

Simple Guidelines to Find Correct German Articles

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ලොව පුරා පැතිර පවත්නා දහස් ගණනක් භාෂා අතුරින් වර්තමානයේ දී වඩාත් වැදගත් ස්ථානයක් හිමි කරගන්නා භාෂාවක් ලෙස ජර්මන් භාෂාව හැදින්විය හැකි ය. භාෂාව නිවැරදි ව හසුරුවා, පැහැදිලි ව අදහස් ප්‍රකාශ කිරීමේ දී අත්‍යවශ්‍ය සාධකයක් වන්නේ නිවැරදි ව්‍යාකරණ භාවිතය යි. ජර්මන් භාෂාවේ ව්‍යාකරණය සැලැකීමේ දී එහි ලිංග හේදයට වැදගත් තැනක් හිමි වේ. සිංහලයේ හෝ ඉංග්‍රීසියේ දක්නට නො ලැබෙන මේ ලක්ෂණය ජර්මන් භාෂාව උගන්නා බොහෝ ශ්‍රී ලාංකිකයන් මුහුණ දෙන දුෂ්කර ගැටලුවක් බව පෙනෙන්නට තිබේ. කැලණිය විශ්වවිද්‍යාලයීය විද්‍යාර්ථීන්ට පමණක් නො ව, දහස් ගණනක් සිසු සිසුවියන්ට ද අභියෝගයක් ව ඇති ජර්මන් භාෂාවේ ලිංග හේදය නිවැරදි අයුරින් යොදාගත හැකි වන්නේ කෙසේ ද යන්න සාකච්ඡා කිරීම මේ පර්යේෂණ ලිපියේ අරමුණ වේ.

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සංස්. පී. ඒ. අමීල මදුසංක, ජයමලේ ද සිල්වා, දිල්හානි මනෝජී රාජපක්ෂ,
වන්දන රුවන් කුමාර, එච්. ඒ. ගිහාන් මධුසංඛ, නන්දුලා පෙරේරා
'ප්‍රභා' ශාස්ත්‍රීය සංග්‍රහය, සිවු වැනි කලාපය - 2014/2015
මානවශාස්ත්‍ර පීඨය, කැලණිය විශ්වවිද්‍යාලය

Since many studies have been conducted already on articles and gender in German, it is suggested that this paper form an insight into contrastive aspects of Sinhalese and German gender. Thus, this paper presents a novel set of guidelines which help Sinhalese native speakers to use German articles correctly.

According to several studies, Language is the most important part in the life of all beings. We use language to express inner thoughts and emotions, make sense of complex and intellectual thought, to learn to communicate with others, to fulfill our wants and needs, as well as to establish rules and maintain our culture. Language can be defined as verbal, physical, biologically innate and a basic form of communication. Behaviorists often define language as a learned behavior involving a stimulus and a response. Often times they will refer to language as verbal behavior, which is language that includes gestures and body movements as well as spoken word.

Through the main languages of the world German is a most important language. German is a West Germanic language that is mainly spoken in Central Europe. It is the most widely spoken and official language in Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Italy and Liechtenstein. It is also an official, but not majority language of Luxembourg and Belgium. Major languages, which are most similar to German, include other member of the West Germanic language branch, such as Afrikaans, Dutch and English.

German is the first language of about 95 million people worldwide and the most widely spoken native language in European Union. It is also the third most widely taught foreign language.

German is a fissional language with a moderate degree of inflection with three grammatical genders. For an example, there can be a large number of words derived from the same root. German nouns inflect by case, gender and number.

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When learning German as a foreign language, Sri Lankan learners find certain areas of difficulty that are common to many language learners all over the world. Since there are two categories of language learners – monolingual (competent in the mother tongue) and bilingual (competent in the mother tongue and one or more language/s). The teachers or the lecturers need to identify the areas of difficulty for learners of both categories. As it is the case of any foreign language, the largest areas of difficulty come in grammatical structures.

The German nouns have a grammatical gender unlike in the Sinhalese language or English where the three genders masculine, feminine and neuter are logically placed as masculine and feminine for humans and neuter for non- humans and objects.

In German all nouns are divided in to the three genders and it appears very confusing to a learner, whose first language does not have grammatical gender.

They find it extremely difficult to understand why a **table** and **chair** are **masculine**, while a **child** is **neuter**. As well as abstract ideas are always written with a capital letter in German and the gender is shown by the article in front of the noun.

Ex: Gender with definite article (bestimmter Artikel)

masculine	der Tisch	<i>table</i>
feminine	die Tür	<i>door</i>
neuter	das Buch	<i>book</i>

And also there are four German cases, nominative, accusative, dative and genitive. Although Sri Lankan learners are familiar with case in their own mother tongue or in English, students of German have to be mindful of the changes that occur in the article **der, die, das** according to each case.

As already mentioned, the choice of grammatical gender for a noun does not follow a logical set of rules. It is advisable; therefore always have to learn nouns together with the correct article. Luckily there are few simple rules that apply to certain kinds of nouns that can help German language learners remember.

Masculine (der):¹

1) Males (humans, animals), male jobs/ occupations

Ex:	der Onkel, der Vater	<i>uncle, father</i>
	der Ingenieur, der Grafiker	<i>engineer, designer</i>
	der Löwe, der Hund	<i>lion, dog</i>

2) Days of the week, months, seasons

Ex:	der Montag, der Dienstag	<i>Monday, Tuesday</i>
	der Januar, der Februar	<i>January, February</i>
	der Frühling, der Sommer	<i>spring, summer</i>

3) Most loan words with the following endings:

-and/ - ant	der Doktor and der Elefant ant	<i>Doctoral candidate</i> <i>elephant</i>
-ent	der Student ent der Patient ent	<i>student</i> <i>patient</i>
-er	der Computer er der Besucher er	<i>computer</i> <i>visiter</i>
-ig	der Ess ig der Honig ig	<i>vinegar</i> <i>honey</i>
-mus	der Tourism us der Terrorism us	<i>tourism</i> <i>terrorism</i>

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-ist	der Spezialist der Polizist	<i>specialist</i> <i>policeman</i>
-ling	der Frühling der Lehrling	<i>spring</i> <i>apprentice</i>
-or	der Motor der Reaktor	<i>motor</i> <i>reactor</i>

Feminine (die): ²

1) Females (humans, animals), female jobs/ occupations

Ex:	die Tante, die Kollegin die Anwältin, die Architektin	<i>aunt, colleague</i> <i>Lawyer, architect</i>
	die Kuh, die Katze	<i>cow, cat</i>

2) Many flowers and trees

Ex:	die Rose, die Tanne	<i>rose, fir tree</i>
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3) Most nouns with the following endings:

-ei	die Bücherei die Partei	<i>library</i> <i>party</i>
-enz	die Konferenz die Existenz	<i>conference</i> <i>existence</i>
-heit	die Freiheit die Gesundheit	<i>freedom</i> <i>health</i>
-keit	die Möglichkeit die Geschwindigkeit	<i>possibility</i> <i>speed</i>
-ie	die Industrie die Demokratie	<i>industry</i> <i>democrac</i>

-ik	die Fabrik die Politik	factory politics
-in	die Chefin die Trainerin	(female) boss (female) trainer
-ion	die Region die Nation	region nation
-schaft	die Wirtschaft die Wissenschaft	economy science
-tät	die Qualität die Produktivität	quality productivity
-ung	die Einladung die Vertretung	invitation stand-in

Neuter (das):

1) Many nouns with the prefix “Ge” at the beginning

Ex: das **G**emüse, das **G**ebirge *vegetable, mountains*

2) The infinitive forms of verbs acting as nouns

Ex: das Essen, das Rauchen *eating, smoking*

3) All nouns ending in

-chen	das Mädchen das Brötchen	girl bread roll
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-lein	das Büchlein das Ringlein	<i>little book</i> <i>little ring</i>
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4) A lot of nouns ending in

-nis	das Verzeich nis das Geheim nis	<i>register</i> <i>secret</i>
-ment	das Medikame nt das Instru ment	<i>medicine</i> <i>instrument</i>
-o	das Bü ro das Auto	<i>office</i> <i>car</i>
-(r)um	das Wachst um das Stadtzent rum	<i>growth</i> <i>town center</i>

As already mentioned before, the students of German language are often advised to learn German nouns with their accompanying definite article, as the definite article of a German noun resembles to the gender of the noun. However, the meaning or form, especially the ending, of a noun can be used to recognise 80% of noun genders.

Through these guidelines for specific groups of nouns, the German language learners may have noticed, that according to the ending of noun change the article each time. This is the simple way to memorise German articles.

End Notes

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2. Hoberg Rudolf and Hoberg Ursula, Duden- Deutsche Grammatik kurz gefasst, Mannheim, (2008) - Page 21.

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