in which gendered linguistic practices are embedded in broader structures of power and social difference. Roxas's (2025) study on integrating more than binary gender in Spanish language classrooms in the Philippines provides one example: situated in a multilingual, postcolonial context, it challenges entrenched binary frameworks and demonstrates how gender- and queer-linguistic research can inform educational practice. Such work highlights the close links between ideology, pedagogy, and policy. In German-speaking contexts, ideological debates over gender-fair language in media, politics, and education illustrate both the societal relevance of the field and the obstacles that accompany its institutionalisation (Meuleneers 2024). Research on gender-inclusive language guidelines at universities and in public institutions further highlights these tensions, showing both tendencies toward standardisation and cross-linguistic variation (Siegenthaler 2022, 2024).

Across its research foci, gender linguistics is united by a commitment to understanding how language both reflects and shapes gendered realities (e.g. Jones 2016). It is a field that must remain attentive to intersectionality, recognising that gender interacts with other dimensions of identity and

¹See also (Körner 2025b), a comprehensive overview paper on psycholinguistic studies for German generic masculines and alternative forms.

²<https://www.ids-mannheim.de/lexik/pb-13/empirische-genderlinguistik>

³<https://www.ids-mannheim.de/lexik/pb-13/empirische-genderlinguistik/genelli>

inequality, including race, class, sexuality, ability, and age (e.g. Shields 2008). This intersectional lens ensures that gender is not treated in isolation but as part of a complex web of social relations.⁴

Gender linguistics exists fundamentally as a transdisciplinary field, with its most significant developments arising through intersections with other linguistic and non-linguistic disciplines. Important advances emerge, for instance, through connections with psycholinguistics in the study of processing (e.g. Zacharski & Ferstl 2023; Körner 2025a), with historical linguistics in tracing language change (e.g. Stevanović 2024), with education in shaping inclusive and transformative pedagogies (e.g. Roxas 2025; Potestades 2021), with computational linguistics in developing language technologies that resist bias (e.g. Savoldi et al. 2025), with corpus linguistics in tracing actual language use and providing quantifiable baselines for contested debates (e.g. Rosar 2022; Ochs & Rüdiger 2025), and with phonetics in linking social meaning to fine-grained acoustic patterns (Schmitz 2025). The contributions to LILG 2023 and 2025 as well as to the edited volume that resulted from LILG 2023 (Schmitz et al. 2025) show that the boundaries of gender linguistics are fluid and open – and that this is a strength.

We also situate *Gender Linguistics* in relation to the long-standing journal *Gender and Language*⁵ (the official journal of IGALA).⁶ We share its commitments to feminist, queer, and trans perspectives and to the social analytics of gender and sexuality across institutions, media, politics, and everyday interaction. At the same time, our remit is complementary: alongside discourse- and interaction-focused work, we place equal emphasis on grammatical and semantic gender, cross-linguistic typology, psycholinguistics, semantics, morphology, phonetics and phonology, computational modelling, historical analyses, corpus-based and experimental approaches, and multilingual policy and pedagogy, among others. We aim to be a multilingual, open-access, community-owned venue that connects structural analysis, usage, and accounts of language ideology across languages and research traditions.

With *Gender Linguistics*, we aim to provide a platform that reflects this diversity. We welcome work on any language or variety, from any methodological or theoretical perspective, so long as it contributes to a deeper understanding of the interplay between language and gender in its many forms. We are committed to publishing research that is theoretically grounded, empirically innovative, and socially engaged. Our goal is to foster dialogue between different strands of the field, to encourage methodological experimentation, and to amplify voices and topics that have been historically marginalised.

With this statement, we are not attempting to close the definition of gender linguistics, but to open it. We invite others to challenge, expand, and refine what we have set out here. In doing so, we hope *Gender Linguistics* will become not only a record of the field as it is, but also an active participant in shaping what it can become.

⁴See also the work by CRC 1482 “Studies in Human Differentiation” at <https://humandifferenzierung.uni-mainz.de/en>; accessed: 30 August 2025.

⁵<https://utppublishing.com/journal/gl>; accessed: 15 August 2025.

⁶We are also mindful of the *Journal of Language and Sexuality*, which provides an important venue for research at the intersection of language and sexuality. While our journal shares some of these interests, *Gender Linguistics* places gender itself at the centre of inquiry.

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