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Journalists' Use of Gender-Inclusive Language in German Youth Radio: Ethnographic Insights From On- and Off-Air Communication

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ABSTRACT

The use of gender-inclusive language (GIL) in German is frequently examined in linguistics and related fields. While journalistic texts are often the central element of such analyses, research on the actual language users – the journalists – and their complex linguistic practices behind the scenes is rather scarce. This article is based on a larger EU-funded research project that examines journalistic practices at a German youth radio station to gain a detailed understanding of how content is created and which factors shape this process. Based on linguistic-ethnographic fieldwork at the youth radio station, 20 semi-structured interviews with journalists and a qualitative linguistic corpus analysis of morning show scripts, this article explores why and how journalists use GIL in the newsroom and which shaping factors arise during content production. It also draws attention to the different forms of GIL used in youth radio communication and which social values are part of journalistic practices and discourses.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Die Verwendung von gendersensibler Sprache in Deutschland wird in der Linguistik und angrenzenden Forschungsfeldern häufig untersucht. Während journalistische Texte oft das zentrale Element solcher Analysen sind, gibt es nur wenige Untersuchungen zu den tatsächlichen Sprachbenutzern – den Journalist*innen – und ihren komplexen sprachlichen Praktiken hinter den Kulissen. Dieser Beitrag basiert auf einem größeren, von der EU geförderten Forschungsprojekt, welches die journalistischen Praktiken in einem deutschen Jugendradiosender untersucht, um ein detailliertes Verständnis davon zu bekommen, wie Inhalte erstellt werden und welche Faktoren diesen Prozess beeinflussen. Basierend auf linguistisch-ethnografischer Feldforschung bei dem Jugendradiosender, 20 semi-strukturierten Interviews mit Journalist*innen und einer qualitativen linguistischen Korpusanalyse von Morningshow-Skripten untersucht diese Studie, warum und wie Journalist*innen gendersensible Sprache in der Redaktion verwenden und welche Einflussfaktoren bei der Produktion von Inhalten wirken. Dieser Beitrag macht auch aufmerksam auf die verschiedenen Formen gendersensibler Sprache, die im Jugendradio verwendet werden, und welche gesellschaftlichen Werte Teil der journalistischen Praktiken und Diskurse sind.

1 | Introduction

The relationship between language, diversity and equality is a recurring topic of discussion in society (Blommaert 2010; McRobbie 2009; Silverstein 1985). Particularly the use of gender-inclusive language (GIL) in Germany, which is highly debated both in academia and by the public (Bloemen and Wilde 2019; Hetjens and Rummel 2021; Jäckle 2022; Krome 2021, 2022; Link 2024; Müller-Spitzer 2022; Sökefeld 2021), is frequently examined in linguistics and related disciplines (Blake and Klimmt 2010; Link 2024; Waldendorf 2024). While the non-inclusive generic use of masculine forms prevails in German, these debates are stirred by a change in language use in recent years towards more gender-inclusive wordings in many domains of social life including in the media. Although journalistic texts are often the central element of such analyses (e.g. Apel and Bose 2024; Link 2024; Müller-Spitzer et al. 2024; Waldendorf 2024), research on the actual language users – the journalists – and their complex linguistic practices regarding the use of GIL in on- and off-air communication is rather scarce. In this article, I draw attention to the complexity of journalistic practices and the factors behind the scenes that shape the use of GIL. As previous research in media linguistics in newsrooms has shown, looking beyond the text allows to gain greater knowledge of journalists' linguistic practices (e.g. Cotter 2010; Merminod and Haapanen 2025; Klemm et al. 2016). Examining the actual language users' practices in real-life contexts and domains allows for answering questions of why and how GIL is used in German media communication and provides deeper insights into possible issues that evolve surrounding the use of GIL in media texts that often remain hidden when journalistic texts or surveys with journalists are the only data for analysis (e.g. Apel and Bose 2024; Waldendorf 2024).

The behind-the-scenes insights into youth radio presented in this article are based on the larger, EU-funded research project CIDoRA *(Community, Identity and Diversity in German Youth Radio)*, for which I examine language practices of media professionals during the production of media content in Germany. The aim of the larger project is to investigate how content is created in relation to ethnic and linguistic diversity, which factors shape this process and how journalists try to interact with their diverse audiences. In this context, the article pays particular attention to the role of the sociocultural environment at the journalistic workplace, including internal strategies, newsroom policies and guidelines, radio itself as the communication channel, the individual journalist's attitudes and perceptions at work and in private communications and the image a broadcaster wishes to have towards its targeted audience, which turned out to be the most relevant factors regarding the use of GIL.

The article is based on linguistic-ethnographic fieldwork at a youth radio station in Germany, 20 semi-structured interviews with journalists, and a qualitative linguistic corpus analysis of morning show scripts. It gives examples from morning show scripts and explores how journalists talk about using GIL in their daily work in the newsroom. It thereby also draws attention to the different forms of GIL used in youth radio communication and which social values are part of journalistic practices and discourses. Morning show scripts were chosen for analysis since morning shows are the most important programmes of the day for radio stations where most listeners tune in. The content in morning shows mainly involves conversations between hosts and their sidekicks, where the careful choice of linguistic resources is key to reaching the targeted audience.

Section 2 gives a brief overview of the debates surrounding the use of GIL in German. This is followed by an outline of the main features of youth radio language in Section 3. The methodological approach applied and the methods used for this study are explained in Sections 4 and 5. Section 6 then presents the study's results and discusses relevant examples from the youth radio station's morning show content. Concluding remarks are then given in Section 7.

2 | Debates Around *Gendern* in German

The contemporary debate around GIL or *Gendern* 'gendering' in Germany can be traced back to the late 1970s, when the use of the so-called *generic masculine* was first critiqued in linguistics (e.g. Pusch 1979; Trömel-Plötz 1978). German features three grammatical genders: masculine, feminine and neuter. While in most cases of person nouns there is congruence between grammatical gender and a referent's sex/gender (Diewald and Nübling 2022), it has become convention to use masculine forms as a generic to refer to gender-mixed groups of referents or to make general, gender-neutral references to persons. As a range of experimental linguistic studies have shown, however, this generic use of masculine forms leads to study participants predominantly forming mental representations of the referenced groups or persons as male (Gygax et al. 2008; Irmen 2007; Stahlberg et al. 2001). In addition, Gygax et al. (2008) report that their study participants tended to misinterpret the generic use of masculine nouns as direct references to male persons. Since the generic use of masculine nouns cannot be formally distinguished from their sex-/gender-specific use, it results in ambiguous wordings whose interpretation as generic is dependent on sufficient contextual information that other-than-male referents are included. As a result of such unconscious cognitive processes and interpretative complications, there is an underrepresentation of women and other gender identities in German that is considered as discriminatory by some scholars and members of the public (Stefanowitsch 2022; Trömel-Plötz 1978). To highlight that these issues of underrepresentation are not based on grammatical necessity but on habitual use and linguistic socialisation that need to be overcome, some linguists refer to the generic masculine in German as a *Gebrauchstradition* 'usage tradition' (see Diewald 2018; Stefanowitsch 2022). As a solution to the representational issues around the generic masculine, a range of more gender-inclusive alternatives are proposed, such as using gender-neutral nominalised participles – for example, *Helfende* 'helping people' instead of *Helfer* 'helper$_{\text{MASC.PL}}$' (for further examples, see Section 6.1) – using masculine and feminine forms as word pairs (which however does not overcome gender binaries), or inserting gender-inclusive punctuation in person reference nouns for which both masculine and feminine forms exist. The most common form of such punctuation currently is the *Genderstern* 'gender asterisk' (e.g. *Lehrer* 'teacher$_{\text{MASC.SG}}$' + *Lehrerin* 'teacher$_{\text{FEM.SG}}$' → *Lehrer*in*).

While for some scholars and members of the public the use of gender-inclusive forms instead of the generic masculine constitutes an important step towards gender equality, others consider GIL as a degradation of the German language and as linguistic paternalism. Opponents of GIL mainly uphold the position that masculine forms can be used generically without making any reference to sex/gender as this use is part of the German grammatical system (cf. Eisenberg 2022). Further arguments that are brought forward by some critics include that GIL lengthens and complicates written and spoken German. In addition, word pairs of feminine and masculine person nouns would unnecessarily highlight the sex of the referents. In particular, however, there is criticism about the use of gender-inclusive punctuation. Arguments against the use of gender-inclusive punctuation include that it creates unnecessary barriers for people with reading or hearing disabilities.

On an administrative level, there has so far also been no formal acknowledgement of gender-inclusive punctuation in the *Amtliches Regelwerk der deutschen Rechtschreibung* (Official Rules of German Orthography) (Rat für die deutsche Rechtschreibung 2024). In a similar vein, while the Gesellschaft für deutsche Sprache e.V. – a non-profit organisation for the cultivation of and research on the German language that also provides language consulting services to the German Bundestag – generally supports the use of GIL, it does not support gender-inclusive punctuation due to it potentially not being comprehensible, readable and compliant with orthographic rules of German. In view of such arguments against gender-inclusive punctuation, the governments of several German federal states, including Bavaria and Saxony, have banned its use in official communication or even educational settings (Bayerische Staatskanzlei 2024; Internetredaktion der LpB BW 2025).

There are, however, also indicators that language change towards more gender-inclusive formulations begins to unfold. Müller-Spitzer et al. (2022) have, for example, shown that the use of the generic masculine is declining in Christmas and New Year's addresses of German high-level politicians. In addition, recent years have seen an increase of different forms of GIL in major newspapers with mainstream newspapers including more feminine–masculine word pairs and left-leaning papers also adopting gender-inclusive punctuation (Waldendorf 2024). In this context, Waldendorf (2024), however, also notes that while the use of GIL is increasing, 'adapting language to be gender-inclusive is difficult due to three factors. First, it is cognitively challenging. Automatic processes need to be broken and mental lexicon/grammars need to be adapted and changes need to be applied to many different person nouns. Second, the environment in which change is to happen is antagonistic – not everyone sees language change favourably and change has been difficult in the past. Third, the existence of multiple different types of GIL may hamper its use and potentially involve a coordination problem' (p. 358).

3 | Main Features of Youth Radio Language

Language used on youth radio is mostly shaped by the communicative aim of reaching young audiences. This means that it is characterised by a frequent use of English words and phrases also known as anglicisms (Schaefer 2025). This use of English is also due to youth radio's focus on topics disseminated on social media, often in connection with stories that have gone viral on TikTok and Instagram.[1] Anglicisms that appeared in the morning show scripts of the youth radio station include the English lexical items *cringe*, *WTF* 'what the fuck', *safe* and *fancy*, and English phrases, such as *sad but true*, *good point* and *that's the spirit*. As my observations at the youth radio station have shown, anglicisms are also often used as a neutral form to overcome the generic masculine or avoid the use of lengthier German gender-neutral forms (see Section 6.3).

In addition, youth radio language is quite colloquial and should always sound like a conversation among friends, which also contributes to the listenability of the radio format. The use of colloquial youth language can be seen in extract 1 taken from the genre of host talk.[2] The German *mal* 'once' and *ist* 'is' are clipped to the colloquial *ma* and *is*, which together with the use of the anglicism interjection *ey* convey coolness in German.

Extract 1

> Da klingelt ma die Kasse ey! Grade jetzt is einer der umsatzstärksten Monate für die Fitnessbranche. Gute Vorsätze und so…
>
> (There rings the cash register for once, ey! Currently it is one of the strongest sales months for the fitness industry. Good intentions and all that…)

Furthermore, youth radio language is also very descriptive and explanatory due to radio being auditory only. Extract 2 shows how this is realised on air.

Extract 2

> Doja Cat machte den Wet Look – Weißes bodenlanges oversized Shirt, das so nass an ihrem Körper geklebt hat. Und geschminkt war sie, als hätte die noch ne runde geheult oder wäre wirklich in Regen gekommen.
>
> (Doja Cat did the wet look – white floor-length oversized shirt that stuck to her body as if it were wet. And her make-up made her look like she'd been crying or had really been out in the rain.)

In addition, youth radio language – like radio language in general – is also genre-bound. This means that the communicative aim is of great importance here. The genre of news, for example, contains short and concise sentences where the most important facts are provided to the listeners first. The news is usually no longer than 1 minute and 30 seconds and each news bit is no longer than a maximum of 20 seconds (see extract 3).

Extract 3

> Der vergangene Oktober ist der wärmste, der jemals gemessen wurde. Und das komplette Jahr 2023 wird wahrscheinlich das wärmste seit 125.000 Jahren. Das

> hat der EU-Klimawandeldienst Copernicus herausgefunden.
>
> (Last October was the warmest ever recorded. And the whole year of 2023 will probably be the warmest in 125,000 years. That's what the EU climate change service Copernicus has found out.)

Overall, the language used on youth radio is very much shaped by the format, which is infotainment driven, combining information with a large portion of entertainment where the characters of the hosts and presenters and the music played are often foregrounded as the main selling points.

4 | Methodological Frame

To grasp the complexity of youth radio language in the context of GIL, the article applies an interdisciplinary framework that allows language use to be viewed from the perspective of media professionals. The core element in this framework is linguistic ethnography (Blommaert and Jie 2020; Copland and Creese 2015; Rampton et al. 2004). It is therefore not the text that is at the centre of this analysis but language as a social practice. In combination with approaches from media studies (Esser 1998; Preston 2008; Shoemaker and Reese 2014) and critical cultural studies (Appadurai 1996), it is thus possible to explore the complexity of communicative resources and influencing factors that come together in media language or in other words meaning-making practices.

Linguistic ethnography is to be understood not as a method but much more as a philosophy of how we can gain knowledge of the social world and our environment. The main thought in this context is that this knowledge can be attained by the researcher through getting an insider's perspective of, for example, why and how journalists actually use GIL at work in their daily routines (Copland and Creese 2015). Linguistic ethnography is therefore all about gaining an understanding of the social world or individual social events through the eyes of the people we study. Whilst undertaking linguistic-ethnographic fieldwork, the researcher as an individual is almost like a participant in the research. The researcher needs to, therefore, be self-reflective, meaning that they are aware that they can never be objective in their data gathering and analysis and that their previous experiences impact the way they conduct research and interpret results. My background in journalism means, for example, that I am familiar with the principles of how journalistic coverage is written and what the basic components of a journalist's daily routine of working in the newsroom are and the pressures that are involved, which I bring to my data gathering and analysis. This means that my analysis of GIL is subjective by nature and, in this sense, in line with the ethnographer's perspective that there can be no independent bird's-eye perspective on the object of study but instead that one always influences what one investigates (Blommaert and Jie 2020; Copland and Creese 2015). Linguistic ethnography is therefore deeply rooted in the critical tradition, and it draws from poststructuralist theories about language, culture and society. For example, language is not seen as a relatively fixed system of vocabulary and grammar like in traditional linguistics but, as previously mentioned, as a social practice.

Although linguistic ethnography is explorative, this does not mean that the researcher is not theoretically informed before going to the fieldwork site. My linguistic-ethnographic analysis in this article is guided by a theoretical framework, the Media Language Model (for a more detailed outline and depiction of the model see Schaefer 2024), which I developed for my previous research on the use of English in German radio. The use of this model is not to be understood as a purely etic approach as it merely functions as a theoretical guideline for analysing influencing factors within the social practices of media content production. In the context of this study, it therefore supports an emic investigation of what shapes journalistic newsroom practices regarding their use of GIL. Due to the scope of this article, I will not go into much detail here but will outline the most important points of the model in the context of this study.

The model builds on previous research into media content production (Esser 1998; Preston 2008; Shoemaker and Reese 2014) as well as critical sociolinguistics (Blommaert 2010; Canagarajah 2021; Pennycook 2007) and critical cultural studies (Appadurai 1996; Nederveen Pieterse 2009). In this sense, it goes by the basic premise that all influencing factors on journalistic language practices are, so to speak, nodes of a complex rhizomatic network in which all entities influence each other (Canagarajah 2021). Examples of nodes are entities such as the editor-in-chief and ethical principles in journalism. In line with this rhizomatic approach, I avoid implying an a priori hierarchy between these nodes. However, since many social practices in journalism also become established, I refer to these sedimented practices as 'groupings of influencing factors', and one can imagine these as arranged as partially overlapping ellipses. The model comprises four groupings of influencing factors – the individual, the media organisation, the media system and the global/cultural environment – and is based on the fundamental assumption that every case of language production by the mass media is characterised by a complex interplay of factors from all four groupings. There is, however, always the possibility of change in these sedimented normative practices of media production, and likewise, hierarchies and power relations within the assemblage of media language are negotiable and emerge in the interaction during meaning-making processes. The extent to which individual factors shape the language used by journalists remains an empirical question and depends on the individual case and the journalists' situatedness in their sociocultural environment.

5 | Methods and Corpus Selection

From mid-October 2023 to May 2024, I undertook linguistic-ethnographic fieldwork at one of the largest youth radio stations in Germany. This included observation of the newsroom (24 days over a period of 7 weeks; up to 8 hours per day), which meant that I was also given permission to attend daily briefings of journalistic staff and editorial conferences. In addition, I undertook individual observation (48 days) of 17 journalists who were recruited on a voluntary basis after I had gained an insight into work processes at the station. The selection of participants (10 male and 7 female) was based on their roles and

functions as well as their availability to participate in the study. Furthermore, I undertook semi-structured interviews (duration of each interview approximately 1 hour) with 20 journalists and informal interviews during individual observation, which mainly included questions to clarify journalists' working practices.[3]

Linguistic ethnography examines language in context, where (socio-)linguistics provides ethnographic research with the necessary tools for a detailed analysis of human interactions. In this sense, I also undertook a linguistic corpus analysis of morning show scripts collected during the time of fieldwork. These were scripts of 75 morning shows broadcast weekdays between mid-October 2023 and early February 2024. The resulting corpus comprises of 203,000 tokens of on-air host talk and short off-air annotations and instructions that the journalists included in relation to the organisation of the show. For analysis, I then created a decontextualised word list from the corpus using WordSmith Tools and manually searched this word list for person reference nouns (e.g. kinship terms, occupational titles, personal traits or social roles) and indefinite pronouns used to refer to persons. This resulted in a condensed list of 584 word forms (out of a total of 17,287 types) that were potential cases of the (non-)use of GIL. The remaining word forms either bore semantic gender (e.g. *Arzt* 'doctor$_{\text{MASC.SG}}$' or *Tante* 'aunt'), had morphological suffixes that indicated the referent's gender (e.g. *-in* for female referents or *-er* for male referents) or were semantically gender-neutral terms (e.g. *niemand* 'nobody' or *Fachleute* 'experts'). For the analysis of the use of GIL, I then clustered word forms that semantically pointed to the same referents (despite the referents' gender) and conducted an in-depth analysis of the use of each individual token using WordSmith Tools's concordance function. This way, it was possible to exclude tokens which had a single person (either male or female) as referent and identify cases in which journalists had the possibility to use GIL (i.e. all forms of the generic masculine in German as well as double references and gender-neutral alternative formulations). It must be noted here that the quantitative findings that resulted from compiling the word list and analysing the concordances served mainly to identify gender-inclusive forms that occurred most frequently in the corpus. These were then examined qualitatively as an addition to the qualitative findings from ethnographic fieldwork, including interviews at the youth radio station.

6 | Results and Discussion

The following section presents the findings from newsroom observation at the youth radio station, including an overview of the main shaping factors that turned out to be relevant regarding the use of GIL. In addition, excerpts from interviews with journalists about why and how they use GIL in off- and on-air communication are presented. Furthermore, this section also outlines the main qualitative findings, including examples from the linguistic corpus analysis of morning show scripts produced by youth radio journalists during fieldwork. The interview statements in this section are representative for the journalism culture regarding the use of GIL at the youth radio station. In addition, the examples from the corpus analysis (see Section 6.3), which shall add to our understanding of why and how GIL is actually used by journalists, represent some of the most frequently occurring cases where journalists made a choice to use or not use gender-inclusive forms.

6.1 | Newsroom Policies on Using Gender-Inclusive Language

During my time at the youth radio station, I was given unrestricted access to most internal data and communications. As my observations have revealed, communication between colleagues and the editorial team mainly takes place via MS Teams since many journalists work remotely. MS Teams is therefore used as a digital space where content is discussed in journalistic teams, and general guidelines and policies are also shared with the journalistic staff, which includes guidelines on the topic of how to use GIL at the station. The guideline 'Gendersensible Sprache bei Radio X' (gender-inclusive language at Radio X)[4] was reposted twice as a PDF by the station's managers during fieldwork via MS Teams but was also brought to the attention of staff twice in editorial conferences. In the following, I have summarised the main points of this guideline.

1. 'We want to use the generic masculine only sparingly.'

As can be taken from the first point, journalists are asked to use the generic masculine seldom and to find fair formulations where possible. Options for fair formulations that are provided to journalistic staff in the guideline are:

a. Gender-neutral wording
   - *Menschen* 'humans', *Leute* 'people (as a mass)' instead of *Männer* 'men' or *Frauen* 'women'
   - *Publikum* 'audience', *Fans* 'fans' instead of *Zuschauer* 'spectator$_{\text{MASC.PL}}$'
   - *Fachleute* 'professionals' instead of *Experten* 'expert$_{\text{MASC.PL}}$'

All three examples provided in the guideline show the potential replacement of semantically gender-specific person reference nouns by semantically gender-neutral collective terms.

b. Relative clauses
   - *wer gewinnt, kriegt eine Nachricht* 'who wins gets a message' instead of *Gewinner werden benachrichtigt* 'winner$_{\text{MASC.PL}}$ will be notified'
   - *alle, die teilnehmen…* 'all who take part…' instead of *jeder Teilnehmer…* 'every$_{\text{MASC.SG}}$ participant$_{\text{MASC.SG}}$'

c. Verb instead of noun
   - *wer sich bewirbt…* 'who applies…' instead of *Bewerber* 'applicant$_{\text{MASC.PL}}$'
   - *geschrieben von…* 'written by…' instead of *Autoren* 'author$_{\text{MASC.PL}}$'

Points (b) and (c) explain the use of GIL by means of referring to people through verbal constructions describing the process/action they undergo/take. The examples provided show the replacement of a generic masculine noun either by relative clauses using the gender-neutral relative pronoun *wer* 'who' or passive constructions that allow for avoiding direct reference to the agent of a process.

d. Neutral pronouns
   - *alle* 'all' instead of *jeder* 'everyone$_{\text{MASC.SG}}$'
   - *niemand* 'nobody' instead of *keiner* 'no one$_{\text{MASC.SG}}$'

The use of neutral pronouns, as stated in point (d), avoids using semantically and grammatically gendered pronouns, such as *jeder* 'everyone$_{\text{MASC.SG}}$' and *jede* 'everyone$_{\text{FEM.SG}}$'.

e. Nominalised participles (if common)
   - *Studierende* 'studying people' instead of *Studenten* 'student$_{\text{MASC.PL}}$'
   - *Mitarbeitende* 'co-working people' instead of *Mitarbeiter* 'employee$_{\text{MASC.PL}}$'

The use of nominalised present participles also allows to avoid semantically gendered person nouns. This option, however, is limited to plural forms since nominalised participles also adopt feminine or masculine inflectional affixes (including gender-specific articles) if used in singular form.

f. Double reference
   - *Hörerinnen und Hörer* 'listener$_{\text{FEM.PL}}$ and listener$_{\text{MASC.PL}}$'
   - *Freundinnen und Freunde* 'friend$_{\text{FEM.PL}}$ and friend$_{\text{MASC.PL}}$'

In point (f), both the feminine and masculine forms are used instead of the generic masculine. This so-called *Beidnennung* 'double reference' is an option for increasing the representation of women in language in the case of word pairs where the feminine form is morphologically derived from the masculine. In addition, the sequence of genders in such word pairs can be used to additionally increase the linguistic visibility of women by putting the feminine form first. However, the *Beidnennung* does not offer an option for including non-binary referents.

These forms of GIL, according to the guideline, should also be used by journalists in written communication (for example, in memes or online articles). In exceptional cases, however, gender-inclusive punctuation is also possible in written communication. Journalists should then use the *Genderstern*. In spoken communication on radio or online, the phonetic equivalent of gender-inclusive punctuation (i.e. inserting a glottal stop [ʔ] at the place of the punctuation mark) shall not be used by journalists as it leads to a short pause in speech that makes media talk often more difficult to understand. As points 2–4 of the guideline show, there are further limits to using GIL at this youth radio station.

2. No modification of names and terms, e.g. *Landesschülerbeirat* 'Land Student$_{\text{MASC.PL}}$ Council', is just called that
3. Quotes are not falsified ('not even through gender-inclusive subtitling')
4. Do not tense up!

In point 3, subtitling refers to the station's use of GIL in their online channels, and point 4 means that journalists should continue to speak on air or online as they would to a friend, but to find fair formulations where possible.

As the chief editorial team regularly reminds journalists of these guidelines, I also asked them about the station's general stance on using GIL. According to the deputy editor-in-chief:

> Gendern ist tatsächlich etwas, was wahnsinnig schwierig ist und eigentlich immer wieder auch hinterfragt werden muss. […] Ich glaube schon, dass wir auch da die Gradwanderung schaffen müssen, zwischen all jenen, die das gut finden und die sich damit auch abgeholt fühlen und da auch mit der Zeit zu gehn, es aber auch gleichzeitig nicht zu übertreiben, weil am Ende ist Verständlichkeit einfach das A und O für ein Radioprogramm. Also wenn wir am Ende jede Moderation durchgendern, dann gehen wir sehr mit der Zeit, aber wenn am Ende keiner was versteht, haben wir halt nix gewonnen. Und da muss man am Ende 'n Mittelmaß finden und ich finde eigentlich, wir ham das mittlerweile ganz gut im Griff.

> (Gendering is actually something that is incredibly difficult and needs to be questioned time and time again. […] I do believe that we have to manage the balancing act between all those who think it's good and who also feel addressed by it and also move with the times, but at the same time not to overdo it, because in the end comprehensibility is simply the be-all and end-all for a radio programme. So, if we end up gendering every broadcast, then we're very much moving with the times, but if in the end nobody understands anything, then we haven't won anything. And in the end, you have to find a middle ground, and I think we've got a pretty good handle on that by now.)

What is striking about this comment is that the deputy editor-in-chief does not mention that it is important to find a balance between supporters and opponents of GIL amongst audience members but instead refers to the need of finding a balance between pro-arguments and the technical limitations of radio as an auditory medium. In the same vein, one can read between the lines that the opinions of audience members who are intolerant of gender inclusivity are seen as outdated ('then we're very much moving with the times') and that such people are not recognised as part of their targeted audience. This is also in line with comments on the matter made by other editorial staff and with my newsroom observations (see Section 6.2). In addition, his statement on GIL affecting the comprehensibility of content on radio is in line with statements made by most journalistic staff. Müller-Spitzer et al. (2024) note, however, that comprehensibility is also one of the common arguments made by critics against the use of GIL. While some previous studies have shown that the use of GIL does not seem to affect the comprehension of texts (Braun et al. 2007; Friedrich and Heise 2019; Jöckel et al. 2021), other studies note that the use of gender-inclusive punctuation in singular forms can affect the comprehensibility since these – in contrast to plural forms – require additional modifications to other sentential elements (e.g. *ein*e gute*r Student*in* 'a$_{\text{MASC*FEM}}$ good$_{\text{FEM*MASC}}$ student$_{\text{MASC*FEM}}$') (Friedrich et al. 2021, 2024). As my observations have shown, radio journalists' language practices on air are shaped by the possibilities and constraints of the medium radio and by journalists' dependence on the

audience's comprehension of their content (see also Apel and Bose 2024). This, however, is not GIL-specific as there seems to be a general caution with using new linguistic forms extensively that are not part of the target audience's repertoire and therefore increase the linguistic complexity of their content (see Schaefer 2025).

6.2 | Gender-Inclusive Language and the Youth Radio Station's Image

The youth radio station also clearly communicates to its employees which image it wishes to have towards its audience regarding the use of GIL. In the 'Gendersensible Sprache bei Radio X' guideline, it reads that the station wants to be regarded as stepping in for 'cosmopolitanism, tolerance and diversity', and that their language is 'contemporary, non-discriminatory and inclusive of social diversity'. However, the guideline continues by stating that since listeners tend to have diverse views on the topic of using GIL, the main principle is to always be at eye level with them. In this context, I asked journalists about the feedback they get from their listeners regarding their use of GIL on air. One host stated:

> Die hassen's. Ja, da kommt richtig oft „ah genderbla" ähm, „-innen und außen."
>
> (They hate it. Yes, there's a lot of 'ah genderbla' um '-inside and outside.'[5])

And another colleague explained:

> Ich hatte in der Anmoderation gesagt, „ich weiß nicht, wie es euch geht, aber wenn ihr irgendwo ne schwangere Person stehen seht, ähm, die raucht, da gehen mir alle Alarmglocken an", bla bla. Der Take war fertig, da hatte jemand geschrieben so: „Okay, *schwangere Person*, ich glaub bei euch hackts! Ich werde euch nicht mehr hören."
>
> (I said in the introduction, 'I don't know about you, but if you see a pregnant person standing somewhere, um, smoking, all my alarm bells start ringing,' blah blah. The take was finished, then someone wrote: 'Okay, *pregnant person*, you can't be serious! I'm not going to listen to you anymore.')

As can be taken from these two statements, journalists often receive criticism when they use GIL (see also Apel and Bose 2024), which is at times also based on misogynistic or anti-gender attitudes. In this context, I was told by many interviewees that listeners who do not have a problem with hosts using or not using GIL tend not to get in touch with the newsroom, while those who oppose hosts using GIL do. One journalist explained:

> Also gendern ist nicht so geil. [überlegt] Das stimmt halt auch nicht, weil es sammeln sich natürlich nur die Leute, die das nicht geil finden und die das dann sozusagen claimen und da in ihren kleinen Communities teilen und die wollen sozusagen verhindern … oder sie sind die Sprachpolizei, werfen aber uns vor, dass wir die Sprachpolizei sind und alle gendern müssen.
>
> (So gendering isn't so cool. [thinks] That's not really true, because of course only those people gather who don't think it's cool and then so to speak claim that and share that in their small communities and want to prevent, so to speak … or they are the language police but accuse us of being the language police and of having to gender everyone.)

Against the background of the differing opinions in public discourse, the station and its journalists seem to neither want to take the side of opponents nor be perceived as extreme advocates of GIL. As my observations during content production have shown, this becomes evident not only in the station's prioritisation of comprehensibility and listenability over a consistent use of GIL on radio but also in the way they handle the public debate around it as a topic in their content. In line with their statutory obligation to offer a platform for the plurality of opinions and thereby contribute to the democratic process (see Medienstaatsvertrag MStV 2020), they do not want to be perceived as opinionated or partial. Previous research into radio media has noted in this context that journalists consider the use of GIL as ideologically motivated and do not wish to express a personal political stance by using it (cf. Apel and Bose 2024). This, however, is only partially the case for journalists working at this youth radio station and only one of several entangled shaping factors. While youth radio journalists' framing of reports on, for example, court decisions regarding the use of GIL in schools reveals their support of gender inclusivity, they always offer space for different perspectives on inclusive language use, such as in the form of vox-pops or expert opinions (e.g. from a member of the German Orthography Council). In doing so, however, they only admit opinions to the programme that are within the spectrum of democratic opinions and are not based on ideological rejections of gender inclusivity (see the statement of the deputy editor-in-chief in Section 6.1). Overall, journalists do not wish to index the specific socio-symbolic patterns that have become associated with extreme advocates of GIL who use gender-inclusive punctuation (i.e. female, highly educated and wealthy; cf. Jäckle 2022; Kotthoff et al. 2024). Instead, journalists rely on less obtrusive forms of GIL on air as described in Section 6.1 that are less contested among their audience members.

As my observations have revealed, the journalism culture at the station, including the guidelines on using GIL and how the station wishes to represent itself to its listeners, the German broadcasting regulation, as well as the targeted audience and their opinions towards the use of GIL shape the content journalists produce for radio. While promoting inclusivity is part of their mission statement, they do not want to be perceived as taking sides in a heated-up debate and lose touch with parts of their audience who are less prone to using GIL.

6.3 | How Gender-Inclusive Language Is Used in the Youth Radio Station's Morning Show Scripts

Against the background of the station's guidelines on using GIL, this section provides an insight into the actual use of GIL in the corpus. The following examples from the station's morning show scripts present the use of different forms within groupings of person references that encompass generic masculine forms and equivalent gender-inclusive forms. For comparative purposes, all occurrences of different grammatical cases in the corpus are represented by the nominative form in the quantitative descriptions in this article. The first referential grouping that frequently occurred throughout the corpus is the use of the indefinite pronouns *alle* 'all' versus *jeder* 'everyone$_{\text{MASC.SG}}$' (765 tokens in total). For 206 occurrences, hosts had the opportunity to use GIL since the referents were non-specific. The actual use on radio shows that *jeder* was used 63 times, *jeder und jede* 'everyone$_{\text{MASC.SG}}$ and everyone$_{\text{FEM.SG}}$' was used 6 times, and *alle* was used 137 times. These figures show that *alle* was used the most, which is in favour of the neutral form (i.e. avoiding the use of forms bearing semantic gender). The following extracts from the morning show scripts present these indefinite pronouns in their contextual use.

Extract 4

> Host 1: Ich glaub es gibt wenig Themen, über die so viel diskutiert worden is, wie über die Frage: Verhüten mit Pille oder Kondom?
>
> (I think there are few topics that have been discussed as much as the question: Contraception by pill or condom?)
>
> Host 2: Hat wahrscheinlich **jeder seinen** Favorit.
>
> (**Everyone$_{\text{MASC.SG}}$** probably has **his** favourite.)

Extract 4 shows the use of the German generic masculine *jeder*. This is rather striking as the topic of contraceptive methods concerns both sexes, and this context therefore actually invites the use of GIL. From my observations in the newsroom and particularly in the morning show team, as well as from interviews with journalists, it became evident that using the generic masculine occurs frequently on air since many journalists are still less accustomed to using GIL, and they often do not have the extra time to reflect on it. This observation is in line with findings by previous research, which notes that one general reason that hinders the use of GIL is that it requires additional cognitive effort in contrast to more established language practices (Waldendorf 2024).

Extract 5

> **Alle** von Euch die mitm Zug fahrn können jetzt ma den Kalender rausholn und paar Sachen streichen und paar andere neu reinschreiben. Es gibt nämlich wieder nen neuen Fahrplan bei der Bahn.
>
> (**All** of you travelling by train can take out the diary now and cross out a few things and write in a few others. There's a new timetable for the railway again.)

The fifth extract shows the use of *alle* 'all' in context. According to most interviewees, the use of the plural indefinite pronoun *alle* is often preferred in youth radio communication to address the whole community as a group, which my observations of daily newsroom work also confirm.

Extract 6

> Host 1: Und 12,99 für die App.
>
> (And 12.99 for the app.)
>
> Host 2: Also dann quasi 12,99 für **alle**, weil ja wohl **jeder** Insta über die
> App nutzt!
>
> (So it's basically 12.99 for **all**, because **everyone$_{\text{MASC.SG}}$** uses Insta via the app!)

Extract 6 demonstrates variation in wording with no use of GIL in the second part of the sentence, even though it would have been possible. This can be related to the guidelines on GIL, which state that journalists should not tense up and should rather speak to the audience as they would to their friends. As we shall hear from journalists in Section 6.4, they often speak differently in private sociocultural environments, which sometimes overlaps with their use of on-air language.

The referential grouping around the meaning of *Freund* 'friend' (also including the semantically equivalent English borrowing *Friend*) showed 115 tokens in the radio scripts. In 94 cases, hosts had the choice to use GIL. The actual use in the final scripts shows that the German generic masculine plural *Freunde* was used 73 times, *Freundinnen und Freunde* 'friend$_{\text{FEM.PL}}$ and friend$_{\text{MASC.PL}}$' was used only 4 times, *Freund oder Freundin* 'friend$_{\text{MASC.SG}}$ or friend$_{\text{FEM.SG}}$' was used only once, and the anglicism *Friends* as a gender-neutral option was used 16 times. As these figures show, the generic masculine is predominantly used in this grouping. In extract 7, we see the use of *Freunde* 'friend$_{\text{MASC.PL}}$' only without the additional feminine form.

Extract 7

> Wingman oder Wingwoman für eure **Freunde** sein – n gutes Wort einlegen – is doch eigentlich fein. Das ist alles schon verkuppeln eigentlich oder?
>
> (Being a wingman or wingwoman for your **friend$_{\text{MASC.PL}}$** - putting in a good word – that's actually fine. That's all matchmaking, isn't it?)

According to the interviewees, such instances mainly occur because adding a double reference at times impairs listenability. In this case, the additional double reference *Freundinnen und Freunde* would most likely have sounded cramped or exaggerated

and would not come naturally since *Wingman oder Wingwoman* already address male and female genders. A news presenter further explained:

> Ich hatte heute Morgen erst wieder den Fall, da ging es um die Letzte Generation und da bin ich einfach nur bei Aktivisten geblieben, so, weil es viel zu lang, viel zu kompliziert geworden wäre immer zu sagen, „die Aktivistinnen und die Aktivisten". Ging einfach nicht […] weil, da schlägt dann in dem Fall die Hörbarkeit ja die Ansprache der Einzelnen.

> (I just had another case this morning, it was about the Letzte Generation, and I just stuck with activist$_{\text{MASC.PL}}$ because it would have been far too long, far too complicated to always say 'the activist$_{\text{FEM.PL}}$ and activist$_{\text{MASC.PL}}$'. It just didn't work […] because, in that case, listenability beats addressing the individual.)

Another host clarified that:

> Bei manchen anderen Formen klingt es konstruiert und das ist halt auch immer so ein bisschen Drahtseilakt, dass man da das Gleichgewicht findet zwischen ich mach die Sprache nicht kaputt und klinge nicht absurd und ich nehme trotzdem alle mit.

> (With some other forms, it sounds artificial and it's always a bit of a tightrope act to find the right balance between not ruining the language and not sounding absurd and still taking everyone along with me.)

This again clearly shows that language aesthetics and listenability on radio are of primary importance to using GIL as the programme must not sound 'strange' and 'unnatural' to most interviewees.

Extract 8 shows the use of *Freunde* 'friend$_{\text{MASC.PL}}$' in the phrase *Freunde und Familie* 'friend$_{\text{MASC.PL}}$ and family', which is an established phrase or idiom in German. Replacing this idiom with GIL would have led to a bumpy construction that the journalists tried to avoid here.

Extract 8

> Bei unserer Dating-App des Vertrauens *hust hust* gibt's jetzt ne neue Funktion – da können euch **Freunde und Familie** Leute vorschlagen so nach dem Motto: „ey, guck mal!"

> (Our favourite dating app *cough cough* now has a new function – **friend$_{\text{MASC.PL}}$ and family** can suggest people to you along the lines of: 'ey, look!')

Overall, despite the sometimes negative feedback from some members of their audience, journalists did not adopt anti-gender discourses in the interviews. Like the editors-in-chief, they mentioned practical journalistic aspects and factors that often shape and complicate the use of GIL. In this context, some journalists also try to find creative solutions for achieving inclusivity in their content. One journalist explained that:

> Manchmal ist es n bisschen lang und dann sag ich zum Beispiel, „Handwerkerinnen und Pfleger."

> (Sometimes it's a bit long, and then I say, for example, 'craftswomen and carer$_{\text{MASC.PL}}$.')

This journalist refers to a particular form of the *Beidnennung* where both the masculine and feminine forms are used, but the dual reference contains two different lexical bases and the feminine form is not directly morphologically derived from the masculine constituent (Kotthoff et al. 2024; Pettersson 2011). The journalist's use of the two forms *Handwerkerinnen* 'craftswomen' and *Pfleger* 'carer$_{\text{MASC.PL}}$' together represents both male and female gender and at the same time creates an additional dimension of inclusivity by tackling social stereotypes, such as that prototypical craftspeople are men and prototypical carers are women. Attempting to create such additional dimensions of inclusivity can, however, also entail other representational issues. According to a host:

> Wir wurden ja dazu angehalten entweder das umschreibende Wort zu finden, *Leute* zu sagen oder sowas und sonst beides, das versuche ich. Manchmal hab ich auch das generische Femininum verwendet. Warum nicht. Aber halt nicht im typischen Kontext, weil Kassiererin da würde man ja jetzt schon wieder sagen okay, das ist ja despektierlich […] Du merkst, wie schwierig das auch ist. Aber das sind alles Gedanken, die wir uns machen, weil wir es ja schon richtig machen wollen.

> (We were encouraged to either find the paraphrasing word, say *people* or something like that and otherwise use both, that's what I try to do. Sometimes I've also used the generic feminine. Why not. But not in typical contexts, because for cashier$_{\text{FEM.SG}}$ you'd say again, okay, that's disrespectful […] You realise how difficult it is. But these are all things we give thought to because we want to get it right.)

While previous research on the use of GIL in radio communication has noted that the majority of journalists oppose the generic use of feminine forms (cf. Apel and Bose 2024), the reasons for this disapproval were not considered. As the above statement reveals, the use of feminine forms as generic can also be misinterpreted by the audience if it occurs in connection with certain social stereotypes or even reinforces them. Furthermore, not only does the generic feminine share the referential ambiguity of generic masculine forms, but since the use of feminine forms as generic is unconventional in German, it is even more prone to be misinterpreted as referring to female referents only. This shows how considerations on values of ethical journalism, such as accuracy and fairness (see Kieran 1998), can become a factor

shaping the use of GIL and make this use rather complex for media professionals.

6.4 | The Sociocultural Environment and Journalists' Attitudes Towards the Use of Gender-Inclusive Language Off-Air and Off Work

During journalists' daily content preparations for the station's morning show programme, I observed that some male and female journalists tend to be lax regarding the use of GIL off air even when speaking to a female colleague. In this context, one journalist also explained to me in an interview that they had agreed that everyone would use GIL the way 'they want to' and that they respect if someone wants to do it differently than themselves. The extract below is taken from my ethnographic fieldnotes and shows that the topic of using GIL is nevertheless present among journalists in their daily work off air.

Extract 9

> Morning show 03/05/2024
>
> Morning show preparation from 4.30 a.m. to 6.00 a.m.; one male host and one female *CvD* (duty editor) are present:
>
> Host (to CvD): Du bist doch hier **der Chef**!
>
> (You're **the**$_{\text{MASC.SG}}$ **boss**$_{\text{MASC.SG}}$ here!)
>
> CvD: Wenn dann **die Chefin**!
>
> (If I am something then **the**$_{\text{FEM.SG}}$ **boss**$_{\text{FEM.SG}}$!)
>
> Host continues to work and searches for possible current topics for the morning show. A few minutes later.
>
> Host: **Chefin**?
>
> (**Boss**$_{\text{FEM.SG}}$?) [not teasing or ironic]
>
> CvD: Ja?!
>
> (Yes?!)

As this extract illustrates, the male host is reflexive about his use of language and adapts his choice of words self-critically. During my time at the youth radio station, such instances occurred from time to time. While some female journalists felt inappropriately addressed by their male and female colleagues when they used the generic masculine to address them, other female journalists seemed not to care much about it.

Against the background of the guideline that states that they should not tense up and speak on air as they would to their friends and family, I asked journalists about their use of GIL in private communications off air. In the interviews, journalists stated that they use GIL differently off work in their private communications with friends and family. In this different sociocultural environment, the pressure to use GIL is not as strongly felt by the interviewees as at the workplace. One journalist stated regarding the frequency of her use of GIL off work:

> Manchmal. Unregelmäßig.
>
> (Sometimes. Irregularly.)

A male colleague explained:

> Also ich mach's so wie ich glaub, dass der Kontext dazu passt. [Pause, er flüstert] Mir ist das eigentlich ganz egal.
>
> (Well, I do it in a way that I think suits the context. [pause, he whispers] Actually, I don't really care.)

In line with her colleague, a female journalist even stated that:

> Ich persönlich zum Beispiel fühle mich auch angesprochen, wenn jemand zu mir sagt, „bist du Radiomoderator?" […] Also mich [Name der Journalistin] stört das nicht. Aber im Programm hab ich schon manchmal das Gefühl, dass ich ja alle Menschen ansprechen will und auch im Privaten würde ich schon sagen, dass ich schon eher gender [überlegt], eher, also jetzt auch nicht immer, aber ich finde einfach diese Verallgemeinerung eigentlich gut, weil da denke ich mir, „ach, da fühlt sich jetzt wirklich jeder angesprochen."
>
> (Personally, for example, I also feel addressed when someone says to me, 'are you a radio host$_{\text{MASC.SG}}$?' […] So it doesn't bother me [journalist's name]. But in the programme, I sometimes have the feeling that I want to address everyone, and even in private life I would say that I tend to use gender-inclusive language [thinks about it], rather, not always, but I think this neutralisation is actually good, because I think to myself, 'oh, everyone really feels addressed now.')

In addition, one journalist also mentioned that he uses GIL where it appears as appropriate to him – for example, in formal written communication off work – and also referred to the use of the gender star in this context, but stated that he would not use it.

> Wenn's sich anbietet mach ich's gerne. Ich würde den Genderstern tatsächlich nie benutzen, aber nicht weil ich sage, „ich hasse den Genderstern", sondern weil es sich für mich halt noch nicht natürlich anfühlt.
>
> (I'm happy to do it if it comes up. I would never actually use the gender star, but not because I say, 'I hate the gender star', but because it just doesn't feel natural to me yet.)

These statements, in comparison to the statements made by journalists on using GIL at work (see Section 6.3), show that the sociocultural environment and the social spaces in which communication takes place have a shaping factor on how much effort journalists invest in using GIL. When journalists communicate with their audience as public voices at the workplace, and their content is exposed to the judgement of both supporters and opponents of GIL, they take the issue more seriously and view voices that are intolerant of gender inclusivity as outdated in line with the station's cosmopolitan, contemporary, tolerant and non-discriminatory image. However, when they communicate in more isolated social environments, such as private conversations with friends where criticism is less likely, they take a more relaxed approach and perceive the whole debate on GIL as less prominent. Overall, in contrast to findings by previous research on radio media (cf. Apel and Bose 2024), the interviews have revealed that none of the journalists at this youth radio station have strong opinions on the subject; they are neither bothered by the use of GIL nor by its absence. As previously outlined, journalists have rather open and liberal attitudes towards everyone using GIL the way they think is right within the confines of the station's guidelines on using GIL. Paying specific attention to GIL at the workplace, therefore, mostly seems to be less about the journalists' personal attitudes and perceptions but more about their public role and the social discourses and democratic values surrounding the topic.

7 | Concluding remarks

This article drew attention to the complexity of journalistic practices and the factors behind the scenes that shape the use of GIL in German youth radio communication. Examining the actual language users' practices allowed for answering questions of why and how GIL is used and thereby provided deeper insights into issues that evolve surrounding the use of GIL in youth radio media content that often remained hidden in previous research.

The findings from ethnographic fieldwork at the youth radio station, interviews with journalists working at the station and the qualitative linguistic corpus analysis of morning show scripts have revealed that there are many factors that shape how GIL is used in on- and off-air communication. These mainly include guidelines on using GIL provided to journalistic staff by the chief-editorial team, the channel of communication where comprehension and overall listenability have priority, the desired image of the broadcaster to be at eye level with the targeted audience, the German broadcasting regulation, the individual journalist and their attitudes and perceptions towards using GIL, principles of ethical journalism and general newsroom practices and the sociocultural environments at work and off work. As became evident, some of these factors seem to be conflicting, such as the inclusive, cosmopolitan image the station wishes to have, on the one hand, and their avoidance of the glottal stop as the phonemic realisation of gender-inclusive punctuation, on the other hand.

In contrast to previous research on GIL, which did not take a linguistic-ethnographic approach and has at times regarded the use of GIL in media texts as affecting comprehensibility, my findings have revealed that comprehension on the radio does not relate specifically to the use of GIL. Instead, there seems to be a general caution among journalists about using new linguistic forms extensively that are not part of the target audience's repertoire. In addition, my results have shown that while previous research into radio media has noted that journalists consider the use of GIL as ideologically motivated and do not wish to index a personal political stance by using it, this is only partially the case for journalists working at this youth radio station and only one of several entangled shaping factors. Furthermore, a deeper linguistic-ethnographic approach to the use of GIL in media texts has also revealed the reasons for journalists often opposing the generic use of feminine forms, as noted by previous research. Such reasons include that the generic feminine is even more prone to be misinterpreted than generic masculine forms and that it even bears the risk of reinforcing stereotypes.

The article also drew our attention to the different forms of GIL used in youth radio communication, such as double references and gender-neutral alternative formulations, and how these are used on air. While journalists try to stay alert to using GIL in line with their overall strategy, their actual use of different forms of GIL on air is subject to every individual communicative situation, where, according to the interviewees, time constraints and listenability as part of journalistic principles mostly play a shaping role. As the findings have further revealed, most journalists show less commitment to using GIL in private communications, for example, with friends and family, than at work. In this context, the complex entanglements of factors shaping the use of GIL on youth radio also become evident from the fact that, as part of the guidelines on GIL, the document also states that journalists should not tense up and should continue to speak on air as they would within their circle of friends. As the deputy editor-in-chief explained, the only point that the guideline actually stipulates is that journalists should not create a language gap by using glottal stops (representing the gender star) for the sake of comprehensibility on the radio. The rest of the guideline is more of a request that journalists should stick to GIL wherever possible in line with the station's image and the values it represents as a broadcaster in this context. Overall, my observations have shown that journalists are trying to adhere to the guidelines. However, since using GIL is not yet the norm amongst audience members and in journalists' private communications, to many journalists it seems to be the lesser economic and habitual way of speaking on and off air. This also strengthens their perceptions regarding the comprehensibility of GIL on the radio.

With the interdisciplinary approach of this analysis, I hope to have demonstrated that a view into the language worlds of journalists in their daily working routines enables a deeper understanding of why and how GIL is used by the media. As the overall results demonstrate, a focus on examining journalistic texts or surveys in the context of the use of GIL merely constitutes an analysis of the tip of the iceberg. What is required in this context are further studies that go beyond linguistic analyses with a deeper, interdisciplinary approach to uncover the fine-grained use of GIL by the media, also beyond the specific cultural context discussed. This usage, as the article has shown, is not only multifaceted and subject to various factors shaping journalistic practices but also dependent on every moment-to-moment emplacement of the journalist in a given communicative situation. Overall, the present article also furthers our under-

standing of the relationship between language and society on a wider level. The analysis of the use of GIL on German youth radio additionally points to the difficulties and challenges professional language users face in the light of social diversity, inclusivity and corresponding language change when having to address broad audiences.

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Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

Endnotes

[1] My previous research on the use of English words and phrases on German adult contemporary radio has shown a use of 1.37 anglicisms per 100 words (in approximately 137,000 tokens of host talk). The youth radio morning show corpus showed more than twice as many anglicisms in host talk (see footnote 2).

[2] The genre of host talk on youth radio contains the most spoken content and is usually a central part of the main programmes of a radio station, such as the morning and afternoon shows. It mainly consists of conversations between hosts and their sidekicks and interviews.

[3] Permission to conduct fieldwork was attained by the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (reference no. 2023-09-11-AHSS) at the University of Limerick. Informed consent for observation and interviews was obtained by the station management and individual journalists.

[4] Radio X is used as pseudonym for anonymisation purposes of the youth radio station and its journalistic staff.

[5] The addition of the derivational feminine plural suffix *-innen* (either in written form or spoken in connection with a glottal stop) is at times mocked by opponents of GIL by this ridiculing wordplay based on the homonymous preposition *innen* 'inside' and its antonym *außen* 'outside'.

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