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On the rejection of gender-inclusive language in the German political discourse – An analysis of press statements from right-wing and conservative parties

Gender-inclusive language is a controversial topic in the German public sphere. In particular, politically right-wing and conservative parties (AfD, CDU) address the topic in political discourse. In my presentation, I examine the argumentative patterns used by both parties against gender-inclusive language. The research material consists of press releases from both parties from 2021 to 2025.

A qualitative analysis of the data shows that arguments against gender-inclusive language can be assigned to six different thematic categories: Gender-inclusive language (i.) is against official spelling/grammar rules, (ii.) affects language and society negatively, (iii.) has no positive effects, (iv.) is politically motivated/ideological, (v.) is compulsion, (vi.) is artificial/unnatural. Linguistic arguments (e.g., pattern i.) play only a marginal role in the discourse, which shows that political parties do not adopt gender-inclusive language for linguistic reasons (cf. table 1). Rather, general reasons, as they are generally raised against ‘gender ideology’ (e.g., Chołuj 2015), also play a role here.

Table 1 Assertion patterns attested within the data set. A total of 28 assertions within the AfD sample and 52 assertions within the CDU sample.

Argumentation pattern	AfD	CDU
i.	1	12
ii.	9	16
iii.	0	5
iv.	8	5
v.	8	12
vi.	2	2

From the analysis, one can conclude that opposition to gender-inclusive language cannot be addressed with linguistic arguments. Rather, the rejection is part of a broader ideological position. This distinguishes the political discourse from the critical voices toward gender-inclusive language in language science (Becker 2022).

References

- Becker, Lidia. 2022. Ideologeme und Argumentationsmuster gegen genderneutrale Sprache in der spanischsprachigen und deutschen Linguistik. In Gabriele Diewald & Damaris Nübling (eds.). *Genus – Sexus – Gender*, 319-348. Berlin: De Gruyter.
- Chołuj, Bożena. 2015. „Gender-Ideologie“ – ein Schlüsselbegriff des polnischen Anti-Genderismus. In Sabine Hark & Paula-Irene Villa (eds.). *Anti-Genderismus*, 219–238. Bielefeld: Transcript.

Biography

Jens Fleischhauer studies General Linguistics and Philosophy at Heinrich-Heine-University. He has also earned his doctorate and habilitation there. Currently, his research focuses mainly on complex predicates, Bantu languages, and the political discourse of politically right-wing and far-right groups.