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### **Guidelines versus Reality: Gender-Inclusive Language in Teaching Plans and Teacher Practices in Spain**

In recent decades, both languages and societies worldwide have advanced in the promotion and acceptance of gender-inclusive language (GIL) following institutional claims (UNESCO 2011). Political actors and organizations have supported its implementation as a strategy to foster equality, and acceptance among language users has also grown (Pfalzgraf 2024). However, despite this apparent momentum, GIL continues to encounter resistance and even rejection, as illustrated by recent developments in Argentina and Germany, where inclusive alternatives have been discouraged or banned, and by the restrictive position of the *Real Academia Española* (2020). Moreover, some GIL strategies present practical limitations—such as pronunciation difficulties or semantic ambiguity (Grijelmo 2019)—that complicate their widespread use, even among supportive sectors.

One domain where this tension is especially evident is higher education. Across Europe, universities have issued guidelines recommending GIL, and Spanish institutions have been active in this regard for two decades. More than thirty such documents have been published in Spain, consistently advising against the exclusive use of masculine generics, among others (Guerrero-Salazar, 2021). Yet, implementation in practice remains inconsistent. This study investigates this discrepancy by analyzing a corpus of teaching plans from 40 courses in the Modern Languages degree at the Autonomous University of Madrid. In parallel, an *ad hoc* survey gathers instructors' reflections on their awareness of and adherence to the university's *Guía para un uso no sexista de la lengua* (2022).

Preliminary findings indicate a significant gap between policy and practice: fewer than 10% of the teaching plans analyzed incorporate GIL. Moreover, although most instructors recognize the importance of gender equality, many admit unfamiliarity with the guidelines or deliberate reliance on masculine generics. Only a minority report systematically using GIL in their teaching. These results underscore the need to bridge the divide between institutional discourse and classroom practice, given the formative influence of language use in educational settings.

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María Muelas-Gil holds a PhD in Philosophy and Language Sciences from the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, where she is currently a professor and researcher in the Department of English Philology. A member of the research project *Polarized and Digital Discourses* (MICINN PID2020-119102RB-I00), her work focuses on Cognitive Linguistics, Pragmatics, and Gender Studies. Recently, she has explored the intersections of gender and language through a multidisciplinary study of stereotypes in Spanish and English within the international network *Language and Gender: Academic Research and Practical Implementation*. She has published extensively and held visiting positions in England, Portugal, Ireland, and the United States.