

Lavender Languages & Linguistics

32: University of Edinburgh
Queer (dis)belonging



THE UNIVERSITY
of EDINBURGH

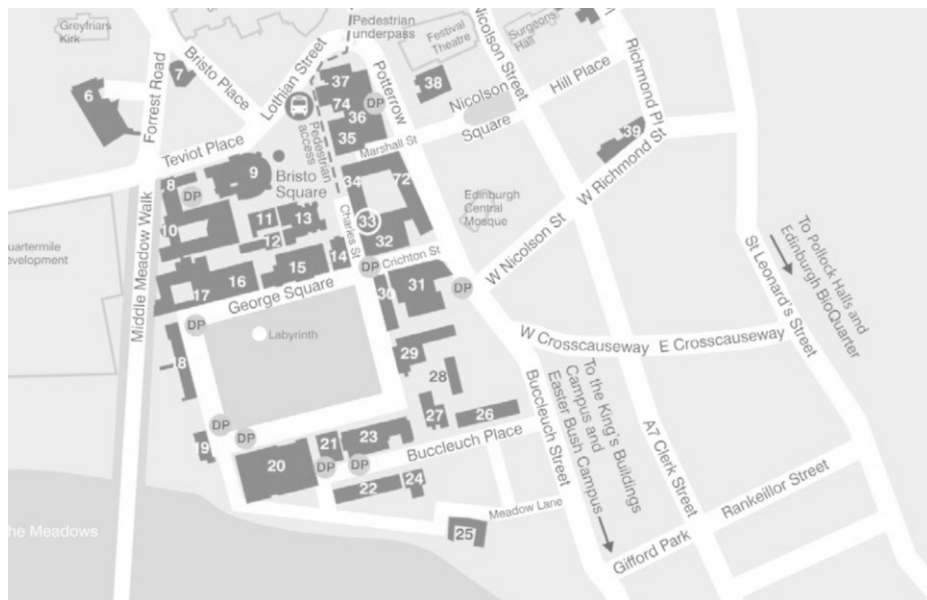
EDINBURGH
University Press



NLP

UKRI CENTRE
FOR DOCTORAL
TRAINING

**Designing
Responsible**
Natural
Language
Processing



Conference venues

Plenary sessions: Old Medical School, G.07 (building 8),

Paper sessions: Chrystal Macmillan (building 17)

Receptions: 7 George Square (building 15)

Wine reception

InSpace – building 72 (corner of Crichton St.)

Conference dinner

Namaste Kathmandu – opposite building 7 on Forrest Road

Questions?

For any questions or queries, please contact Dr. Christian Ilbury

(cilbury@ed.ac.uk) or Prof. Lauren Hall-Lew (lauren.hall-lew@ed.ac.uk)

Accessibility

Accessibility information for the venues [can be found here](#). On the map above, DP = Disabled parking. BSL interpretation information has been made available to registered attendees.

We are extremely grateful to everyone who donated their time to evaluate abstracts for LavLang32

Scientific Committee

Aimee Bailey, Archie Crowley, Aet Kuusik, Alice Ross, Alon Lischinsky, Branca Fabricio, Brian King, Cliodhna Hughes, Christian Ilbury, Claire Cowie, Daniel Edmondson, Phil Freestone, Mie Hiramoto, Federica Formato, Frazer Heritage, Jai Mackenzie, Joseph Comer, Joan Pujolar, Kat Gupta, Costas Canakis, Lexi Webster, Lars Sörries-Vorberger, Lauren Hall-Lew, Louis Strange, Lucy Jones, Nina Markl, Paul Baker, Ryan Shaw-Hawkins, Shutong Han, Sophie Holmes-Elliott, Salina Cuddy, Ingo Siegert, Veronika Koller, Vincent Pak, Ashley Xing, William Leap.

Default Masculinity and the Erasure of Gender Multiplicity in State School Textbooks in Pakistan: A Socio-Cognitive Analysis

Lilith Alison

Forman Christian College (A Chartered University), Lahore, Pakistan

Pakistan is a multi-ethnic, multi-lingual society where education plays a key role in sustaining long-standing social norms. This study examines how English textbooks (Grades 5–8) prescribed by the Punjab Board in Pakistan encode gendered discourses that shape children’s cognitive models of gender. Drawing on Lakoff’s Conceptual Metaphor Theory, Idealized Cognitive Models (ICMs), and Van Dijk’s triadic socio-cognitive framework, the analysis identifies patterns in pronoun use, collocations, and ideological framing that position masculinity as default and depict women as submissive and relational. Through a queer-theoretical lens, it shows how texts promote heteronormativity and marginalize alternative gender identities, constraining children’s understanding of gender. The findings suggest that repetitive exposure to such discourses during critical learning periods contributes to the socio-cognitive reproduction of patriarchy and normative gender roles. The research highlights the importance of curricular reform to help children develop cognitive schemas that foster inclusivity and belonging.

Lubunca and the Infrastructures of Queer Subcultural Reproduction and Pedagogy in Turkey

Burak Alp Çakar

Linköping University, Linköping, Sweden

Originating as a cryptolinct in the late Ottoman Empire (Kontovas, 2012), Lubunca has since evolved into a complex linguistic phenomenon intertwined with the lives of the contemporary queer community in Turkey and is used to facilitate solidarity, index identity, and provide secrecy (Çakar, 2023). Building on this, this paper examines how Lubunca functions as an infrastructure for queer subcultural reproduction, focusing on how experiences of marginalization and oppression are recontextualized into practices of kinship and cultural continuity.

Lubunca's semi-underground circulation and the precarious position of its speakers—the lubunya community—call for a gentle excavation as opposed to total extraction. To account for this, I approach linguistic ethnography through a scavenger perspective (Halberstam 1998; Niang 2024; Tommaso & Borba 2022), keeping ethnographic grounding while adopting scavenger logics for what constitutes data, relevance, and meaning-making. The scavenger perspective loosens disciplinary allegiances and allows meaning to be assembled from heterogeneous fragments through which subcultural life circulates and reproduces itself. In line with this, the data comes from focused ethnographic fieldwork in Lubunya-identified and Lubunya-defined spaces such as bars, pubs, festivals, cafes, and cruising streets in Turkey and is made up of narrative interviews and field notes, as well as artifacts laced with Lubunca, such as fanzines, posters, and murals. The data is analyzed and woven together through multimodal discourse analysis coupled with a queer linguistics lens, with attention to how Lubunca operates across both interactional and material contexts.

The findings illustrate that beyond being a veil of secrecy and a resource for in-group communication, Lubunca functions as a subcultural channel through which alternative queer imaginaries are articulated and made socially meaningful. This is achieved partly through playful processes of lexical

resignification of Lubunca words such as ‘digin,’ which enable speakers to recontextualize marginalization and produce shared meanings that circulate across contexts. Moreover, traces of historical oppression embedded in Lubunca—what speakers describe as a form of “sorrowful joy”—complicate its transmission and dissemination as Lubunca generates transhistorical kinship bonds between speakers, across past and present, in their shared becoming toward more capacious futures. In turn, Lubunca facilitates the circulation of shared subcultural knowledge and norms that support emergent forms of queer pedagogy within the community.

References

- Çakar, B. A. (2023). Lubunca in social transition: A sociolinguistic analysis of the secret queer language [Master's thesis, Vytautas Magnus University, The Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz]. VDU CRIS.
- Halberstam, J. (1998). *Female Masculinity*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.
- Kontovas, N. (2012). Lubunca: The historical development of Istanbul's queer slang and a social functional approach to diachronic processes in language [Master's thesis, Indiana University]. Indiana University ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.
- Niang, S.M. (2024) ‘in Defence of what’s there: notes on scavenging as Methodology’, *Feminist Review*, 136(1), pp. 52–66.
- Tommaso M., Borba R. (2022) *Queer(ing) Methodologies in Flick U*. The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research Design. 1 Oliver's Yard, 55 City Road, London EC1Y 1SP: SAGE Publications Ltd, pp 5–26.

A guide to nonbinary Galician language: collaborative experiences in a sociolinguistically minoritized, stateless nation

Daniel Amarelo

Universitat Oberta de Catalunya, Barcelona, Spain

The paper explores the collaborative creation of a forthcoming guide to nonbinary Galician, scheduled for publication in March 2026 by Através Editora, through the dual lenses of language policy and sociolinguistic justice. This guide was co-created by speakers, linguists and activists, reflecting a deliberate effort to combine academic expertise, community knowledge and activist praxis. Its orientation is explicitly sociolinguistic and educational, designed to provide practical tools for inclusive language use in classrooms, community programs and other pedagogical settings. The project is situated within the particular context of Galician as a minoritized language in Europe, which faces multiple structural challenges: revitalization campaigns have historically been weak and insufficient to prevent the ongoing substitution of Galician by Spanish; the language's standardization is relatively recent, dating from 1982; and its use is constrained by Spanish centralist nationalism and the State's persistent monolingualist biases, which become especially salient during periods of right-wing political resurgence.

By foregrounding the collaborative and intersectional nature of its development, the guide seeks to bridge language advocacy and queer activism, demonstrating the ways in which linguistic and social justice efforts can reinforce one another. It offers concrete strategies for promoting nonbinary-inclusive language while simultaneously engaging with broader sociopolitical debates about language minoritization, revitalization and educational equity. Beyond its immediate pedagogical applications, the guide serves as a model for how linguistic resources can be co-produced in ways that empower marginalized communities, strengthen minoritized languages and foster inclusive educational environments. In doing so, it highlights the intersectional affordances of combining language policy, activism and educational practice, illustrating how targeted collaborative interventions can advance both linguistic diversity and social justice in contemporary European contexts.

Queer ethnopoetics in minoritised languages: an ethnographic case study on Galician rural LGBTIQ festivals

Daniel Amarelo

Universitat Oberta de Catalunya, Barcelona, Spain

Ethnopoetics is a key term in linguistic anthropology and critical sociolinguistics that has been mainly mobilized to explore indigenous communities' verbal art practices (Hymes, 1982; Tedlock, 1983; Bauman & Briggs, 1990; Briggs & Bauman, 1992). Despite its focus on the USA, an ethnopoetic approach to minoritized languages in Southern Europe is coherent with the historical attachment of some of these varieties to rurality, poverty, masculinity and tradition – concepts rooted in orality and community – despite current globalizing trends and new forms of speakerhood (Iglesias Álvarez, 2003; Ramallo et al, 2019). In a context where language prejudices against minoritized languages blossom, it is important to remain critical of folkloristic language ideologies that indexically tie threatened languages to oral skills, artistic demonstrations and past times, reinforcing authenticity (Bucholtz, 2003; Woolard, 2016). However, during the last few years we are witnessing a revolution where Galician folklore and queer ruralities meet to embrace a longstanding history of practices of linguistic, sexual and affective diversity (Barreto, 2020; Amarelo, 2024).

Thus, this paper aims to study that genealogy of language, gender and sexuality in a rural LGBTIQ festival, where language revitalization and queer activism meet to sing, dance and yell against a hegemonic sociolinguistic order that imposes Spanish and monologualism, on the one hand; and against ideologies of sexual modernity that erase LGBTIQ diversity from rural places since ancient times, on the other hand. Folk music, especially dancing and tambourine playing, constitutes a source for new speakers of Galician and a practice of queer literacy in LGBTIQ collectives, since many newcomers join local people at foliadas (traditional Galician music and dance gatherings). Together with other cultural forms such as regueifas, foliadas are part of the language revitalization landscape of Galiza and its 'linguistic collective action' (O'Rourke & Dayán-Fernández, 2024), characterized by sensory agency (Deumert, 2023), and populated by many queer people.

Data for this paper draws on a long-term multisited ethnography in queer festivals where I conducted participant observation and developed collaborative ethnographic practices (Estalella & Sánchez-Criado, 2018). One of them, showcased here, is a queer festival's callout constructed and deployed as a collective musical creation based on Galician traditional music. This commoning activity (Pérez-Milans & Garrido Sardà, 2025) allowed participants to become Galician speakers for a while, playing (with) words and using their bodies and instruments as mediating objects for a political discourse to be shared at the village main square with all the festival's attendees. Ultimately, this research shows the importance of verbal art in contemporary queer communities that express themselves in minoritized languages, to the extent that ethnopoetics de-centers top-down language disciplining and allows for collective language practice and joy.

Quantifying “Chill” Affect: The Case of Bisexual Stoners

Bayleigh Baldwin

University of Kansas, Lawrence, United States

Stylistic bricolage is the process of breaking down established sociolinguistic styles and recombining them into new ones [1]. What happens when bisexual women adopt a stoner persona?

/s/-fronting is a commonly examined stylistic marker of sexuality in American English, but it is unclear exactly how bisexuals pattern [2]. Creaky voice has been found to be perceptually linked to lesbian identity [3].

I will administer three sociolinguistic interviews of American bisexual stoner women throughout their daily routines by the time of the conference. Participants will self record marijuana-intoxicated readings of “The Rainbow Passage.” I hypothesize that my participants will use more elements of “chill” affect in their “high” speech, including slower speech rate and higher rates of creaky syllables [4]. I also plan on coding interviews for topic. I expect a higher center of gravity (COG) for /s/-fronting and higher rates of creak when discussing queer topics.

References

[1] Zimman, L. (2017). Gender as stylistic bricolage: Transmasculine voices and the relationship

between fundamental frequency and /s/. *Language in Society*, 46(3), 339–370. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0047404517000070>

[2] Willis, C., & Ben Youssef, C. (2023). Random bisexual forests: Intersections between gender,

sexuality, and race in /s/ production. *Proceedings of the Linguistic Society of America*, 8(1), 5504. <https://doi.org/10.3765/plsa.v8i1.5504>

[3] Barron-Lutzross, A. (2015). The Production and Perception of a Lesbian Speech Style. UC

Berkeley Phonology Lab Annual
Reports, 11. <https://doi.org/10.5070/P77F6332BH>

[4] Pratt, T. (2023). Affect in sociolinguistic style. *Language in Society*, 52(1), 1–26. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0047404521000774>

Building biliteracy and identity through Grindr in Taipei: Getting laid and beyond...

Guillermo Balseiro-Barrios

National Taiwan Normal University, Taipei, Taiwan

“Any and all instances in which communication occurs in two (or more) languages in and around writing, being those instances, an individual actor, interaction, practice, program, situation, or society” (Gentil, 2005). This definition of biliteracy extends beyond the traditional educational contexts in which it is usually applied. A new and fascinating context for biliteracy studies corresponds to the LGBTI+ community. Within this community, “a collection of people who engage on an ongoing basis in some common endeavor” (Eckert, 2006), socialization through mobile/online networks requires its members to develop biliterate knowledge that, at the same time, helps build their identities. In this sense, this exploratory study aimed to offer a glimpse of how biliteracy operates in the gay/bisexual community in Taipei, through the app Grindr. Data from a randomized sample of 250 anonymized profiles was collected and preliminarily analyzed with the constant comparison method (Glaser, 1965), and the resulting categories were then evaluated under Hornberger’s Model for Biliteracy (Gentil, 2005), identifying different biliteracy practices (García & Godina, 2017; Jiménez et al., 1996) used by Grindr members. As a result, biliteracy in this social app works in a micro highly-contextualized level, in a successive manner, with a language that is literate, yet vernacular, plurilingual and highly convergent and pictorial (Freedman, 2018), and where the very interactional nature of this language has defined glocalized features (Medina, 2010) that pertain to Taipei and its gay/bisexual community. Further analysis might provide highlights about the interactions between Mandarin Chinese, English, and other languages, as well as the visual elements (emojis) found in this initial exploration, in an effort to understand how the biliteracy development through this app (“queered classroom” as defined by (Woodland, 1999) helps its member to build their identity further beyond simply getting laid.

References

1. Eckert, P. (2006). Communities of Practice. In J. L. Mey (Ed.), *Concise Encyclopedia of Pragmatics* (Second ed., pp. 109-112). Oxford, United Kingdom: Elsevier.
2. Freedman, A. (2018). Cultural literacy in the empire of emoji signs: Who is crying with joy? *First Monday*, 23(9). <https://doi.org/10.5210/fm.v23i9.9395>
3. García, G. E., & Godina, H. (2017). A Window Into Bilingual Reading: The Bilingual Reading Practices of Fourth-Grade, Mexican American Children Who Are Emergent Bilinguals. *Journal of Literacy Research*, 49(2), 273-301. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1086296X17703727>
4. Gentil, G. (2005). Commitments to Academic Biliteracy: Case Studies of Francophone University Writers. *Written Communication*, 22(4), 421-471. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0741088305280350>
5. Glaser, B. G. (1965). The Constant Comparative Method of Qualitative Analysis. *Social Problems*, 12(4), 436-445. <https://doi.org/10.2307/798843>
6. Jiménez, R. T., García, G. E., & Pearson, P. D. (1996). The reading strategies of bilingual Latina/o students who are successful English readers: Opportunities and obstacles. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 31(1), 90-112. <https://doi.org/10.1598/RRQ.31.1.5>
7. Medina, C. (2010). "Reading Across Communities" in Biliteracy Practices: Examining Translocal Discourses and Cultural Flows in Literature Discussions. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 45(1), 40-60. <https://doi.org/10.1598/RRQ.45.1.3>
8. Woodland, R. (1999). I plan to be a 10: Online Literacy and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Students. *Computers and Composition*, 16, 73-87. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S8755-4615\(99\)80006-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/S8755-4615(99)80006-1)

When is “she” a “boy”? The acquisition of grammatical and social meanings of English third person pronouns

Montreal Benesch

University of California, Santa Barbara, United States

For English-speaking adults, "she's a boy" contains indices to two different genders: "she," indicating the referent is a girl, and "boy," indicating the referent is a boy. Normatively, individuals are only licensed to have a single gender, and such utterances therefore require resolution. Trans knowledges, however, posit that a. people can have multiple genders and b. boys can use "she" as their pronoun of reference, making "she's a boy" felicitous (see e.g., Zimman, 2020).

English-speaking children are known to produce sentences such as "she's a boy because she has short hair," which imply not a trans epistemology, but rather that "she" and "boy" do not yet contradict each other: in this case, "she" encodes that use of this pronoun for the referent by others. The regular production of such sentences suggests that, even for those raised with normative concepts of gender, the categories "people referred to with 'he/him' pronouns" and "people who are boys" develop separately and only later come to be equivalent.

This raises two questions. First, around what age do English third-person pronouns become indices of social gender? Second, what pronoun will English speakers of various ages choose to refer to a character when they've been told that "she's a boy"? In other words, even when pronouns have come to be socially gendered indices, do they ever have as much social meaning as gendered nouns?

To answer these questions, I ran a forced-choice sentence completion task at a children's science museum. At the beginning of each story, participants were introduced to a character in a frame such as, "This is [Dani]. [She's] a [boy]," where "Dani" was one of nine gender-neutral* names and the pronoun and the noun were each randomly chosen from three options: "she," "he," "they" and "boy," "girl," or "kid," respectively. Twice during each story, they were asked to choose a pronoun ("he," "it," "she," or "they") to refer to this human character.

Participants (n=164) ranged in age from 4-61, are were generally from around Southern California. Analysis, including random forests and mixed-effects multinomial modeling (Gudmestad & Metzger 2025), found that generally, English speakers above the age of approximately 7 prioritize gendered information from the noun over the pronoun. Under that age, speakers choose "he" and "she" in relatively equal amounts, dispreferring both "it" and "they" for animate singular referents. However, between the normatively singular and inanimate "it" and plural and animate "they", young speakers preferred "it", suggesting the prioritization of matching number over animacy.

This queer sociolinguistics research denaturalizes the equivalence of social and grammatical gender, reminding us that both are acquired as children sketch out locally relevant gender categories in their languages and social worlds. Simultaneously, it shows the importance of considering the respective indexical weights of different linguistic forms when considering the resolution of situations of and like indexical disjuncture.

*No names are truly gender-neutral, but in this case names were selected for a. maximal hypothesized gender-neutrality and b. to contain a diversity of linguistic origins.

References

Gudmestad, A., & Metzger, T. A. (2025). Mixed-Effects Modeling with a Multinomial Dependent Variable. *Language Learning*, 75(1), 212–249. <https://doi.org/10.1111/lang.12667>

Zimman, L. (2020). Transgender Language, Transgender Moment: Toward a Trans Linguistics. In K. Hall & R. Barrett (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Language and Sexuality* (1st ed.). Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190212926.013.45>

Listening for Silence: Queer (Dis)Belonging Beyond Linguistic Visibility in the Anglophone Caribbean

Isaias Calderon

University of Puerto Rico, San Juan, United States

Research in Lavender Linguistics has largely centered on visibly articulated, lexically explicit, and performatively legible expressions of queerness, most often drawn from white, urban, Global North contexts. Such work has implicitly treater verbal disclosure, identity naming, and speech-based visibility as normative indicators of queer belonging. This paper argues that these assumptions limit the analytic reach of Lavender Linguistics and obscure how queerness is negotiated linguistically in postcolonial contexts where silence, indirection, and strategic ambiguity are central communicative resources.

Focusing on Anglophone Caribbean contexts, the paper positions Caribbean English varieties and Creole-influenced speech practices not as peripheral data but as theory-generating sites that unsettle Global North paradigms of queer linguistics visibility. Drawing on examples from mediated public discourse and digital communication, the analysis examines how queer Caribbean subjectivities are indexed through what is not overtly said. Rather than relying on explicit self-labeling or categorical naming, speakers frequently deploy euphemism, deixis, code-switching, topic avoidance, and silence to signal queerness while maintaining social viability within heteronormative, religious, and nationalist frameworks.

Grounded in sociolinguistic approaches to indexicality and stance-taking, the paper demonstrates that silence operates as an active semiotic strategy rather than an absence or failure of expression. In Caribbean contexts shaped by colonial histories, linguistic respectability politics, and persistent anti-queer ideologies, indirectness often enables partial or conditional belonging across public, religious, and national domains. These practices challenge Euro-American models that equate queer authenticity with verbal disclosure, revealing instead forms of queer (dis)belonging that are negotiated, relational, and context dependent.

This paper further argues that Lavender Linguistics must expand its theoretical toolkit to account for communicative practices that fall outside explicit identity articulation. By privileging recognizability and verbalized self-identification, dominant models risk reproducing exclusionary logics that marginalize queer speakers whose linguistic strategies prioritize survivability over visibility. Anglophone Caribbean discourse highlights alternative semiotic pathways through which queerness becomes legible, often obliquely, situationally, and without lexical markers.

Ultimately, this paper calls for a decolonial reorientation of Lavender Linguistics that treats silence, ambiguity, and indirection as analytically central rather than marginal. By foregrounding Caribbean English varieties as sites of theoretical production, it reframes queer (dis)belonging as a process negotiated through absence as much as presence, challenging Global North assumptions about how queerness must sound for it to count.

Cameron, D., & Kulick, D. (2003). *Language and Sexuality*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Eckert, P. (2012). Style and the indexical field. In *Style and Sociolinguistic Variation* (pp. 87-116). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kempadoo, K. (Ed.). (2004). *Sexing the Caribbean: Gender, Race, and Sexual Labor*. New York: Routledge.

Leap, W. L. (Ed.). (2015). *Queer Linguistics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Overcoming resistance to gender-inclusive language teaching: research-informed pathways for teachers in world language classrooms.

Diana Carter¹

Angela George²

Francis Langevin¹

(1) The University of British Columbia, Kelowna, Canada

(2) The University of Calgary, Calgary, Canada

In additional language classrooms, efforts to integrate gender-inclusive language often encounter resistance, uncertainty, and practical challenges among educators. Such pushback is often rooted in prescriptive ideas about how language should work, in deference to linguistic authorities, and in binary assumptions about gender, all of which intersect with broader sociopolitical backlash that shapes what counts as legitimate classroom language (Knisely, 2025). In response to these tensions, recent classroom-focused scholarship has introduced a range of concrete implementation strategies, including ergonomic and design-thinking models for inclusive pedagogy (Brisson, 2024), language-specific guidelines and resources for inclusive Italian (Merolla, 2024), lesson plans that embed nonbinary language and trans-affirming practices in Portuguese (Osborne, 2024), multilingual institutional guidelines that address classroom practice and assessment (Carlini Versini et al., 2025), and equity- and social-justice-driven frameworks and activity blueprints in Spanish (Parra & Faria, 2024; Zandomenico & Fernandes, 2024). However, large-scale teacher-centered evidence on how educators navigate these resources amid everyday instructional and institutional constraints remains limited.

Over the past two years, we have delivered professional development workshops on gender-inclusive language to approximately 500 educators worldwide who teach Romance languages across proficiency levels and age groups. During the workshops, educators completed surveys about their familiarity and use of gender-inclusive language, submitted comments via the Zoom chat, and discussed the difficulties they encountered and solutions they implemented. Using qualitative thematic analysis (Saldaña, 2025), our preliminary findings show that participants' concerns closely align with

Veergoossen et al.'s (2020, p. 336) categories of resistance to language change (“(a) defending the linguistic status quo, (b) diminishing the issue and its proponents, (c) sexism and cisgenderism, and (d) gender-fair language being distracting in communication”). Our data also reveal additional practitioner-focused pedagogical constraints. Although many of our workshop participants expressed interest in adopting gender-inclusive language and demonstrated varying levels of familiarity with it, they also described several practical challenges they face (e.g., how to teach this to dyslexic students or young students), while others voiced strong objections (e.g., “why spend public resources on something that affects 1% of the population?”; “this is going to hurt the integrity of the language”). For example, one frequently cited but largely anecdotal concern is that gender-inclusive language might impede language learning (Knisely, 2025). Empirical evidence challenges this assumption: Knisely (2022) found that intermediate French learners made fewer grammatical errors and improved their accuracy with complex structures when gender-just pedagogies and the use of gender-inclusive language were integrated into the course. Drawing from participants’ comments and questions, we outline evidence-based linguistic, pragmatic, and pedagogical pathways to address these challenges, and we identify research gaps that respond to educators’ concerns and help counter common criticisms.

Fostering queer belonging through the critique of straight people on social media

Alice Cesbron

University of Potsdam, Potsdam, Germany

Criticizing or mocking heteronormativity has always served to foster bonding and belonging in the queer community and helped in defining a queer identity (Greco, 2012). Because they bring people together, social media platforms are also an essential tool for the development of queer communities and queer identities nowadays (Zottola, 2024). While the criticism of heteronormativity and straight people is not a new phenomenon neither offline nor online (Cavalcante, 2019), 2019 seemed to mark the development of online discursive practices dedicated to this topic, perhaps as a product of a post-MeToo culture and the increase of feminist and queer counterdiscourses online. That year saw the creation in February of the Instagram account @heterocringe and, in October, of the subreddit r/AreTheStraightsOk, which functioned as spaces where excessively heteronormative or discriminatory internet content can be shared, sometimes for entertainment purposes to elicit a feeling of “cringe” in users. These discourses rapidly expanded to other platforms such as Twitter (now X), where the expression “are the straights ok?” began to be used as a formulaic meme phrase, and YouTube, which saw the emergence of “react” videos by queer creators reacting to heterocringe TikTok content.

Following the perspective of queer linguistics (Motschenbacher & Stegu, 2013), the goal of this paper is to reflect on how criticizing or mocking heteronormativity and straight people foster queer belonging and participate in reinforcing queer identity on social media. More specifically, this paper aims to analyze how this sentiment of belonging appears linguistically in discourse. This work is based on the study of a multilingual corpus in English, French and German comprising two sub-corpora from X and Instagram collected between 2020 and 2021. The Twitter subcorpus comprises 163,818 and was collected using the noun phrases “the straights”, “straight people”, and “les hétéros”. The

Instagram subcorpus originates from two heterocringe humor accounts, the former @heterocringe and @german_hetero_cringe and is made up of 2807 posts. The research questions are explored through the qualitative discursive analysis of a data sample focusing on several micro and macro categories, such as markers of subjectivity, the denomination and address of social actors, markers of counterdiscursive positioning and also through the analysis of the role of humor and implicit discourses.

This analysis allowed for the observation of several discursive strategies that participate in the construction of queer belonging through the discursive practices observed. Among some of the most noteworthy is metadiscourse that formulate mocking straight people as a conscious and stated goal around which certain queer social media users gather. The presence of an “us” versus “them” dichotomy cultivated through the performative othering of straight people and the reversal of “cognitive hegemony” (Zerubavel, 2018) also appears as a central strategy that participates in promoting a sense of queer belonging. Finally, this sentiment also seems to rely on expected shared knowledge of queer users as a key to understanding wit and humor.

References

- Cavalcante, A. (2019). Tumbling into queer utopias and vortexes: Experiences of LGBTQ social media users on Tumblr. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 66(12), 1715–1735. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00918369.2018.1511131>
- Greco, L. (2012). Production, circulation and deconstruction of gender norms in LGBTQ speech practices. *Discourse Studies*, 14(5), 567–585. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461445612452229>
- Motschenbacher, H., & Stegu, M. (2013). Queer linguistic approaches to discourse. *Discourse & Society*, 24(5), 519–535. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0957926513486069>
- Zerubavel, E. (2018). *Taken for granted: The remarkable power of the unremarkable*. Princeton University Press.
- Zottola, A. (2024). *LGBTQ+ and feminist digital activism: A linguistic perspective*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009122962>

“Any homophobe can take a new untarnished word and make it a slur by context and tone alone”: Perceptions of LGBTQ+ Slurs

Sloane Cheesebrough

University of Kentucky, Lexington, United States

This research is designed to answer the research question “What are perceptions of words that may be LGBTQ+ slurs?”. In addition, the research also addresses “What kinds of reclamation behaviors occur in the LGBTQ+ community?” and “What are perceptions of preferred labels for the LGBTQ+ community?”. Edmondson (2022) states that any definition of a slur must “regard them as a linguistic means of exercising hegemonic power.” On reclamation, Bianchi (2014) says that reclamation is used by targeted groups of their own slurs for non-derogatory purposes to show a sense of intimacy and solidarity, while Herbert (2015) argues that slurs are not reclaimed, but reappropriated, and that it is rarely the case that the targeted group ever had linguistic control over the slur - contrary to what the respondent in the title of this presentation says. Previous research on specifically LGBTQ+ slurs and preferred terms finds that certain words are controversial, even within the community (Carillo and Houston 2015), and that perceived offensiveness and “tabooness” vary with age and gender (Edmondson 2022). The present study expands upon this research and aims to fill the gaps of a lack of transgender voices and analysis of different sexualities in the data.

This presentation will focus on the qualitative analysis for this data (which was collected via an online survey distributed via Discord, email, and Instagram) (N=225), specifically what it depends on in order for a word to be considered a slur, and also captures the complex reclamation behaviors in this sample population. The sample population’s diversity of gender and sexuality is notable, with the largest gender group being nonbinary (N=64) and the largest sexuality group being bisexual/pansexual (N=68). The research focuses on eight words, listed here by result: faggot, dyke, and tranny were determined to be slurs, but are reclaimed for personal and often in-group use on an individual basis; perceptions of queer, transvestite, and transsexual vary widely, but generally can be summarized as reclaimed and/or historical terms; and, finally, gay and lesbian were not only determined to not be slurs, they were also

among the most common preferred terms in addition to LGBT(Q)(+), queer, and transgender. Qualitative analysis reveals that slur determination factors can be categorized into broad context, community status of speaker and referent, age of speaker, intent, relationship of speaker and referent, tone, historical context, and grammatical context. Additionally, reclamation behaviors vary widely from person to person. The results of this research could inform the micro level of social interactions, e.g., which words are acceptable to use to describe LGBTQ+ people, and to the macro level of policy and professional fields, e.g., which words are acceptable to use to describe LGBTQ+ people in law and medicine.

References

Bianchi, C. (2014). Slurs and appropriation: An echoic account. *Journal of Pragmatics* 66: 35-44. doi:10.1016/j.pragma.2014.02.009

Carrillo, Justine and Houston, Julie Marie, Exploring Cultural and Linguistic Aspects within the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Youth Community (2015). Electronic Theses, Projects, and Dissertations. 170. <https://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/etd/170>

Edmondson, D. (2022). Reclaiming colourful language: The impact of linguistic reclamation on the cognitive processing of LGBTQ+ slurs. Doctoral dissertation University of Nottingham.

Herbert, C. (2015). Precarious projects: The performative structure of reclamation. *Language Sciences* 52: 131-138. doi:10.1016/j.langsci.2015.05.002

#grindrlife: Modulated Sociality, Narrated Intimacies, and Mediated Desires on Grindr

Spencer Chen

Carter Higgins

Hamilton College, Clinton, United States

This paper examines how affective experiences of intimacy, desire, and queer (dis)belonging are narrated, circulated, and re-embodied through platformed sexual sociality. Drawing on publicly shared recounts of Grindr encounters circulated under tags such as #grindrlife across social media and podcasts, the paper approaches these narratives not as retrospective anecdotes or fantasies, but as semiotically accomplished interactional artifacts through which participants negotiate inclusion, exclusion, recognition, and rejection within digitally-mediated queer spaces. Through narration, participants reconstitute affective states—anticipation, excitement, discomfort, shame, attachment—as well as experiences of racialized and sexual(ized) desire, desirability hierarchies, and fragile community formation that emerge through, but are not resolved by, platform-mediated encounters.

Rather than treating intimacy as culminating in physical co-presence, the article argues that affect circulates recursively across platform interfaces, embodied encounters, and post hoc narration, producing layered forms of attachment and estrangement that complicate what it means to “belong” in queer social worlds. Grindr interactions do not end with the hookup or non-hookup; they persist as affective residues that are reorganized through storytelling, evaluation, and public sharing. In this sense, narration functions as a technology of affective continuity, allowing bodies to be re-felt, re-evaluated, and socially situated after the fact, and enabling narrators to position themselves within—or at the margins of—queer collectivities structured by platform logics.

Situated within linguistic anthropology and platform studies, the article contributes to ongoing efforts to move beyond an affect–semiotic divide by showing how affective experiences are socially and technologically

accomplished through narrative practice. By focusing on sexual sociality as a privileged site of intensified mediation, the paper demonstrates how digital platforms shape not only interaction and self-presentation, but the conditions under which queer subjects experience belonging, (mis)recognition, vulnerability, and community in technologically saturated social worlds.

Conflicted Identities: Religious Gay Speakers' Use of Creaky Voice in Taiwan

Yu-Che Jackson Chou

Tsung-Lun Alan Wan

National Yang Ming Chiao Tung University, Hsinchu, Taiwan

Variationist sociolinguistics has explored the speech patterns of gay speakers, with most studies focusing on European and North American contexts. Levon's (2009) work in the Israeli context stands out, as Israel has positioned itself as a gay-friendly country compared to its neighbors. However, self-conflicts were still observed among Orthodox Jewish men engaged in same-sex romantic and sexual relationships (Levon, 2015). Building on this, the current study shifts focus to Taiwan, the first Asian country to legalize gay marriage. Despite this milestone, conservative Christian institutions continue to resist LGBTQ rights. Drawing inspiration from Levon's analysis of creaky voice as an index of "suppressed affect" in an Orthodox Jewish man, this study expanded the scope of speaker number and examines how six Christian gay speakers in Taiwan use creaky voice to navigate their conflicted identities. Through sociolinguistic interviews, the study systematically analyzes the indexical meanings associated with the use of creaky voice when discussing religion and gay-related topics.

The study investigates how creaky voice, coded categorically as present or absent in phonological environments (i.e., mid-falling tone) where it is likely to occur, varies quantitatively across different conversational topics. These topics include discussions of masculinity, emotional experiences, emotional suppression, gay-related issues, religious issues, and the conflicts between gay and Christian identities. With the diversity of the topics, we aim to provide insights into what indexicalities of creaky voice are utilized by the speakers. To expand upon previous research, we measured participants' openness to gay identity (Meidlinger & Hope, 2014), different aspects of gay identity (Mohr & Kendra, 2011), and religious strength (Plante & Boccaccini, 1997). These measures aim to pinpoint the conflicts between identities without presuming that gay and Christian identities are inherently mutually exclusive.

Mixed-effects regression analysis on a group-level model revealed that creaky voice was statistically prominent in discussions of gay-related issues, emotional suppression, and identity conflicts. Interestingly, creaky voice was found statistically less prevalent in discourse related to masculinity, challenging the common association between creaks and masculinity. After including the psychometric measures in the model, only “outness” significantly improved model fit and showed interactions with certain topics. However, qualitative analysis of the speakers' narratives did not clearly support these statistical interactions. Given the limited sample size (N=6), we interpret these interactions conservatively. Ultimately, the findings indicate that creaky voice can indeed index “suppressed affect,” derived from the social meaning of emotional suppression. This provides further evidence that the indexical meanings of creaky voice can be shared across speakers from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

References

- Levon, E. (2009). Dimensions of style: Context, politics and motivation in gay Israeli speech. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 13(1), 29-58. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9841.2008.00396.x>
- Levon, E. (2015). Conflicted Selves: Language, Religion, and Same-Sex Desire in Israel. In E. Levon & R. B. Mendes (Eds.), *Language, Sexuality, and Power: Studies in Intersectional Sociolinguistics* (pp. 215-239). Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780190210366.003.0011>
- Meidlinger, P. C., & Hope, D. A. (2014). Differentiating disclosure and concealment in measurement of outness for sexual minorities: The Nebraska Outness Scale. *Psychology of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity*, 1(4), 489-497.
- Mohr, J. J., & Kendra, M. S. (2011). Revision and extension of a multidimensional measure of sexual minority identity: the Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Identity Scale. *Journal of counseling psychology*, 58(2), 234-245.
- Plante, T. G., & Boccaccini, M. T. (1997). The Santa Clara strength of religious faith questionnaire. *Pastoral Psychology*, 45(5), 375-387.

Temporal Governance and the Construction of Trans (Dis)Belonging in South Korean Media

Abigail Cowan

Jung In Lee

The Pennsylvania State University, State College, United States

Despite growing public visibility and scholarly attention to trans lives in South Korea, existing research has focused largely on structural conditions and social challenges, including access to medical care (Lee et al., 2015; Son et al., 2017), social exclusion (Kim, 2020), and parents' responses to coming out (Kim & Yang, 2024). This work documents institutional barriers and familial dynamics; yet, with few exceptions (Lim, 2025), research overlooks the discursive and temporal construction of trans people across media. Neglecting media as a site of analysis risks obscuring how identity is negotiated across platforms through interactions among trans people, media hosts, and online audiences. As media representations adopt increasingly progressive tones, the politics of inclusion and exclusion position trans belonging as a conditional formation constrained by heteropatriarchal ideologies rather than a stable or readily accessible category.

One way trans identities are negotiated through media is through chrononormativity. As theorized by Elizabeth Freeman, chrononormativity refers to the ways dominant temporal norms discipline bodies into socially productive and legible rhythms. Within this framework, what Jack Halberstam terms "straight time" can be understood as a specific temporal regime that organizes life trajectories around heteronormative milestones, such as marriage and reproduction, which function as markers of familial and social success. Dean Spade's concept of transnormativity further explains how trans lives become legitimated within legal and administrative systems only when aligned with normative expectations of gender coherence, medical transition, and social integration. These frameworks extend beyond formal institutions into mediated contexts, where trans identities are rendered intelligible through their alignment with, or deviation from, these temporal and normative expectations (Zimman, 2019).

Yet, these frameworks remain limited in accounting for how trans identities are not confined to individual self-articulations but are continually negotiated through others across time, particularly within mediated contexts. This study addresses constructions of trans (dis)belonging across linked media events by analyzing two episodes on Ask Us Anything Fortune Teller, a popular advice-giving TV show, and corresponding YouTube comments. Using Discourse Analysis beyond the Speech Event (Wortham & Reyes, 2020) in dialogue with trans studies, the analysis traces how temporal meanings are produced, taken up, and intensified through recontextualization across these interconnected events.

This study proposes temporal governance as a framework for understanding how trans identities become intelligible through sequencing, evaluation, and circulation of temporal norms across relational, institutional, and affective domains. The findings suggest that South Korean advice-giving television functions as a site of temporal governance; trans lives become legible only when they align with normative timelines of gender coherence, transition, and social integration. These advice-giving programs frame trans lives as conditionally intelligible by sequencing them into a moralized timeline, where belonging is only granted when trans people align with normative trajectories. This framing is then recontextualized through public commentary, which consolidates the media's temporal framework into a more rigid temporal foreclosure by anchoring gender legitimacy in bioessentialist assumptions. Together, these findings reveal how media functions as a site of temporal governance, producing trans (dis)belonging as a conditional and precarious formation shaped by heteropatriarchal norms.

References

Freeman, E. (2010). *Time binds: Queer temporalities, queer histories*. Duke University Press.

Halberstam, J. (2005). *In a queer time and place: Transgender bodies, subcultural lives*. New York University Press.

Kim, B.-M. (2020). Women's Place and Feminism- Focus on the Exclusion of Transgender Women -. *Journal of Korean Modern Literature*, null(71), 83–117. <https://doi.org/10.35419/KMLIT.2020..71.003>

Kim, H., & Yang, S. (2024). Mother's Experiences of their Transgender Children's Coming Out. *Korean Journal of Human Ecology*, 33(2), 171–185. <https://doi.org/10.5934/kjhe.2024.33.2.171>

Lee, H., Yoon, J., Kim, Seung-Sup, Park, J., & Lee, H. (2015). Transgender People's Access to Health Care in Korea. *Health and Social Welfare Review*, 35(4), 64–94. <https://doi.org/10.15709/HSWR.2015.35.4.64>

Lim, D. (2025). Platformized Trans/Gender Performativity—The Legibility and Cultural Politics of the Transgender Celebrity Pungja. *Study of Humanities*, 43, 33–65. <https://doi.org/10.31323/SH.2025.06.43.02>

Son, I., Lee, H., Park, J., & Kim, S.-S. (2017). Social Stigma and Medical Marginalization in Healthcare Service Among Transgender People in South Korea. *Korean Journal of Sociology*, 51(2), 155–189. <https://doi.org/10.21562/kjs.2017.05.51.2.155>

Spade, Dean. 2011. *Normal life: Administrative violence, critical trans politics, and the limits of the law*. Brooklyn, NY: South End Press.

Wortham, S., & Reyes, A. (2020). Discourse analysis of ethnographic data. In S. Wortham & A. Reyes, *Discourse Analysis Beyond the Speech Event* (2nd ed., pp. 75–113). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003049708-3>

Zimman, L. (2019). Trans self-identification and the language of neoliberal selfhood: Agency, power, and the limits of monologic discourse. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 2019(256), 147–175. <https://doi.org/10.1515/ijsl-2018-2016>

The inclusional fallacy: Discourses of queer disbelonging in Norwegian textbooks

Yvonne Jasmine Demirel

Western Norway University of Applied Sciences, Bergen, Norway

Who gets to feel safe as a reader in school? What if the selected reading and literature are actually intended to be for your benefit; and yet you remain invisible, or worse, the subject of disdain? Conversely, what is it like to be in the company of friends and allies who want to know what it's like to be you - who seek your insights so they can learn from you, laugh with you, and live with you? (Blackburn & Clark, 2011, p. 148)

Educational practices in Norway are governed by the core curriculum of 2020. It states that education should build on “values that unite the Norwegian society” and constitute the “foundation of our democracy” (LK20 CC, Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2017, p. 4). To this end, the core curriculum outlines certain fundamental values that are to be embedded in all educational practices, such as human dignity; identity and cultural diversity; critical thinking and ethical awareness; democracy and participation. However, the ambiguity of the values necessitates interpretation, negotiation and operationalisation by teachers and teaching materials.

This paper examines one such interpretational practice. The textbooks for Norwegian and English subjects in lower and upper secondary school are an amalgamation of different text ranging from literary excerpts to texts about current issues. Furthermore, they contain paratexts such as author biographies or writing tasks. Using Dorrit Cohn's concept of “the second author” (1999), the paper focuses especially on the discursive interchange between the literary excerpts and the paratexts, and argues that although well intended, the books engage in discursive constructions of “the other” that in fact uphold and perpetuate cultural and historical power structures. Furthermore, the paper posits that this world view can be considered a hidden curriculum (Jackson, 1968), existing in the books alongside the seemingly inclusive materials that align with CC values. Using CDA and thematic analysis, the paper posits that the paratexts in this way represent a discourse of incorporation, rather than a

discourse of levelling in representations of LGBTQ subjects and themes. This means that although queer subjects are included in the books, they remain constructed as “the other”, with potentially detrimental effects on queer students (Hellesund, 2008; Nadal, 2013; Nadal et al., 2011; Nadal et al., 2010). Inclusion then, is insufficient.

The paper examines how the construction of the other is done predominantly through four main discursive devices: Stereotyping, i.e. reductionist portrayals of queer subjects; gendering, i.e. assigning gendered pronouns to texts without such pronouns; omission, i.e. failing to acknowledge queer subjects and authors, and lastly, negativity, i.e. the use of negative slurs in literary texts. Furthermore, the paper argues that new pedagogical perspectives and ways of resisting can be found in queer theory and norm critical pedagogy, shifting the perspective from merely including minority voices in textbooks to critically examining the mechanisms and structures in society that uphold and perpetuate existing power imbalances (Kulick, 2004; Røthing, 2020), i.e. embracing a discourse of levelling rather than a discourse of incorporation.

References

Blackburn, M. V., & Clark, C. T. (2011). Becoming Readers of Literature with LHBT Themes - In and out of classrooms. In *Handbook of Research on Children's and Young Adult Literature* (pp. 148–163). Routledge (Taylor & Francis).

Cohn, D. (1999). *The distinction of fiction*. Johns Hopkins University Press.

Hellesund, T. (2008). *Identitet på liv og død*. Spartacus forlag.

Jackson, P. W. (1968). *Life in classrooms*. Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Kulick, D. (2004). Queerteori, performativitet och heteronormativitet - några grundläggande begrepp. In A.-C. Olsson & C. Olsson (Eds.), *I den akademiska garderoben* (pp. 21–35). Bokförlaget Atlas.

Kunnskapsdepartementet. (2017). *Core curriculum – values and principles for primary and secondary education*. Laid down by Royal Decree on 1 September 2017 Retrieved from <https://www.udir.no/overordnetdel?lang=eng>

Nadal, K. L. (2013). *That's so gay! Microaggressions and the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender community* (1 ed.). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association. <https://doi.org/10.1037/14093-000>

Nadal, K. L., Issa, M.-A., Leon, J., Meterko, V., Wideman, M., & Wong, Y. (2011). Sexual Orientation Microaggressions: Death by a Thousand Cuts for Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Youth. *Journal of LGBT Youth*, 2011(8:3), 234–259.

Nadal, K. L., Rivera, D. P., & Corpus, M. J. (2010). Sexual orientation and transgender microaggressions in everyday life: Experiences of lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgender individuals. In W. D. Sue (Ed.), *Microaggressions and marginality; Manifestation, dynamics, and impact* (pp. 217–240). Wiley & Sons.

Røthing, Å. (2020). *Mangfoldskompetanse og kritisk tenkning : perspektiver på undervisning* (1. utgave. ed.). Cappelen Damm akademisk.

Nonbinar/i/ ? Nonbinar/u/ ! Vowel Quality Changes in Gendered Contexts

Joy Dertinger

University of Colorado at Boulder, Boulder, United States

Divergence, convergence (Pardo et al. 2017), imitation (Scarborough et al 2016), domination, and accommodation (Giles et al. 1991) are well-known sociophonetic processes by which a speaker indexes a particular stance, often regarding gender (Ochs 1992). Studies on mimicry (Babel 2011, Hay & Drager 2006) and accommodation as social phenomena address predictors such as race (Calder & King 2020), attractiveness, and gender (Babel 2012); socioeconomic class (Labov 1984); and their intersections, while colloquial understandings of sociophonetic phenomena underscore gendered stereotypes in language (Escola 2025). Historically, formal sociophonetic studies on gendered differences in language have primarily focused on cis men vs cis women speakers (Labov 1984, Trudgill 1972, Eckert 1989), with concepts of queerness binarized into discussions of “sounding gay” (Munson, 2007; Smyth, Jacobs, & Rogers, 2003). Studies that do address queer and trans phonetic identity markers have begun to emerge more prominently in the last 25 years, primarily focusing on /s/ (Zimman 2013, Willis & Ben Youssef 2023), fundamental frequency (Zimman 2017), and creak (Becker, ud Dowla Khan, & Zimman 2022) as functions of indexicality (Calder & King 2020, Zimman 2017, Calder 2024). This study focuses on the analysis of nonbinary speaker production of vowels, specifically in response to interlocutor gender, as a means of associating or disassociating with the perceived gender of the interlocutor.

At the time of this project launch, I will have completed data collection and will be beginning analysis.

References

Babel, Molly. (2012). “Evidence for phonetic and social selectivity in spontaneous phonetic imitation.” *Journal of Phonetics* 40(2012), 177-189.

Becker, Kara, Sameer ud Dowla Khan, and Lal Zimman. (2022). "Beyond binary gender: creaky voice, gender, and the variationist enterprise." *Language and Variation and Change* 34(2020), 215-238.

Calder, J. (2024). "Harsh' SoMa vs 'Beige' Castro: The cross-modal construction of contrasting femininities in queer San Francisco." *Language & Communication* 99(2024), 107-128.

--- & Sharese King. (2020). "Intersections between race, place, and gender in the production of /s/." *U. Penn Working papers in Linguistics* 26.2(2020).

Eckert, Penelope. (1989). "The whole woman: Sex and gender differences in variation." *Language Variation and Change* 1(1989), 245-267.

Escola, Cole. (2025). "Interview with Stephen Colbert." *The Late Show with Stephen Colbert*. 2025.

Giles, Howard, Nikolas Coupland, and Justine Coupland. (1991). "Accommodation theory: Communication, context, and consequence." *Contexts of Accommodation: Developments in Applied Sociolinguistics*. 1991, 1-68. Cambridge UP.

Hay, Jennifer and Katie Drager. (2006). "From fush to feesh: Exemplar priming in speech perception." *The Linguistic Review* 23(3), 351-379.

Labov, Bill. (1984). "The Social Stratification of (r) in New York City Department Stores." *Sociolinguistic Patterns*. U of Pennsylvania P, 43-55.

Munson, Benjamin. (2007). "The Acoustic Correlates of Perceived Masculinity, Perceived Femininity, and Perceived Sexual Orientation." *Language and Speech* 50(1), 125-142.

Ochs, Elinor. (1992). "Indexing Gender." *Rethinking Context: Language as an Interactive Phenomenon*, edited by Alessandro Duranti and Charles Goodwin. Cambridge UP, pp. 335-358.

Pardo, Jennifer S., Adelya Urmanche, Sherilyn Wilman, Jaclyn Wiener. (2017). "Phonetic convergence across multiple measures and model talkers." *Attention, Perception, & Psychophysics* 79, 637-659.

Smyth, Ron, Greg Jacobs, and Henry Rogers. (2003). "Male Voices and Perceived Sexual Orientation: An Experimental and Theoretical Approach." *Language in Society* 32(3), 329-350.

Trudgill, Peter. (1972). "Sex, covert prestige and linguistic change in the urban British English of Norwich." *Language in Society* 1(2), 179-195.

Willis, Chloe and Chadi Ben Youssef. (2023). "Random bisexual forests: Intersections between gender, sexuality, and race is /s/ production." *Proceedings of the Linguistic Society of America* 8(1): 5504.

Zellou, Georgia, Rebecca Scarborough, and Kuniko Nielsen. (2016). "Phonetic imitation of coarticulatory vowel nasalization." *The Journal of the Acoustical Society of America* 140(5), 3560-3575.

Zimman, Lal. (2013). "Hegemonic masculinity and the variability of gay-sounding speech: The perceived sexuality of transgender men*." *Journal of Language and Sexuality* 2(1), 1-39.

---. (2017). "Gender as stylistic bricolage: Transmascline voices and the relationship between fundamental frequency and /s/." *Language in Society* 46, 339-370.

From Plague to PrEP: Gay Gen X and the Meaning of Midlife

David Divita

Pomona College, Claremont, CA, United States

Gay men born between 1965 and 1980, members of so-called Generation X, occupy a distinct position in the realm of queer life. Although they were not as directly impacted by AIDS as their predecessors, their coming-of-age was indelibly marked by a sense of danger and mortality well into the 1990s, when retroviral treatments first became available. Their maturation was also shaped by new forms of media and popular culture, as well as a concomitant increase in gay acceptance, reflected in an expansion of their rights. In this talk I present findings from 52 in-depth, semi-structured interviews that I conducted with gay Gen Xers from around the United States, illuminating how they make sense of midlife without a coherent model for doing so. As Spieldenner (2024) writes, “there is no map for getting older” as a gay man, “how some parts of our lives shut down and others open up” (p 55).

My talk will highlight the intersecting themes that have emerged in my preliminary discourse analysis of data. Tracing the use of terms of identification, I first propose “gay man” as a generational type, understood by my research participants in relation, rather than opposition, to “queer,” which they often attribute to younger counterparts. Many of them explain their preference for the former by evoking the social and political conditions in which they navigated adolescence. Among those with a strong sense of generational identity, I highlight the characteristics that they most frequently associate with their cohort – self-reliance, adaptability, skepticism, and irony – and show how these characteristics get recruited into narratives about surviving the epidemic and entering adulthood. Lastly, I turn my attention to talk about PrEP, which is described by many in language of liberation that reveals the legacies of coming-of-age sexually in a period of acute distress. This biomedical intervention is largely understood by gay Gen Xers to have facilitated newfound relationships to sex and sexual practices. Such transformations have occurred at a moment in midlife that coincides with widespread interest in the figure of the “daddy” (see Silva, 2023). Analyzing daddy discourse, I shed light on shared

understanding of this figure as an embodiment of non-toxic masculinity that enables possibilities of intergenerational transmission.

As Hajek (2015) has remarked, the particularities of middle age among gay men warrant special attention. Navigating this span of the life course, they contend not only with the lasting impacts of a public health crisis, but also a pervasive emphasis on youth and desirability. There are no recent studies that explore their experiences through the potentially intimate exchange of semi-structured interviews between peers. For that reason, I have heeded the call of Goltz (2022), a fellow gay man in midlife, to “tell the stories of aging queers in community with aging queers” and thus to push against “youthist logics” that privilege those you are “young,” however that may be conceived (p. 418).

“God made trans people”: Resisting trans disbelonging through religio-political rhetoric

Philip Duncan

University of Kansas, Lawrence, United States

New York-based Mayday Health recently released billboards in Kansas, U.S.A., emblazoned with the phrase “GOD MADE TRANS PEOPLE” on a backdrop of a blue sky and cross (Figure 1). Billboards with religiously- and politically-infused semiotics are common in Kansas. However, trans-affirming billboards are not. In 2023, Target pulled the work of Erik Carnell, a gay trans artist/designer from London, partly due to public furor toward the (false) claim that Target was selling Satanic products in its Pride Month lineup. Among the contentious, but not-actually-sold-at-Target, pieces from Carnell’s brand Abprallen, was an enamel pin he designed with a goat, crystals, and the now famous phrase “Satan respects pronouns” (Figure 2). These two multimodal texts—the billboard and the pin—likely differ in their target audiences. Both, however, share the use and the re-appropriation of religious elements that are embedded in and across anti-trans texts and discourses, which are in turn intertextually and interdiscursively linked to Christian religio-political texts/discourses.

This paper examines the role of multimodal religio-political rhetoric in resisting anti-trans discourses. Using “texts” (broadly construed) like those exemplified above as our objects of analysis, we focus on how trans folk and trans allies intentionally and strategically appropriate Christian and Christian nationalist phrases and imagery, regardless of their own (a-)religious affiliations. Our analysis draws from two methods of critical discourse studies, situated in relation to trans linguistics (Zimman 2020, 2021): the discourse-historical approach (Reisigl & Wodak 2001, 2009) and the sociocognitive approach (van Dijk 2008, 2009, 2014), which have been used together in previous analyses of other religio-political discourses (AUTHOR). Our goal in blending these approaches in relation to trans linguistics is multifaceted. On the one hand, this enables us to perform a hermeneutic analysis that highlights aspects of language use in relation to co-textual elements as well as broader social and historical considerations (the discourse-historical approach). It also recognizes

the intersubjective mental models of discourse participants (the sociocognitive approach). While a substantive body of critical discourse-analytic work has traditionally focused on the discursive production of discrimination, hegemony, and other forms of power abuse (e.g., anti-Semitism, right-wing populism, fascism) (Reisigl, 2017), we seek to highlight agency in the disruption of these things, in and through the discursive strategies whereby trans people are (self-)empowered. Through our analysis, we also connect the forms of critique associated with the discourse-historical approach to the impetus toward social and linguistic justice that shapes trans linguistics (Zimman 2020).

This work highlights how mental models are contested, negotiated, and maintained through multimodal public discourse. Our analysis treats these texts as creative repurposings of familiar text types, crafted in such a way as to leverage Christian language and iconography in support of trans rights. They are sites where trans disbelonging is resisted and transformed, and where trans belonging is enacted. Religious and religio-political (particularly Christian and Christian nationalist) discourse are thus diversely appropriated for similar teleological purposes, for example: making transness legible (the billboard example), or refashioning negative elements for positive ingroup meaning (the pin example).

Between linguistic identity and the prohibition of gender expression: the case of Québec French

Alexandra Dupuy

Université de Montréal, Montréal, Canada

Inclusive language in Québec French has been the subject of multiple debates in Québec media and has permeated recent language policies restricting the use of some linguistic forms used by non-binary individuals in institutional contexts (Décret 1142-2025; *Projet de règlement : Règlement sur les règles de conduite au primaire et au secondaire*, 2025). At their core, language policies are seen as vectors of the reproduction of inequalities and power dynamics (Tollefson, 1991), especially since the institutional power of issuing these policies is granted to an elite and contributes to the maintenance of their status (van Dijk, 1993; Cooper, 1990). In Québec, the *Charte de la langue française* (RLRQ c C-11; Walsh, 2016) aims to make French the national language of the province in a context where Québec is a francophone minority within a majority anglophone Canada. This legislation also aims to allow Québec francophones to express their identity through language (RLRQ c C-11, preamble). In that context, the ability to use Québec French to express gender identity interacts directly with this linguistic law and raises the question of what it means to have a francophone identity. Previous studies have examined the use of non-binary linguistic forms in French (Knisely, 2020a), by non-binary Canadians (Knisely, 2020b), notably regarding the experiences of non-binary individuals in their use of Québec French by Montrealers in multiple public contexts (Kaplan, 2024).

This study aims to contribute to the existing literature and to explore the use of different forms of inclusive language by non-binary individuals; it also examines the ways in which Québec's language institution's actions discriminate against certain francophones in their right to express their identity. In this presentation, we will present the results of a survey conducted in 2024 on the use of inclusive language by 123 non-binary millennials and Gen Z native francophones living in Montréal. More specifically, we will examine the use of pronouns and gender agreement to refer to themselves, as well as the use of different strategies such as feminization (e.g., *la directrice*), neutral epicene (e.g., *la direction*), doublets (e.g., *les directeurs et les directrices*), truncated

forms (e.g., les voisin-es, les voisin.e.s, les voisin-es, les voisin(e)s, les voisin[es]) and neologisms (e.g., les promeneurs). Furthermore, we analyze the use of these forms based on three variables: linguistic modality (oral or written), context (formal or informal), and referent (women, non-binary individuals, or unknown). The survey results will be accompanied by a thematic analysis (Paillé and Mucchielli, 2012) of qualitative data drawn from semi-structured sociolinguistic interviews conducted with 14 non-binary native speakers of French in Montréal, covering three themes: the interaction between Québec French and their gender identity, their use of inclusive language, and their attitudes towards linguistic institutions such as the Office québécois de la langue française.

References

Charte de la langue française, RLRQ c C-11.

Cooper, R. L. (Éd.). (1990). *Corpus planning*. In *Language Planning and Social Change* (p. 122-156). Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511620812.009>

Décret 1142-2025, 5397 [En ligne]
[https://www.publicationsduquebec.gouv.qc.ca/fileadmin/gazette/pdf_encrypte/lois_reglements/2025F/86424.pdf]

Kaplan, J. (2024). 6. The Social Life of Non-Binary French : How Non-Binary Francophones Linguistically Navigate Institutions. In *Redoing linguistic worlds : Unmaking gender binaries, remaking gender pluralities*. (p. 129-152). Multilingual Matters. <https://doi.org/10.21832/9781800415102-012>

Knisely, K. A. (2020a). Le français non-binaire : Linguistic forms used by non-binary speakers of French. *Foreign Language Annals*, 53(4), 850-876. <https://doi.org/10.1111/flan.12500>

Knisely, K. A. (2020b). Subverting the Culturally Unreadable : Understanding the Self-Positioning of Non-Binary Speakers of French. *The French Review*, 94(2), 173-192.

Paillé, P., & Mucchielli, A. (2012). *L'analyse qualitative en sciences humaines et sociales*. Armand Colin. <https://doi.org/10.3917/arco.paill.2012.01>

Projet de règlement : Règlement sur les règles de conduite au primaire et au secondaire (2025). [En ligne]

[https://www.publicationsduquebec.gouv.qc.ca/fileadmin/gazette/pdf_encrypte/lois_reglements/2025F/85955.pdf]

Tollefson, J. W. (1991). Planning language, planning inequality : Language policy in the community. Longman.

van Dijk, T. A. (1993). Elite discourse and racism. Sage publications.

Walsh, O. (2016). Linguistic purism : Language attitudes in France and Quebec. John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Do lesbians flirt differently with femme vs. masc presenting women?

Melissa Ebert

Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Berlin, Germany

F0 and vowel space size in lesbian women's speech is influenced by their gender representation (e.g., "femme", "masc", "chapstick") (Sulkin and Tighe 2025). Additional to these sociophonetic parameters, register parameters (Lüdeling et al. 2022) such as conversation topic (queer vs. neutral topic) and gender & sexual orientation of the interlocutor also affect lesbian women's F0 (Herubin 2021, Sulkin and Tighe 2025). When talking to an attractive interlocutor, heterosexual men lower their F0 whereas women tend to raise their F0 (Habekost et al. 2024, Michalsky and Schoormann 2020).

This study investigates whether lesbian women mirror features of heterosexual flirting behavior according to their own and the interlocutors' gender representations, assuming a style variation based on social variation (Audience Design, see Bell 1984).

Acoustic data from several seasons of a German lesbian dating show will be analysed. The focus lies on how the show's love interest interacts with a more femme vs. a more masc presenting woman she is attracted to. F0 and vowel space size will be analysed.

References

Bell, Allan (1984). Language style as audience design. *Language in Society*, 13(2), 145–204. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S004740450001037X>

Habekost, Emma, Boyd, Zac, and Hejná, Míša (2024). The role of F0 and Vowel Formant Dispersion in cis-gender female-male flirting interactions. *Proceedings from FONETIK 2024, Stockholm, June 3–5, 2024*, 57–64. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.11396074>

Herubin, Aimee (2021). Lesbian pitch level and span: A case study of Cameron Esposito. *Proceedings of the 1st International Conference on Tone and Intonation*, 147–150. <https://doi.org/10.21437/TAI.2021-30>

Lüdeling, Anke, et al. (2022). Register: Language users' knowledge of situational-functional variation. *Register Aspects of Language in Situation*, 1–58. <https://doi.org/10.18452/24901>

Michalsky, Jan, and Schoormann, Heike (2021). Birds of a Feather Flock Together But Opposites Attract! On the Interaction of F0 Entrainment, Perceived Attractiveness, and Conversational Quality in Dating Conversations. In: Weiss, Benjamin, Trouvain, Jürgen, Barkat-Defradas, Melissa, Ohala, John J. (eds.). *Voice Attractiveness. Prosody, Phonology and Phonetics*. Springer, Singapore. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-15-6627-1_12

Sulkin, Elizabeth, and Tighe, Amelia (2025). Uncovering Identity in Lesbian Voices: An Analysis of Variation in Vowels and Creak. *Proceedings of the Linguistic Society of America* 10 (1), 5892. <https://doi.org/10.3765/plsa.v10i1.5892>

Beyond the Straw Man: Redefining Safe Space Through Social Safety Theory and Queer Narratives

Noé Fouquet

Queen Mary University of London, London, United Kingdom

Safety is a complex feeling indexed by various acoustic cues, but understanding it requires interrogating what safety means. Especially for queer communities, who constantly deploy speech strategies to navigate everyday life. Leading to questions: which mechanisms of safety enable speech variation? Does familiarity (friend vs. stranger) or sharedness (queer vs. non-queer) shape the feeling? These questions become sharper once we confront how loosely the term is used. In queer communities, it is common to hear this is a safe space, but what does this mean? Safe for whom and from whom? While many understand it as both literal and figurative, a stubborn materialist perception persists, locating safety in physical environments rather than in social actors and power dynamics. Thus, making safe space a misnomer, deflecting accountability onto inanimate walls, I argue the term becomes a straw man, obscuring responsibility. Conceptualising safety rigorously is essential for both academic and civil discourse.

Discourses of diversity in Hong Kong Universities: belonging & identity in cosmopolitan, Confucian & Christian context

Philip Freestone

Hong Kong University of Science & Technology, Hong Kong

Recent legislation and institutional policy which mandates greater inclusion in institutions have become influential globally in recent years and global university ranking systems have explicit diversity components. Consequently, language and practice related to equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) is proliferating. However, recognising and promoting these in reality is complex, as this often means serving the needs of the broad spectrum of associated stakeholders. Based on a three-year ethnography, this paper uses sociocultural discourse analysis (Blommaert 2005; Jones 2016) to explore the description and performance of EDI in two leading Hong Kong universities, as and when it pertains to queer belonging. It investigates the interplay of ideology with social and linguistic practice by comparing the language used by universities with the ways sexual minority group identities are articulated and negotiated in everyday life. To do this, it closely analyses instances of communication pertaining to diversity and inclusion and scrutinises any presences or absences of queer representation. For example, when universities make cosmopolitan claims to labels such as 'diverse' and 'global' in their printed and online material, I ask how this corresponds to life on the ground for queer staff and students, as seen through their linguistic and semiotic identity performance.

Studying these themes in Hong Kong is arguably of particular value to queer linguistics, as well as to discourse analysis, because the language of related social debates and everyday identity performance tends to reflect the city's especially complex matrix of influential value systems. These range from the broadly 'cosmopolitan' to the broadly 'traditional', and from the broadly 'Eastern' to the broadly 'Western'. Of course, all these terms are floating signifiers which are useful points of reference in a poststructuralist discussion of language, belonging and ideology. Also highly influential across Hong Kong is the of the post-colonial power of conservative Christianity, which runs deeply in its institutions its government, and in the everyday discourse of some of the general population. In the current paper, therefore, some of the nuances of the

discursive atmosphere of the city are charted through close linguistic analysis, which traces diverse dominant ethical and moral value systems in the language used by both institutions and individuals, and by both queer and straight-identified voices. In this way, I use sociocultural discourse analysis to investigate some of the complexities of identity work and queer belonging.

References:

Blommaert, J. (2005). *Discourse: A Critical Introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Jones, R. H. (2016). *Spoken Discourse*. London: Bloomsbury.

“Now that I can die here, I wonder when I will be able to live here”: Homonationalism as the gatekeeper of LGBTQ+ belonging in Israel

Roey Gafter

Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Beer-Sheva, Israel

Tommaso Milani

The Pennsylvania State University, State College, United States

Israeli discourse offers a revealing site for examining homonationalism (Puar, 2007), the ideological formation through which successful LGBTQ+ struggles for civil rights and recognition are co-opted into the national self-image. This dynamic is perhaps most evident in Israel’s efforts to brand itself as a “gay and lesbian oasis” vis-à-vis a problematically homogenized and allegedly homophobic Middle East (Milani & Levon 2016), a strategy widely critiqued as “pinkwashing” (Maikey 2017). While such outward-facing practices have received substantial scholarly attention, the internal production and circulation of homonationalist discourse within the Israel/Palestine context remain comparatively underexplored (cf. Hartal & Sasson-Levy, 2021; Gafter & Milani, 2023). We argue that attending to both external and internal dimensions is crucial, as their interrelation illuminates how, in a deeply militarized society, LGBTQ+ inclusion becomes entangled with – and ultimately helps legitimize – state violence.

Although homonationalist and homomilitaristic discourse has long been pervasive in Israel, in the wake of the October 7 massacre and the subsequent attack on Gaza, it has become further entrenched. A salient example can be seen in the rhetoric surrounding Omer Ohana’s campaign for recognition as a widower after the death of his partner, Sagi Golan, on October 7 – a successful effort that led the Israeli Defense Ministry to extend bereavement benefits to same-sex partners of soldiers killed while in military service. A further case involved the two bereaved mothers of another soldier, who successfully petitioned to have both their names engraved on his tombstone. We suggest that the accommodation of these bereaved families’ needs underscores the selective nature of Israeli homonationalism: while extending recognition to

certain LGBTQ+ persons, it simultaneously delimits the conditions under which such recognition becomes possible, predicating the belonging of some on the dis-belonging of others.

Drawing on interviews with LGBTQ+ soldiers and their families recently published in mainstream Israeli media, this paper analyzes how narratives of grief and sacrifice are mobilized to articulate the conditions of belonging. We approach this discourse through the lens of indexical inoculation (Silverstein, 2017; Barrett and Hall, 2024) – a semiotic process by which speakers strategically shield (or “inoculate”) themselves from unwanted associations by constructing and reinforcing alternative indexical meanings. Specifically, we demonstrate how these narratives forge a discursive link between claims for LGBTQ+ inclusion and the willingness to serve in the Israeli military, up to and including the risk of death in combat. In a context where state recognition of grief and loss has become the definitive litmus test of belonging, a commitment to national sacrifice is recruited as a semiotic shield against homophobia. These discourses reveal an internalized form of homonationalism, which frames any progress towards LGBTQ+ inclusion as contingent on having been “earned” through military service, thereby excluding those who do not or cannot conform to this ethos. At the same time, the narratives also expose the fragility of this strategy, since the promise of inclusion frequently gives way to disillusionment, as captured in one interviewee’s reflection: “Now that I can die here, I wonder when I will be able to live here.”

“I am different, I am outside of this grammatical gender”: linguistic practices of non-binary L1 and L2 French, Italian, and Spanish speakers for self-expression

Candice Guerbeau

Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh, United States

Non-binary people often face challenges in expressing their identities, especially with grammatical gender languages like Romance languages (Stahlberg et al., 2007). For instance, in French, Italian, and Spanish, avoiding gendered expressions in everyday conversation is far more difficult than in English, due to their extensive grammatical gender marking. For non-binary multilinguals who use gender-neutral terms daily in English, as a first (L1) or second language (L2), Romance languages constitute a greater challenge to speak and/or learn. In the U.S., where 1 million adults are trans, non-binary, and/or gender non-conforming (Knisely & Paiz, 2021), this may pose a particular problem for those learning/speaking Romance languages. Interdisciplinary research has recently started to explore the experiences of L1 non-binary speakers of Romance languages (French: Kaplan, 2024; Knisely, 2020a, 2020b; Italian: Feketova & Raviv, 2025; Mirabella et al., 2024; Monaco, 2024; Spanish: George et al., 2025) and L2 learners (French: Knisely, 2024; Spiegelman, 2022; Spanish: Baros, 2022; Spiegelman, 2024). Although this research has provided insights into their unique lived experiences, language is often associated with limited opportunities for non-binary self-expression and identity affirmation. While not denying the linguistic challenges and feelings of identity invalidation, the present study chose to center linguistic belonging over disbelonging, and to investigate linguistic practices beyond pronouns. Thus, this study explores the linguistic practices of five U.S.-based non-binary individuals for self-expression in French, Italian, and Spanish. These three languages were included in the study to make connections across languages with shared grammatical gender systems, and both L1 and L2 users were included in an effort to overcome any native-speaker/L2-learner dichotomies. Drawing on a queer languaging-as-a-verb framework (Knisely & Russel, 2024),

this study employed language learning autobiographies and semi-structured interviews to document practices from five non-binary languagers. Moment analysis (Li Wei, 2011) was employed to examine the “metalinguaging data, i.e., commentaries on the language user’s own language practices as lived experience” (p. 1224), providing valuable insights into the ways participants negotiate and create linguistic space for their non-normative gender identities. Multiple strategies were identified across the three languages, including playing with binary grammatical gender through subverting or alternating gender marking, taking advantage of the gender ambiguity of epicenes, choosing neopronouns, and/or using neologisms. These findings illustrate both the importance of language in identity construction and the creativity of non-binary speakers in languaging their own identities. Although it acknowledges (gender) identity as a social and discursive construction that is shaped by and in interaction (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005; Butler, 1990), this study highlights speaker agency and stresses the power of words in self-definition and self-expression (Tudisco, 2018; Zimman, 2017). This study offers useful language resources for L1 and L2 non-binary people as well as loved ones and allies. Furthermore, the strategies identified in this study can inform L2 education, especially considering teachers’ lack of training and resources on gender-inclusive language (Fuentes & Gomez Soler, 2023), which will contribute to creating more inclusive L2 classrooms.

Sexuality as Interactional Achievement: Evidence from a Toronto Queer Oral History

Nick Haggarty

University of Toronto, Toronto, Canada

Narratives are not simply accounts of past events, but interactional sites where speakers evaluate experiences and position themselves in relation to broader social structures (Bucholtz & Hall 2005; Bamberg & Georgakopoulou 2008; Du Bois 2007). Oral history interviews provide a context in which such narratives are produced through guided reflection on past experiences. Queer oral histories extend this further by documenting lives shaped by stigma (Goffman 1963), institutional regulation, and participation in sexual and social communities; they thus provide a resource for examining how experiences are retrospectively interpreted and made meaningful (Cvetkovich 2003).

This paper examines how sexuality is interactionally constructed as a shifting social category in a discourse analysis of a queer oral history interview from the Foolsap Gay Oral History Project (1981–1987). Focusing on three narratives conceptualized as small stories (Bamberg & Georgakopoulou 2008), the analysis applies John W. Du Bois' (2007) stance triangle framework to track how evaluative, affective, and epistemic positioning shape the emergence of sexuality across narrative contexts, while attending to shifts in interactional framing (Goffman 1974). It draws selectively on tools from membership categorization analysis (Stokoe 2012) and Bucholtz & Hall's (2005) tactics of intersubjectivity to support the analysis of specific interactional moments.

Across the three stories, sexuality is constructed in distinct but related ways: as a mechanism of institutional gatekeeping and exclusion (Goffman 1963), as a site where sexual knowledge is sought but disrupted under conditions of surveillance and stigma, and as a domain of embodied knowledge and ethical responsibility within queer sexual practice (Barrett 2017). These shifts are accomplished through changes in stance and interactional framing, including moments of interviewer uptake that reconfigure the trajectory of each narrative.

Read together, these narratives trace shifting relations to belonging and non-belonging, as sexuality is negotiated through exclusion from institutional and normative masculine pathways, disrupted attempts at entry into queer social worlds, and the emergence of alternative forms of belonging grounded in practice, expertise, and relational norms. These shifts are also tied to changing configurations of masculinity, as sexuality is constructed through relations to institutional authority (Air Force), vulnerability and exposure (Buffalo), and forms of expertise and control (S&M) that become differentially legible across contexts. Rather than assuming a singular hegemonic masculinity, the analysis treats masculinities as historically contingent and hierarchically organized (Zimman 2013; Milani 2014; Bucholtz & Hall 2004), showing how forms of authority, vulnerability, and expertise become differentially valued across interactional contexts.

The paper argues that sexuality is not a stable identity or pre-existing attribute, but an interactional achievement that emerges through stance, narrative organization, and shifting normative frameworks of sexuality. It shows how sexuality operates as a shifting site of access, knowledge, and authority across institutional and subcultural contexts. As a methodological pilot for a broader dissertation project, this study contributes to a larger program combining interactional narrative analysis with sociophonetic analysis to examine the diachronic construction of queer masculinity, authenticity, and vocal style in Toronto and Southern Ontario, addressing a relative gap in recent Canadian scholarship on language and sexuality.

References

- Bamberg, Michael & Alexandra Georgakopoulou. 2008. Small stories as a new perspective in narrative and identity analysis. *Text & Talk* 28(3). 377–396.
- Barrett, Rusty. 2017. *From drag queens to leathermen: Language, gender, and gay male subcultures*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Bucholtz, Mary & Kira Hall. 2004. Theorizing identity in language and sexuality research. *Language in Society* 33(4). 469–515.
- Bucholtz, Mary & Kira Hall. 2005. Identity and interaction: A sociocultural linguistic approach. *Discourse Studies* 7(4–5). 585–614.

Cvetkovich, Ann. 2003. *An archive of feelings: Trauma, sexuality, and lesbian public cultures*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Du Bois, John W. 2007. The stance triangle. In Robert Englebretson (ed.), *Stancetaking in discourse: Subjectivity, evaluation, interaction*, 139–182. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Foolscap Gay Oral History Project. 1981–1987. Foolscap Gay Oral History Project. Audio oral history collection. The ArQuives: Canada's LGBTQ2+ Archives, Toronto.

Goffman, Erving. 1963. *Stigma: Notes on the management of spoiled identity*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Goffman, Erving. 1974. *Frame analysis: An essay on the organization of experience*. New York: Harper & Row.

Kiesling, Scott F. 2012. The interactional construction of desire as gender. *Gender and Language* 6(1). 27–50.

Kulick, Don. 2003. No. *Language & Communication* 23(4). 139–151.

Levon, Erez. 2014. Categories, stereotypes, and the linguistic construction of sexual identities. *Language in Society* 43(5). 539–566.

Milani, Tommaso M. 2014. Language and masculinities: Performances, intersections, dislocations. In Susan Ehrlich, Miriam Meyerhoff & Janet Holmes (eds.), *The handbook of language, gender, and sexuality*, 2nd edn., 346–365. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.

Sacks, Harvey. 1972. On the analyzability of stories by children. In John J. Gumperz & Dell Hymes (eds.), *Directions in sociolinguistics: The ethnography of communication*, 325–345. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.

Stokoe, Elizabeth. 2012. Moving forward with membership categorization analysis: Methods for systematic analysis. *Discourse Studies* 14(3). 277–303.

Zimman, Lal. 2013. Hegemonic masculinity and the sound of female masculinity: Retheorizing gender and language variation. *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 23(2). 78–102.

Too Queer to Fit in: Gatekeeping and Intragroup Marginalization on LGBTQ+ Subreddits

Routa Hallapaju

University of Helsinki, Helsinki, Finland

This study explores how gatekeeping of identities manifests itself in discourse on LGBTQ+ subreddits and how conflicts arising from differing views on acceptable expressions of queer identities are handled. Identities are constructed and gain meaning in discourse (Bucholtz and Hall 2005). When it comes to group identities, following norms is central to the shared identity and the protection thereof (Castillo et al. 2007; Limatius and Nevala 2024), as atypically performed group identities can lead to gatekeeping, resulting in restricted access to identity exploration resources through intragroup marginalization (Castillo et al. 2007; Dellers et al. 2024; Fathallah 2024). Othering based on atypically performed gender and sexual identities may lead to conflicts when interactants have differing views on what constitutes a legitimate queer identity.

In this study, the exclusion of queer minorities is explored through corpus-assisted discourse studies (CADS) (Baker 2023). The LGBTQ+ Reddit Corpus (ca. 44 million words), compiled by Hekanaho et al. (2024), serves as the data. More specifically, concordance analyses of search terms (e.g., “not * enough,” “too feminine/masculine,” and “not * trans”) and keywords are used to explore and contextualize gatekeeping discourse on queer subreddits.

An initial exploration of a subset of the corpus, extracted from r/transgender and r/NonBinary, (ca. 800.000 words), reveals that experiences of gatekeeping and intragroup marginalization stem, among other things, from feeling underrepresented in a group. For instance, a thread posted to r/NonBinary draws attention to how nonbinary identities get absorbed into the broader transgender category, indicating that nonbinary people are a minority within gender minorities and need to rely on the larger minority (i.e., binary trans people) to gain visibility also within queer spaces. Other gatekeeping issues in the r/NonBinary data include whether a nonbinary person is allowed to identify

as nonbinary while simultaneously claiming a cis identity and/or experiencing no gender dysphoria.

Feeling like an outlier within a marginalized group is not unique to nonbinary people; similar sentiments are echoed on r/transgender, where trans men report feeling othered due to the assumption that the forum users are first and foremost trans women. Reproducing this assumption in discourses others trans men. For example, questions regarding passing tend to receive comments regarding “sufficient” femininity and suggestions on how to improve it. r/transgender, while supposedly welcoming all trans identities, is de facto primarily a space for trans women, excluding trans men and potentially nonbinary people who claim the trans identity: acts of gatekeeping evoke a concept redditors on r/transgender refer to as transgirl privilege.

Beyond identifying what constitutes an identity as “nonbinary enough” or the “right kind of trans” in online discourse, this study will describe the linguistic strategies employed to manage heated discussions between disagreeing interactants. The aim is to unveil how gatekeeping is linguistically realized and how conflicts regarding expressions of marginalized queer identities are resolved.

References

- Baker, Paul. 2023. *Using Corpora in Discourse Analysis*. 2nd ed. Bloomsbury Academic. <https://www-bloomsburycollections-com.libproxy.helsinki.fi/monograph?docid=b-9781350083783>.
- Bucholtz, Mary, and Kira Hall. 2005. “Identity and Interaction: A Sociocultural Linguistic Approach.” *Discourse Studies* 7 (4–5): 585–614. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461445605054407>.
- Castillo, Linda G., Collie W. Conoley, Daniel F. Brossart, and Alexander E. Quiros. 2007. “Construction and Validation of the Intragroup Marginalization Inventory.” *Cultural Diversity & Ethnic Minority Psychology* 13 (3): 232–40. <https://doi.org/10.1037/1099-9809.13.3.232>.
- Dellers, Leander Y. E., Amanda L. Duffy, and Melanie J. Zimmer-Gembeck. 2024. “Manifestations and Harms of Intragroup Marginalization within the Male Gay Community: A Qualitative Study of Gay and Bisexual Men.” *Psychology of*

Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity, ahead of print, June 13.
<https://doi.org/10.1037/sgd0000724>.

Fathallah, Judith. 2024. 'BEING A FAN OF A SERIAL KILLER IS NOT OK': Gakekeeping Reddit's True Crime Community. *New Media & Society* 26 (10): 5638–5657. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14614448221138768>.

Hekanaho, Laura, Turo Hiltunen, Minna Palander-Collin, and Helmiina Hotti. 2024. “Exploring Self-Identification and Functions of the Identify as Construction in the LGBTQ+ Reddit Corpus.” In *Linguistics across Disciplinary Borders: The March of Data*, edited by Steven Coats and Veronika Laippala. <https://doi.org/10.5040/9781350362291>.

Limatius, Hanna Katariina, and Minna Nevala. 2024. “Intragroup Marginalization in Social Media: Self- and Other-Reference on a Plus-Size Fashion Brand’s Instagram Page.” In *Self- and Other-Reference in Social Contexts: From Global to Local Discourses*, edited by Minna Nevala and Minna Palander-Collin, vol. 342. *Pragmatics & Beyond New Series*. John Benjamins.

Queer Stylisation Beyond Visibility: Modelling Sajiao among Gay Men in Urban China

Shutong Han

University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh, United Kingdom

Queer linguistics has been consistently critiqued for its Western focus (e.g., McEwen & Milani 2014). This paper offers a non-Western intervention by examining the deployment of *sajiao*—a hyper-feminine speech style associated with vulnerability and cuteness (Yueh 2012)—among gay men in China. Building on previous work showing how *sajiao* circulates online as part of a recognisable submissive gay male persona (Author, forthcoming), this study shifts attention from public-facing influencers to everyday gay male individuals.

This paper is situated within a three-year ethnographic project on sexual non-normativity across Beijing, Shanghai, and Chengdu. Specifically, it focuses on interview speech, contextualised by self-recordings and ethnographic fieldnotes, to ask whether *sajiao* persists beyond platformed economies of attention and, if so, how its use is socially patterned. Rather than treating *sajiao* as categorically present or absent, I model it as a gradient stylistic resource varying in both intensity and duration. To do so, I develop a Time-Weighted *Sajiao* Intensity Coefficient (TW-SIC). Drawing on 16 recurrent phonetic and prosodic features identified in the data, such as high overall pitch, sentence-final rising intonation, vowel lengthening, and nasalised voice quality, I assign each *sajiao*-containing intonational phrase an intensity score based on the number of co-present features. Each phrase-level score is weighted by duration and aggregated at speaker level, capturing both how intensely a speaker stylises *sajiao* and how long such stylisation is sustained. TW-SIC is then tested against social variables derived from prior scholarship and ethnographic fieldwork, including sexual role identification (“0/1”, i.e., top/bottom), degree of outness, age, and residential site.

The findings complicate several expectations in the existing literature. First, *sajiao* intensity does not systematically align with “0” (bottom) identification, challenging the assumption that feminised vocal stylisation is principally tied to

bottom-identified men or submissive gay male personae. While “0” and “1” remain salient as circulating figures of personhood (Agha 2003), they do not deterministically govern the deployment of *sajiao* as a stylistic resource. Second, age does not predict *sajiao* intensity, suggesting that *sajiao* is not a straightforwardly age-graded variable. Third, *sajiao* intensity shows no clear correlation with outness, whether measured globally or by interactional domain. This complicates dominant models in Anglophone queer linguistics, where overt stylistic markedness is interpreted as legible identity work that may risk outing the speaker (e.g., Leap 1996, Podesva & Van Hofwegen 2014). Together, these findings suggest that *sajiao* is not tightly tethered to stable identity categories or high levels of sexual identity visibility.

Most notably, *sajiao* intensity is highest in Beijing, the political capital often associated with disciplined institutional masculinity and heightened hegemonic and heteronormative regulation. Rather than showing assimilation or concealment, this pattern suggests that where overt expressions of non-normativity may entail tangible social risk, linguistic stylisation may be intensified or recalibrated as a comparatively low-cost semiotic channel for negotiating queerness. The paper therefore contributes to queer linguistics by decentring visibility-based, identity-centred models of queer speech derived largely from Anglophone contexts, and by showing how queer expressions can operate through gradient, partially legible, and contextually conditioned forms of semiotic practice.

Creating a space for queer conversations in Breton: The Queeromp podcast

Michael Hornsby

Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, Poznań, Poland

Previous work on queer terminology in Breton concentrated on the mechanisms for creating neologisms in the language, and the level of acceptance they attracted among the Breton-speaking population (Hornsby, 2019, 2025; Daussà and Hornsby, 2026). This paper aims to move the discussion on to a particular space where these new terms have begun to be used: the podcast, *Queeromp*, on Radio Kerne (Bramoullé, 2025). How queer Breton speakers talk about their lives and their experiences in this series of 8 podcasts is primarily examined through the lens of visibility, and how a queer Breton-language world is talked into being. Additionally, the paper will examine the extent to which new terms are gaining currency among the Breton-speaking community by a close analysis of the frequency of their use in these podcasts. As minoritised language communities move toward linguistic modernisation in order to deal with the pressures of modernity and globalisation, it is vital that all speakers within these communities are visibly represented in terms of language, and this case study demonstrates how this is being attempted in the Breton language at the present time.

References

Daussa,, Eva J. and Hornsby, Michael. Gender-neutral language in situations of minoritization: Some examples from Catalan and Breton. In *Gender-Inclusive Language: Findings from 14 Languages and Open Research Questions*, edited by Falco Pfalzgraf, De Gruyter Mouton, 2026, pp. 341-360. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783111701608-014>

Hornsby, Michael. 2019. Gender-Fair Language in a Minority Setting: The Case of Breton. *Studia Celtica Posnaniensia* 4(1):59-74.

Hornsby, Michael. 2025. Making Breton gender – and LGBTQIA+ – Fair: Typographical and lexical expansion to reflect diversity within the Breton-speaking community. In John Walsh, Michael Hornsby, Eva J. Daussà, Renée Pera-Ros, Samuel Parker, Jonathan Morris, and Holly R. Cashman, *Queering*

language revitalisation: navigating identity and inclusion among queer speakers of minority languages. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 31-41. DOI: 10.1017/9781009591034 ; Online ISBN: 9781009591034

Gen Z bisexuals less invisible than misperceived: A gay voice study of a spectrum of sexual attractions.

Jinfan Frank Hu¹

Michael Newman²

Patrick Xu¹

Jay Cox¹

(1) Phillips Academy, Andover, United States

(2) CUNY Queens College, New York, United States

The phenomenon of “gay voice” has long found empirical support including the identification of some phonetic cues (e.g., Gaudio, 1994; Smyth et al., 2003, Munson et al., 2005). However, this work has typically examined gay/straight binaries, leaving bisexual and pansexual speakers largely invisible—a scholarly pattern that mirrors the disbelonging experienced by bi+ individuals in both straight and queer spaces. Moreover, while studies establish that listeners are able to perceive sexual orientation above pure chance, few examine the schemata underlying their perceptions.

In this first study of a more comprehensive project, we use attraction as the basis for classification of sexual orientation. Thirty-six male Gen Z speakers who rated themselves between 0 (exclusively female attracted) and 10 (exclusively male attracted), read an identical 60 second passage. Eighty-five undergraduate judges rated each speaker's perceived sexuality on a similar scale although reduced to five points. We examine correlation between the speech and perceptions and whether evaluations of speakers' reported sexuality follow systematic patterns.

Results show that inter-rater reliability is exceptionally high ($ICC_{2,k} = 0.964$), indicating strong consensus about what different points on the spectrum sound like. Nevertheless the correlation between mean listener ratings and speakers' self-reported orientations is not significant ($r = 0.29$, $p = .089$). Principal component analysis of rater patterns illuminates this gap: PC1 (explaining 31% of variance) correlates nearly perfectly with mean listener ratings ($r = 0.998$, $p < .0001$), validating it as the shared gay-to-straight voice

perceptual dimension. Nevertheless, the correlation with participant reported attraction was not significant ($r=0.27$, $p=.108$). In sum, the consensus bore, at best, a limited relationship to speakers' self-reports.

Beyond the primary consensus dimension (PC1), listener judgments vary along additional systematic axes (PC2-PC5). Remarkably, speakers' positions across these non-consensus dimensions strongly predicts listener variation: the correlation between a speaker's distance in this multidimensional space and their ratings' standard deviations was $r = 0.78$ ($R^2 = 0.61$, $p < .0001$). This disagreement suggests listeners potentially attending to different acoustic cues.

Individual listener accuracy varies widely, despite the strong group-level consensus. Listeners with familiarity with gay men in their personal lives showed a small positive association with accuracy, suggesting real-world exposure may reduce the effect of stereotype reliance. Female listeners showed slightly greater individual-rater consistency than male listeners ($ICC_{2,1} = 0.27$ vs 0.23), though this difference was modest and gender did not significantly predict overall accuracy. Signal detection analysis revealed listeners' sensitivity was only slightly above chance (mean $d' = 0.11$), with substantial individual variation.

These findings suggest listeners have a strong, shared idea of what “sounds” gay, bi, and straight, but this perception bears little relationship to how speakers report their attractions. Future work will extract 1) acoustic features to determine what exactly cue these ratings 2) whether those features actually distinguish speakers by orientation, and 3) how substituting reported attraction with identity labels (straight, gay, bi) changes how listeners perceive different forms of queer identity, particularly bisexuals who may be especially vulnerable to erasure.

LGBTQ+ Voices in Speech Data Collection and Technology Development

Clíodhna Hughes

University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh, United Kingdom

Current voice technologies and development pipelines are not well suited to the needs of LGBTQ+ people. Speech data collection presents privacy and security risks, since the voice is inherently identifiable and particular vocal traits are culturally associated with particular genders and sexualities. Several current voice technologies also rely on a notion of “speaker identity”, which is assumed to be a relatively static phenomenon. This conceptualisation is in conflict with sociolinguistics research which demonstrates the voice to be highly flexible, and is further challenged by gender expansive speakers, many of whom seek options for changing their voice.

I plan to work with LGBTQ+ people to learn more about the harms they face regarding the representation of their voice in data collection and technologies, with a view to designing systems and processes that are better suited to their needs. I am hoping to discuss initial data collection methods with the audience.

‘Out of the frying pan and into the fire’ – exclusion, authenticity, and the imagined centre of online transgender communities

Gabe Jackson

Independent scholar, Liverpool, United Kingdom

The concept of the ‘imagined community’, first theorised by Anderson (1983) to analyse the emergence of nationalism, has proven valuable for queer scholars seeking to understand the construction and negotiation of a collective ‘queer’ identity (e.g. Ghaziani 2011; Formby 2017). Many LGBTQ+ people feel themselves to be part of a larger international ‘queer community’, the vast majority of whom they will never have any individual awareness of. Nevertheless, these individuals feel a sense of solidarity and community based upon shared identity and the presumption of shared experiences, values, and needs. This sense of community is associated with feelings of strength and belonging for many queer people, though some research suggests that others may have a more ambivalent relationship with the imagined ‘queer community’, particularly those who are already vulnerable or marginalised among queer people (Alm and Martinsson 2017). This is due, at least in part, to the fact that the ‘sameness’ on which the imagined community is built is socially constructed and negotiated in discourse and cannot reflect the real diversity of queer people (Yuval-Davis 2006), rather a normative ideal of what it means to be a queer person. This normative ideal constitutes the ‘imagined centre’ of the community (Winer 2022), an ‘ideal type’ of queer identity that most closely resembles those within the community with the greatest access to social power and privilege (e.g. white, wealthy, cisgender, able-bodied).

This paper applies these concepts to explore how three transgender young adults construct their identities as peripheral members of transgender communities on TikTok and Facebook. These platform-specific imagined communities are closely tied to the social media platforms that host them (Renninger 2015), often referred to with nicknames such as ‘Trans TikTok’. Taking a sociocultural linguistic approach and applying the tactics of intersubjectivity framework (Bucholtz and Hall 2005), I analyse narratives of exclusion and nonbelonging produced during semi-structured interviews. I examine how participants’ construct the imagined centre of the communities

they engage with and position themselves in relation to this normative ideal when constructing their own ‘problematic’ transgender identities. My analysis is sensitive to the intersectional nature of participants’ lived experiences, exploring how participants’ transgender identity construction is necessarily informed and constrained by intersections of race, economic class, and disability, as well as their experiences of being both closeted and stealth. Finally, I consider how participants’ constructions of the imagined centre of these online imagined communities are shaped by the technical affordances of TikTok and Facebook, highlighting how technical infrastructure can serve to reproduce existing structures of power.

References

- Alm, E. and Martinsson, L. (2016) ‘The rainbow flag as friction: transnational imagined communities of belonging among Pakistani LGBTQ activists’, *Culture Unbound*, 8(3), pp. 218–239.
- Anderson, B. (1983) *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso.
- Bucholtz, M. and Hall, K. (2005) ‘Identity and interaction: a sociocultural linguistic approach’, *Discourse Studies*, 7(4–5), pp. 585–614.
- Formby, E. (2017) *Exploring LGBT Spaces and Communities: Contrasting Identities, Belongings and Wellbeing*. 1st edn. Routledge.
- Ghaziani, A. (2011) ‘Post-Gay Collective Identity Construction’, *Social Problems*, 58(1), pp. 99–125.
- Renninger, B.J. (2015) “‘Where I can be myself ... where I can speak my mind’: Networked counterpublics in a polymedia environment’, *New Media & Society*, 17(9), pp. 1513–1529.
- Winer, C. (2022) ‘Solidarity, Disdain, and the Imagined Center of the Gay Imagined Community’, *Sociological Inquiry*, 92(S1), pp. 710–732.
- Yuval-Davis, N. (2006) ‘Belonging and the politics of belonging’, *Patterns of Prejudice*, 40(3), pp. 197–214.

“They can’t police where I piss”: Trans people’s resistance to the UK Supreme Court judgment on the definition of ‘woman’

Gabe Jackson

Independent scholar, Liverpool, United Kingdom

Lucy Jones

University of Nottingham, Nottingham, United Kingdom

This paper uses queer linguistic analysis to explore the impact on trans people’s lives of a recent decision by the UK Supreme Court. Specifically, we consider the consequences of a judgment made in April 2025, in which the Court ruled that references to ‘man’ and ‘woman’ in British equality legislation refer exclusively to a person’s “biological sex” as recorded at birth. This judgment has potentially wide-ranging implications, including restricting the rights of trans people to access single-sex services and facilities that align with their gender identity. However, it was quickly and widely criticised by legal experts for its lack of clarity and precision (Benn 2025; Good Law Project 2025), and a great deal of confusion has resulted from how the ruling was communicated. Nevertheless, it has been celebrated as a victory for ‘gender critical’ activists campaigning for anti-trans legislation on the basis of “women’s sex-based rights” (Borba 2022: 74) and it has also contributed to increased uncertainty, vulnerability, and public harassment experienced by many transgender people in the UK (López and Corvi, 2025).

Importantly, although the Supreme Court judges considering this case took into account the views of ‘gender critical’ activists, at no point were trans people’s voices heard. In contrast, and in line with trans linguistic principles (Zimman 2021), we have endeavoured in this project to prioritise their perspectives. In this paper, we share data emerging from focus group discussions with trans people from a range of social backgrounds in the UK, held one year on from the judgment. Guided by sociocultural linguistic principles of identity construction (Bucholtz and Hall 2005), we analyse participants’ discursive self- and other-positioning in relation to (a) the ‘gender critical’ campaign group who brought

the case to the Supreme Court, (b) the judgment itself, and (c) key social actors in their lives, including family, friends, and colleagues.

We pay particular attention to the use of stance-taking, affect, and agency in our analysis, revealing how participants position themselves as increasingly marginalised as a result of this ruling. We also explore the discursive strategies of resistance that emerge dialogically from the focus group interactions; participants use humour to undermine and delegitimise the ideological propositions underpinning the judgment and, as a result, collaborate in constructing empowered and agentic stances. Through our discussion of this data, we highlight the importance of sociocultural linguistic analyses which prioritise trans people's resistance to discrimination and structural inequality. We conclude by setting out a series of interventions, informed by the findings of our analysis and developed in collaboration with law scholars, in which we advocate for policy change regarding the inclusion of trans voices in decision-making around gender equality.

References

Benn, A. (2025), "Biological Sex" in the UK Supreme Court: Four Problems with *For Women Scotland v Scottish Ministers* | OHRH'.

Borba, R. (2022), 'Enregistering "Gender Ideology": The Emergence and Circulation of a Transnational Anti-Gender Language', *Journal of Language and Sexuality*, 11 (1): 57–79.

Bucholtz, M. and K. Hall (2005), 'Identity and Interaction: A Sociocultural Linguistic Approach', *Discourse Studies*, 7 (4–5): 585–614.

Good Law Project (2025), 'For Women Scotland: A Legal Critique', Good Law Project.

López, J. and Corvi, F. (2025) Gendered Spaces and the Impact of the Supreme Court Judgement/EHRC Interim Update on Trans, Intersex and Gender Non-Conforming Adults. *TransActual*. Available from: <https://transactual.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Gendered-Spaces-Review-Final.pdf> (accessed 17.03.26)

Zimman, L. (2021), 'Beyond the Cis Gays' Cis Gaze: The Need for a Trans Linguistics', *Gender and Language*, 15 (3): 423–29.

‘Kein(e) Pronomen’: gender-neutral pronouns, or lack thereof, in German

Henriette Johansen

Kassel University, Kassel, Germany

Lydia Wiernik

Max Planck Institute for Human Cognitive and Brain Sciences, Leipzig,
Germany

Gender-neutral pronouns and referring strategies have gained increased recognition in grammatically gendered languages like German, Spanish, and French. While Spanish and French speakers often use gender-neutral neopronouns to refer to gender-diverse people, German makes less prominent use of these and instead relies on avoidance strategies, i.e., referring practices that avoid pronouns altogether (“kein(e) Pronomen” [‘no pronouns’]). Using a mixed-methods online survey, we investigate why such avoidance occurs and which members of gender-diverse communities prefer this strategy. We additionally examine the communicative function of the label “kein(e) Pronomen” as a reflection of this strategy and how (morpho)syntax adapts for “kein(e) Pronomen” users in the discourse. Our guiding hypothesis is that pronoun avoidance is especially common in German because binary pronouns are highly entrenched, and non-binary alternatives are not yet widely established. We will begin data collection in April and expect to present final results at the conference.

“Accept that you are different! Don’t invite people to war!” Affective-discursive practices in the representation of marriage equality in Estonian media

Elisabeth Kaukonen

Raili Marling

University of Tartu, Tartu, Estonia

On 1st of January 2024, marriage equality became legal in Estonia. This was a notable step toward gender equality in an Eastern European country, where feminist and LGBTQ+ activism have emerged only in the 2000s. These developments have sparked tensions and heated debates in public discourse, providing plentiful examples of the ideological use of language to achieve particular political goals (Breeze 2019).

This paper examines the affective-discursive practices in representations of marriage equality in Estonian media, drawing on articles on marriage equality from the news feeds subcorpus (2014–2023) of the Estonian National Corpus 2023 (Koppel & Kallas 2022). Based on Martin’s (2000) distinction between directly constructed, inscribed affect versus more indirect, invoked affect which invites an audience response, we aim to analyze the media representation of marriage equality, focusing on the emotional strategies used to invoke political polarisation. As far-right parties have been surging in global politics, promoting anti-gender narratives (Graff & Korolczuk 2022), which often construct a dichotomy between a collective “us” and an alien “them” (Chojnicka 2025), it is essential to study how this polarisation is enforced through the language of emotions. We will employ corpus-based discourse analysis (Partington et al. 2013) and discourse analysis (Wodak 2015, Breeze 2019) to investigate the use of emotion in creating polarisation.

The preliminary results indicate that in right-wing populist media, marriage equality is portrayed as dangerous and threatening, invoking fear and anger in its audiences. This is done, for instance, by creating a dichotomy between liberals supporting marriage equality and conservatives, using derogatory naming practices, creating exaggerated scenarios, and portraying marriage

equality through mockery and delegitimation, placing it in quotation marks and referring to it as “so-called”. These strategies also appear in mainstream media, albeit in more subtle forms. These representations, we argue, are crucial not just in creating social polarisation, but also in deepening queer disbelonging in a context where the conception of nationhood continues to be based on reproductive heteronormativity (Marling & Põldsam 2022).

References

- Breeze, Ruth. 2019. Emotion in politics: Affective-discursive practices in UKIP and Labour. *Discourse & Society* 30(1). <https://doi.org/10.1177/0957926518801074>
- Chojnicka, Joanna 2025. The Language of Anti-Gender Takeover of Space: The Case of „LGBT-Free“ Zones in Poland. In Ksenija Bogetić (ed.), *Language, Gender and Politics in Central and Eastern Europe*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, pp 209–237.
- Graff, Agnieszka, Elżbieta Korolczuk 2022. Gender, anti-gender and right-wing populism. Recasting the debate. In Agnieszka Graff, Elżbieta Korolczuk (eds.), *Anti-Gender Politics in the Populist Movement*. Oxford: Routledge, pp 15–37
- Koppel, Kristina, Jelena Kallas. 2022. Eesti keele ühendkorpuste sari 2013–2021: mahukaim eesti keele kogu. In Margit Langemets, Maria-Maren Linkgreim & Helle Metslang (eds.), *Eesti Rakenduslingvistika Ühingu Aastaraamat, 207–228*. Tallinn: Eesti Rakenduslingvistika Ühing. <https://doi.org/10.5128/ERYa18.12>
- Marling, Raili, Rebeka Põldsam 2022. Affect and queer intimate entanglements in national-neoliberal Estonia. *Sexualities* 27(3). <https://doi.org/10.1177/13634607221112646>
- Martin, James R. 2000. Beyond exchange: Appraisal systems in English. In Susan Hunston, Geoffrey Thompson (eds.), *Evaluation in Text. Authorial Stance and the Construction of Discourse*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp 142–175
- Partington, Alan, Alison Duguid and Charlotte Taylor. 2013. *Patterns and Meanings in Discourse. Theory and Practice in Corpus-Assisted Discourse*

Studies (CADS). Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Wodak, Ruth 2015. *The Politics of Fear: What Right-Wing Political Discourses Mean*. London: SAGE.

The Unspeakable Tongue and a Borrowed Code: How the Korean Lez Clips English and Cuts through Silence

Julia Kim

University of Notre Dame, South Bend, United States

English queer terminologies have become popularized in many non-Anglophone countries, playing various roles and functions (Leap & Boellstorff 2003; Mourad 2013; Simpson 2023). In South Korea, where open discussions of sexuality are tabooed and homophobia is prevalent, queer speakers have mainly used unique, vernacular code words for in-group communication until popular English queer terms such as “gay,” “lesbian,” “bisexual,” and “transgender” became popularized by activists on college campuses in the early 2000s (Seo 2001). While the prevalence of the English terms has made queer Koreans much more visible in society and provided a sense of solidarity (Kim 2025), examining the sociolects used by Korean gay and lesbian communities reveals some notable differences in how the two groups navigate and articulate their non-normative sexualities. To date, there is a dearth of research on the intersection of queer language, gender power dynamics, and the role that the English language plays in Korea. To address this gap, this study employs a digital ethnography to examine the semiotic roles that Korean queer language plays. The study analyzes over 100 contemporary Korean queer terms drawn from various queer community websites and YouTube videos where Korean queer sexualities are articulated. Findings show that Korean gay slang has a relatively strong, albeit evolving, vocabulary of Korean origin and includes explicit terms for sexual acts and spaces. In contrast, Korean lesbian language heavily relies on clipped English loanwords such as **팜**/pem/ from “femme” and **부**/bu/ from “butch” and primarily focuses on appearance and relational dynamics when expressing their sexual identities. Similarly, when describing sexual practices, they heavily use Anglicized words, including one- or two-syllable clipped terms derived from English words “give” and “take”. These differences highlight the unspeakability of female sexuality within a

conservative, Confucianist Korean society and show how the English language provides a semantic distance that allows sexual expressions. This study argues that while English queer terms empower Korean lesbians by allowing them to bypass the linguistic constraints of the native tongue and find a voice in the spaces between two languages, heavy usage of English terms can create further distance between queer and non-queer speakers and perpetuate the sense of queer disbelonging within the broader society.

The Sound of Resistance: Sociolinguistics of Queer Nationhood in Poland

Jay King

University of Bern, Bern, Switzerland

Historically central to nationalist imaginaries, gender and sexuality have taken on renewed prominence through “anti-gender” campaigns that frame LGBTQ+ communities as threats to traditional values. In Poland LGBTQ+ identities are frequently cast as incompatible with Polishness. This paved the way for the establishment of “LGBT-free zones”, where regions declared themselves “free of LGBT ideology”.

Language is a key site where belonging is constructed, negotiated and contested. However, we know little about how individuals targeted by exclusionary national narratives use language to position themselves as legitimate members of the nation. Drawing on sociolinguistic ethnography in Warsaw, this project investigates how Polish LGBTQ+ individuals use linguistic practices to claim and negotiate national belonging. The project adopts a mixed-methods approach that combines sociophonetics with discourse and interactional analysis. At the time of the conference, the project will be undergoing finalization of the theoretical framework and preparation for ethical approval.

Pronouns as Social Practice: Variability in Non-Binary Pronoun Use in Switzerland

Elijah King

Jay King

University of Bern, Bern, Switzerland

Previous literature identifies pronouns as one of the very few direct indices of gender, attributed to their presumed non-social nature (Ochs, 1993). This view suggests that pronoun use should align consistently with one's gender identity, independent of social context, such as setting or interlocutor. However, as shown by the construction of a true transsexual (Borba, 2019), the adoption of closet pronouns (Conrod, 2019) or shifting pronoun preferences during transition (Zimman, 2019), variability in gendered language choices, including pronouns, can extend beyond alignment with one's gender identification. Pronoun variability can be even more intricate for non-binary individuals who do not always place themselves within the binary pronoun system.

The aim of this paper is to identify factors influencing the pronoun choices of non-binary individuals in various interactional settings and to elucidate why these factors shape such choices. To address this, the paper draws on reported pronoun use across different interactional settings, as well as participants' evaluations of various pronoun-sharing practices. The data consists of responses to an online survey completed by 55 Swiss non-binary participants, as well as two follow-up focus groups. Survey responses and focus group discussions show that participants report the usage of varying pronouns, influenced by factors such as their perception of the interlocutor, current interactional priorities, conversation space, and languages at their disposal.

We argue that these factors shape pronoun choice because pronouns do not operate as stable, direct indexes of gender, but acquire meaning contextually through interaction. While often treated as inherently gender-indexing forms (Ochs, 1993), our data suggest that pronouns can also function through indirect indexicality. Drawing on the notion that linguistic forms do not carry

fixed social meanings (Silverstein, 2003), and the relational view of identity (Bucholtz and Hall, 2005), we conceptualize pronoun use as a socially situated practice rather than a pure reflection of identity. This view is supported by participants' accounts, which show that pronoun choices are shaped by assessments of the interactional situation, for example by avoiding coming out when it is deemed "not worth the effort", or by not using non-binary pronouns in formal settings. In this sense, shifts in pronoun use are agentic, though constrained, responses to context.

Following Foucault's (1991) concept of governmentality, we argue that these choices are shaped by internalized institutional norms. Pronouns thus index stances within fields of power structured by such norms, in which certain meanings become more or less available to speakers. Speakers therefore self-regulate their language use in anticipation of potential consequences, with variation in pronoun use emerging as a strategy for navigating regimes of normativity that render some interactional moves less legitimate. The data shows that even in spaces explicitly defined as supportive, pronoun use remains negotiated rather than fixed, with participants reporting hesitation to use non-binary pronouns in interactions involving power asymmetries (e.g., with a supervisor), despite the interlocutor's explicit support for non-binary people. Therefore, our findings suggest that pronouns function less as direct markers of gender and more as resources through which speakers navigate social positioning in interaction.

References

- Borba, R. (2019). The interactional making of a "true transsexual": Language and (dis)identification in trans-specific healthcare. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* (256), 21–55. <https://doi.org/10.1515/ijsl-2018-2011>
- Bucholtz, M., & Hall, K. (2005). Identity and interaction: A sociocultural linguistic approach. *Discourse Studies*, 7(4–5), 585–614. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461445605054407>
- Conrod, K. (2019). Pronouns raising and emerging [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. University of Washington.
- Foucault, M. (1991). Governmentality. In G. Burchell, C. Gordon, & P. Miller (Eds.), *The Foucault Effect* (pp. 87–104). University Chicago Press.

Ochs, E. (1993). Indexing gender. In B. D. Miller (Ed.), *Sex and gender hierarchies* (pp. 146–169). Cambridge University Press.

Silverstein, M. (2003). Indexical order and the dialectics of sociolinguistic life. *Language & Communication*, 23(3–4), 193–229. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0271-5309\(03\)00013-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0271-5309(03)00013-2)

Zimman, L. (2019). Trans self-identification and the language of neoliberal selfhood: Agency, power, and the limits of monologic discourse. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, (256), 147–175. <https://doi.org/10.1515/ijsl-2018-2016>

Shifting Disability Narratives: Neuroqueering Reddit

Margaux Kraemer

California Institute of Integral Studies, San Francisco, United States

What knowledges are shared by neuroqueer individuals in their online communities in relation to their sex lives, and how can they inform an understanding of neurodiverse people and their sexual practices? To research sex in its facilitation, sex outside of heteronormative relationships, and lived experience without objectifying and infantilizing the disabled subject was, and in large part still is, under-researched and taboo. Nearly absent in early research, popular culture also invisibilized disabled people, especially from forms of intimacy, deeming disabled bodies as either “untouchable” or “supercrrips” (Serlin, 2012, p. 146) who served as sources of inspiration for able bodied counterparts. Disability or neurodivergence is not always recognized as a site for creative potentials (Walker, 2021), especially for sexual practices without medical interventions or theorizing. Rather, the literature tends to incorporate these experiences into discourses of sexual healthism in which the individual is personally responsible for optimizing their bodies, minds, and health to be able to access enjoyable sexual experiences, molding individuals into heteronormative scripts for sex, partnerships, and pleasure (Epstein & Mamo, 2017). While academia may have a significant gap in the discussion of sex within the context of neurodisability, neurodiverse communities thrive online in advice sharing, community formation, and frank discussions of their sexual lives. Little research has been conducted on how these communities approach advice-sharing, forming connections, and how these communities are uniquely important to those who participate.

Guided by a vignette compiled from Reddit posts, this paper is a scoping review of neurodivergence and embodied sexual experiences for neurodivergent and disabled people as well as a proposal for future work. To set the structure for my analysis of discourse regarding neurodivergence and sex in online communities, I bring together sexual healthism (Epstein & Mamo, 2017), neuroqueer theory (Walker, 2021), and disability justice (Piepzna-Samarasinha, 2019), uniquely approaching Reddit online communities to uplift knowledges and care networks shared in neurodivergent posts regarding sex

and sexuality. Each post, and its associated comments, demonstrates threads that explode with empathetic agreement, challenges, overwhelm, needs, and a unique type of belonging and kin networks. Posts revealed a discourse that builds on contemporary disability work, goes beyond medical framings of disability and sex, and presents an embodied approach to sex and disability that breaks heteronormative narratives. I share aspects of this compellation of threads to highlight the types of questions that arise online when anonymity is allowed, as well as the resourcing and connection that occurs within neurodivergent community. Discussing the embodied experiences of neurodivergent people and sex as the communities discuss it will uniquely expand on disability and crip studies, while also attending to these communities as acts of radical disability justice through care networks (Piepzna-Samarasinha, 2019). This work aims to shift discourses in disability and crip studies back to the materiality of the disabled bodymind. Ultimately, the goal of this research is to produce work by and for neurodivergent individuals as they navigate sexual experiences with self and partner, raising the knowledges created online as authoritative experiences of neurodivergent people.

Pragmatic camouflage: The Estonian slur *pede* across hostile, ironic, and ‘neutral’ uses

Aet Kuusik

University of Tartu, Tartu, Estonia

This paper traces the pragmatic life of the Estonian slur *pede* (‘fag’) across hostile, ironic, and seemingly neutral contexts in a mediated public sphere shaped by mass circulation, political instrumentalisation, and in-group negotiation. The analysis draws on a diachronic corpus study of Estonian media texts from the Estonian National Corpus (1995–2023), supplemented by a targeted reading of queer-authored public texts, including essays and interviews in which *pede* appears in self-referential or community-oriented use. Taken together, these materials show that the label does not move neatly from insult to reclaimed identity (Popa-Wyatt, 2020). Instead, its force is continually renegotiated across genres, speakers, and contexts of uptake.

Historically, *pede* derives from *pederast*, a legal-medical label that cast sex between men as both criminal and pathological. In contemporary Estonian, it circulates not only as a direct homophobic insult but also in newer formations. In conservative-populist discourse, it appears in compounds such as *pedeseadus* (‘fag law’) and *pedepropaganda*, where it functions as a tool of political stigmatisation. Elsewhere, it occurs in compounds such as *autoped* (‘car nut’) and *toidupede* (‘food enthusiast’), where it may appear humorous or low-key rather than overtly taboo. I argue that these uses do not represent semantic bleaching or straightforward neutralisation. Rather, they show what I call pragmatic camouflage: the term’s evaluative core remains in place even when its immediate target shifts and its offensiveness is backgrounded. This is best understood as effluence (Camp, 2018): the derogatory perspective leaks into new domains below the threshold of perceived offence.

Queer-authored texts complicate the picture further. In-group uses do not amount to a single reclaiming strategy, but serve different pragmatic purposes, including signalling affiliation, voicing anticipated stigma, marking recognition, and closing down external scrutiny. Much of this usage is better understood as

pragmatic accommodation than as full resignification, although some cases do point towards more playful or provocative forms of reappropriation.

By foregrounding ambivalence rather than reclamation as a completed process, the paper contributes to queer linguistics beyond Anglophone contexts and argues that slur meaning is constituted at the level of utterance, uptake, and circulation. The paper also addresses the ethical tensions of reproducing slur material in academic contexts, where scholarly citation itself constitutes a form of tokening not immune to the dynamics described.

Camp, E. (2018). A dual act analysis of slurs. In *Bad Words* (pp. 29–59). Oxford University Press.

Popa-Wyatt, M. (2020). Reclamation: Taking back control of words. *Grazer Philosophische Studien*, 97(1), 159–176.

Analyzing anti-trans legislation in the United States

Lillianna Lamagna

Dagan Fultz

Kameron Welch

University of Kansas, Lawrence, United States

Analyses of laws and policies show how language can harm trans people, enshrining language that aims to delegitimize and stigmatize trans folk and otherwise produce trans disbelonging [1]. We use the discourse-historical approach [2, 3] to analyze anti-trans legislation in the United States, especially the massive surge of anti-trans bills in recent years. Applications of this approach often expose abuses of power [4], including in policy/legislation. This method is particularly suitable to our project because of its multi-level approach to “context,” which we feel can better position our work in relation to trans experiences so as not to produce additional harm through the research process itself [1]. We have begun data collection and are identifying bills to include in our analysis. We will begin data analysis in June. By August, we anticipate having analyzed a substantive portion of our corpus and will be able to discuss preliminary findings.

References

- [1] Zimman, La. 2025. Transphobic legislation and the linguist: The case of Florida’s Subsection 3. *Proceedings of the Linguistic Society of America*, 10(1), 5878. <https://doi.org/10.3765/plsa.v10i1.5878>.
- [2] Reisigl, Martin, and Wodak, Ruth. 2001. *Discourse and discrimination: Rhetorics of racism and antisemitism*. London: Routledge.
- [3] Reisigl, Martin, and Wodak, Ruth. 2009. The discourse-historical approach. In Ruth Wodak & Michael Meyer, (eds.), *Methods of critical discourse analysis*, 2nd ed. London: Sage.

[4] Reisigl, Martin. 2017. The Discourse-Historical Approach. In John Flowerdew & John E. Richardson, (eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Critical Discourse Studies*.

“We don’t have beaches in our townships”: Muhsin Hendricks, gay Islam and queer translanguaging

William Leap

American University, Washington DC, United States

On February 15, 2025, Muhsin Hendricks, at that time, the only openly gay Imam [Muslim spiritual leader] in the Cape Town ZA metropolitan area, was shot and killed by an unknown assailant’s shotgun blast while walking on a public street near his home in Wynburg, ZA. The local Muslim Judicial Council had recently (2024) issued a “short fatwa” condemning openly gay lifestyles. The Council had previously (2007) declared Muhsin “out of the fold of Islam” for giving public endorsements of homosexuality as a Muslim religious leader. But Muhsin did not feel threatened by the Council’s initial attack. He continued to open his home in Wynburg to queer friendly Muslims for Friday noontime prayers and weekly social events and he provided spiritual and social counseling to any Cape Town area Muslims who felt pushed into the margins by a hetero-normative Islamic habitus. Soon, this effort expanded into an independent facility, the People’s Mosque, in Wynburg.

I interviewed Muhsin Hendricks and several of his gay male-identified Muslim friends as part of my studies of language, sexuality and geography in late apartheid Cape Town in the late 1990’s. During these conversations, Muhsin and colleagues described how, under apartheid, they always wanted to get away from the “Coloured” areas on the Cape Flats, and to explore the gay opportunities open to them in the City Centre., even though they knew that these opportunities were limited, Under apartheid, the City Centre was proclaimed white-space, while they were proclaimed Coloured persons, thereby officially excluded from “white” locations. But the gay Muslims were looking for spaces where they could move without restrictions or, as Muhsin phrased it, “they were looking for opportunities to feel free.”

Gay-identified residents of the area's Black Townships also used an isiXhosa-English phrase "... where I can feel free" when explaining their attraction to the City Centre (Leap 2002, 2005). "Feeling free isiXhosa" led them to the City Centre gay bars or the downtown cruising areas . But "feeling free Muslim English" led gay Muslims to outdoor cruising areas in the Waterkant or in Green Point, to the sidewalks along the beachfront in Sea Point, or to some other open city space. "Feeling free" didn't mean opportunities to cruise, so much as opportunities to "walk around and look." "We don't have open spaces or beaches in our township", Muhsin explained.

None of the languages traditionally associated with Muslim experiences during apartheid show up in these comments or elsewhere in the interview conversations. This suggests that Muhsin and his gay Muslim colleagues are engaged in a particular translanguaging project: using English to explain how Arabic-based Islam could prompt 'explorations of (walking around and looking at)' the queer potential of gay Muslim experiences in late apartheid Cape Town. The queer potential of this translanguaging project disturbed outsiders, and that led Muhsin to end up on the hitlist of an overly-ambitious assassin.

“A pathway to same-sex marriage”: heteronormative argumentation and queer (dis)belonging in South Korea

Jung In Lee

The Pennsylvania State University, State College, PA, United States

In April 2023, South Korea's Justice Party proposed the Life Partnership Act, a bill seeking legal recognition for non-normative households. What might appear as a legal intervention to recognize diversifying forms of social reproduction became instead a site of ideological struggle over family and national belonging. Across legislative cycles, the Act has been framed in both National Assembly debate and news media as “a pathway to same-sex marriage”, rhetoric which renders queer belonging legally and socially untenable. Drawing on the Discourse-Historical Approach (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009), this study examines how conservative lawmakers and media outlets construct queer (dis)belonging through heteronormative and slippery-slope argumentation. Preliminary findings suggest that topoi of threat, responsibility, and culture naturalize heterosexual marriage as the nation's moral foundation while positioning non-normative partnerships as sources of disruption. These findings reveal how discourse functions as governance regulating queer subjectivities and producing conditions of legal and social precarity.

Languageing (Dis)Belonging: Queer Latinx Resistance, Fear, and Solidarity under Anti-LGBTQ+ and Anti-Immigrant Policies

Fernando Lesniak

Metropolitan State University, Saint Paul, MN, United States; University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN, United States

Belonging for queer Latinx communities in the United States is not stable or guaranteed. Instead, it is constantly negotiated, especially in a moment where anti-LGBTQ+ and anti-immigrant policies are shaping how people are allowed to exist, speak, and be recognized. In this paper, I examine how these policies produce conditions of queer (dis)belonging by regulating not only identities, but also the language through which those identities are expressed and understood. In this context, language becomes a key site where inclusion, exclusion, and survival are worked out in everyday ways.

This study draws on qualitative data from a series of research projects with Spanish language educators and students in U.S. classrooms. I focus on the use of gender-inclusive Spanish (e.g., *elle*, *amigues*, *todxs*) and how it is taken up, questioned, or suppressed in educational spaces. Grounded in critical applied linguistics and informed by queer and trans linguistics (Knisely, 2023) and raciolinguistics (Flores & Rosa, 2015), I bring together classroom observations, policy analysis, and interviews to understand how participants navigate linguistic affirmation in increasingly hostile political contexts.

What emerges from this work is that language policies targeting inclusive forms do more than restrict words, they shape who gets to belong. These policies create conditions of fear, erasure, and uncertainty, particularly for queer Latinx students who are already navigating racialized and linguistic marginalization. At the same time, participants show that belonging is not only denied; it is also actively created. Teachers and students describe using inclusive language as a way to care for one another, to build community, and to push back against norms that render them invisible. I conceptualize these practices as *solidarity-based languageing*: inclusive forms as acts of care, relationality, and refusal against cisnormative and monolingual ideologies.

At the same time, this paper does not assume that queer spaces are automatically inclusive. Participants also describe tensions within classrooms and communities around what counts as “appropriate” language, who feels safe using it, and who is recognized as legitimate. These moments show that belonging within queer and educational spaces is uneven and shaped by race, language, institutional expectations, and broader political pressures.

By centering these experiences, this paper argues for an approach to applied linguistics that takes seriously the role of language in shaping who belongs and who does not. It calls for pedagogical and policy approaches that move beyond surface-level inclusion and instead support practices that sustain queer and racialized students in meaningful ways.

Ultimately, this work shows that everyday language use is never neutral. It is deeply connected to broader struggles over power, identity, and justice; and it is through these everyday practices that people both experience exclusion and create new possibilities for belonging.

Queering the Voice: Phonetics of Sexual Orientation

Yu-Leng Lin

Institute of Linguistics, National Chung Cheng University, Chiayi, Taiwan

This study examines how individual psychosocial factors shape phonetic characteristics associated with sexual orientation. Sociolinguistic explanations have traditionally focused on group-based models, suggesting that speakers from lower-prestige social groups, such as gay men, may adopt distinctive speech features to resist or accommodate dominant norms. However, these models rely on binary identity categories and do not fully explain cross-cultural variation. For example, research conducted in Mainland China (Geng & Gu, 2022) proposed the concealment hypothesis, which argues that speakers may suppress stereotypically gay-sounding features in less accepting sociocultural contexts.

The current study tests whether phonetic variation is better explained by individual-level factors, focusing on adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and self-acceptance as predictors of speech. Conducted in Taiwan, a society generally more accepting of sexual minorities, it also evaluates the cultural specificity of the concealment hypothesis.

Forty male native speakers of Taiwanese Mandarin were recruited, including 20 self-identified gay men and 20 heterosexual men. Participants completed a reading-aloud task, and the resulting speech samples were analyzed for five acoustic variables: vowel space area (VSA), sibilant duration, sibilant spectral skewness, sibilant center of gravity (COG), and fundamental frequency (F0). Participants completed questionnaires measuring ACEs and self-acceptance beliefs. Height and weight were recorded to test the biosocial hypothesis that body size influences vocal characteristics.

The findings from linear mixed-effects models do not support the concealment hypothesis. Instead, they provide support for continuous, individual-level factors such as self-acceptance, as well as partial support for the biosocial hypothesis.

First, sexual orientation alone did not significantly predict either F0 or vowel space area in this sample. This contrasts with findings from the Mainland China study, suggesting that speakers in more accepting sociocultural contexts may not suppress phonetic features linked to sexual orientation. However, gay participants did show distinct sibilant articulation patterns, with significantly higher COG and more negative spectral skewness. These features reflect more frontal articulation, similar to patterns previously reported in Western sociophonetic studies of gay speech.

Second, self-acceptance emerged as a significant predictor of phonetic variation. Participants with higher levels of self-acceptance, regardless of sexual orientation, tended to have higher pitch and more expanded VSA. These features, often associated with gay speech, may instead reflect psychological integration and comfort with one's identity. While ACE scores did not show a direct effect on phonetic variables, they may influence speech indirectly through self-acceptance.

Third, the results provided partial support for the biosocial hypothesis. Body weight did not significantly affect speech, but height showed a significant negative relationship with vowel space area. Taller participants produced smaller vowel spaces, contradicting earlier assumptions that anatomical size directly determines articulatory range. This finding further demonstrates the influence of social and psychological factors on speech, even for features considered biologically constrained.

Overall, the findings suggest that phonetic features associated with sexual orientation are not fixed group markers but reflect interactions between sociocultural context and individual psychological factors, particularly self-acceptance.

Geng, P., & Gu, W. (2022). Acoustic and perceptual characteristics of Mandarin speech in gay and heterosexual male speakers. *Language and Speech*, 65(4), 1096-1109.

What's in a (trans) name? Indirect sociolinguistic profiling of personal names chosen by trans individuals in Spain

Emma Machado de Souza

John Vinagre Vázquez

Universidad de Salamanca, Salamanca, Spain

Personal names function as indexes of gender in most speech communities (Pilcher, 2017) and the names that trans individuals select during transition serve as semiotic resources for communicating gender identity (Schmidt-Jüngst, 2020; Lind, 2023). A growing body of research has examined the motivation behind trans name choices (Obasi et al., 2019; Jiménez, 2020; Anzani et al., 2023), the role of naming in identity construction (Aldrin, 2014; Kinney & Muzzey, 2021), the mental-health benefits of chosen-name use (Rusell et al., 2018) and the specific naming patterns observed in the Spanish trans community (Vinagre, 2024). This literature, however, centres on the perspective of the name bearer. Whether names chosen by trans individuals carry distinctive sociolinguistics associations for cisgender perceivers (independently of any knowledge about the bearer's gender identity) remains uninvestigated.

This study addresses that gap through an indirect perception paradigm applied to Peninsular Spanish. A stimulus set of 48 personal names was constructed along two controlled dimensions: source (names empirically attested as chosen by trans people in Spain, collected from social media and prior research in consultation with trans community members vs. frequency-matched control drawn from population data) and typicality (high-frequency, generationally conventional names vs. low-frequency or phonologically and temporally marked names). Names were matched across conditions for phonological gender marking, syllable count and generational frequency.

Cisgender participants recruited only rate each name on dimensions previously shown to mediate the social evaluation of personal names: perceived femininity and perceived masculinity as independent scales (Zimman, 2020), commonality, modernity, social-class association and estimated bearer age.

Crucially, no reference to gender identity or trans status appears at any point in the task. Beyond avoiding the demand characteristics inherent in a direct categorisation task (e.g. “Is the name cis or trans?”), this indirect design also sidesteps the ethical risk of inviting participants to treat transness as something detectable from a name (a framing that could reinforce stigmatising assumptions).

Data are analyzed with linear mixed-effects models with crossed random effects for participant and name (Barr et al., 2013). Source serves as the primary fixed effect, typically and their interaction as moderator, and participant age, gender, education and LGBTQ+ affiliation as covariates. The crossing of source and typicality allows the analysis to disentangle social meaning attributable to trans-specific indexicality (Ecker, 2008; Silverstein 2003) from effects reducible to perceived name rarity or generational mismatch. If trans-attested names diverge for matched control (for instance, by being perceived as less common or more modern), they may carry indirect indexical values (Ochs, 1992) that render them sociolinguistically legible as non-normative even without explicit identity formation, with tangible consequences for passing, privacy and exposure to discrimination. If no such divergence emerges, the notion of “trans-coded names” lacks a semiotics basis in the names themselves and must be attributed to other channels of social information. Both outcomes hold implication for how onomastics practices intersect with gender indexicality in trans communities.

HIV Prevention, PrEP, and the conditions of belonging in Healthcare in the U.S. South

Diogo Maicon Krevoniz Balduino

University of South Carolina, Columbia, United States

This project examines how meanings around HIV prevention and Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) are constructed, enacted, challenged, negotiated, and co-operatively managed across different communicative events in the U.S. South. The study approaches PrEP and prevention not only through biomedical framings, but also as semiotic objects shaped by intersecting moral, religious, and public health discourses. Drawing on linguistic and medical anthropology, the project explores how categories such as risk, responsibility, and adherence are interactionally constructed, and how these categories participate in shaping the conditions under which certain sexual practices and subjects become intelligible, legitimate, or contested as sites of belonging and exclusion within institutional contexts. The project employs ethnographic fieldwork in a faith-based nonprofit healthcare organization in South Carolina, including recorded clinical encounters, interviews, and analysis of institutional materials. By the time of the conference, the project will be in the early stages of data collection and preliminary analysis.

Queer Masculinities: How Men Use Tribes on Grindr to Understand Their Masculinity

Vince Mallia

Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh, United Kingdom

This study aims to explore how men who use Grindr understand masculinity as plural, non-fixed, and socially negotiated, and how Grindr Tribes function as flexible resources for meaning-making rather than fixed identity categories. The first objective examines participants' understandings of masculinity without reference to Tribes to avoid priming essentialist interpretations. The second objective investigates how Tribes are used to negotiate, resist, or reconfigure dominant masculine norms. Using a qualitative, exploratory methodology, semi-structured interviews were analysed through the lenses of queer theory, hegemonic masculinity, and the social identity approach. Findings indicate that masculinity is commonly constructed in opposition to femininity while simultaneously understood as fluid and evolving, though constrained by binary social expectations. Across culturally diverse participants, understandings of masculinity were largely consistent. Importantly, masculinity was also attributed to men engaging in receptive sexual practices or submissive relational dynamics, as well as to trans men, complicating hegemonic associations between masculinity, dominance, and embodiment. The study recommends conceptualising digital identity categories as destabilising rather than reinforcing fixed models of masculinity.

Multimodal constructions of transgender (dis)belonging in an American political talk show

Martino Mangano

Georgetown University, Washington, DC, United States

This paper explores anti-transgender multimodal discourse in the context of the 2024 American presidential election. On September 20, 2024, the Donald Trump presidential campaign released an anti-transgender attack ad targeting the Kamala Harris campaign for Harris' previous pro-transgender stances. In the weeks after the airing of this ad, Joe Scarborough, a conservative political commentator on the morning talk show *Morning Joe*, claimed that the Harris campaign's lack of response to this ad and Democratic trans-inclusive policy stances would cost the campaign the crucial demographic of multicultural and working-class male voters in swing states. This paper demonstrates that Scarborough utilizes prosodic and gestural linguistic practices within enactments of confused liberal campaign strategists, and trans-inclusive liberals more generally, to frame trans-inclusive policies as beyond common sense, fomenting transgender (dis)belonging within the United States. I show that a growing group of trans-agnostic reactionary liberals (TARLs) (Chu, 2024), described as liberals who disagree with trans-inclusivity in progressive politics, frame anti-transgender messaging through verbal and embodied discursive practices.

In this paper, I perform a multimodal discourse analysis of Scarborough's discourses from October to November 2024 about the Trump campaign's anti-trans attack ad against Harris. I demonstrate that Scarborough's depictions imagine (i) a prototypical multiracial and working-class swing-state male voter who becomes disgusted by Harris' pro-transgender stances, while enacting (ii) a confused Harris campaign staffer who ignores what Scarborough calls "common sense" stances on transgender issues. The data show that anti-transgender enactments incorporate prosodic and gestural stance-making to ridicularize pro-transgender politicians and index transgender inclusivity as beyond common sense. This work builds on linguistic anthropological research on enactments (Hall et al., 2016; Sidnell, 2006; Streeck, 2008) to illuminate

these communicative practices and link anti-transgender multimodal discourse to transgender (dis)belonging in the United States.

References:

Chu, A. L. (2024, March 11). Freedom of sex: The moral case for letting trans kids change their bodies. New York Magazine.

<https://nymag.com/intelligencer/article/trans-rights-biological-sex-gender-judith-butler.html>

Hall, K., Goldstein, D. M., & Ingram, M. B. (2016). The hands of Donald Trump: Entertainment, gesture, spectacle. *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory*, 6(2), 71–100. <http://dx.doi.org/10.14318/hau6.2.009>

Sidnell, J. (2006). Coordinating gesture, talk, and gaze in reenactments. *Research on Language and Social Interaction*, 39(4), 377–409.

Streeck, J. (2008). Gesture in political communication: A case study of the Democratic presidential candidates during the 2004 primary campaign. *Research on Language and Social Interaction*, 41(2), 154–186. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08351810802028662>

Role nouns in Dutch: Towards more inclusive linguistic practice

Alexander Martin

Hans Wilke

University of Groningen, Groningen, Netherlands

Research on role nouns (e.g., ‘writer’, ‘professor’) in grammatical gender languages has shown that so-called ‘generic’ masculine forms (i.e., using the masculine to refer to mixed-gender groups) bias listeners towards thinking of men (e.g., Gygas et al., 2008). A common alternative is mixed forms (e.g., ‘actors and actresses’), which have been shown to diminish the bias of masculine forms (e.g., Brauer & Landry, 2008; Xiao, Strickland & Peperkamp, 2023). However mixed forms are not explicitly inclusive to non-binary people in many languages. Based on our previous work looking at masculine vs. mixed forms in Dutch, we will test if currently marginal but productive gender-neutral forms (e.g., *studerenden* instead of the standard *studenten* (M) or *studentes* (F)) also function to correct the male bias of masculine forms without reinforcing binary perceptions of gender morphologically. We are also designing a survey about different role noun forms to be distributed amongst gender-diverse speakers of Dutch.

Multilingual queer speech communities and languaging practices among Latine/Latinx college-aged speakers in the U.S.

R Mata

Western Washington University, Bellingham, United States

A pilot study of five college-aged Latinx/Latine speakers who self-identify as 2SLGBTQI reveals the complex languaging dynamics of multilingual queer speech communities in a geographical area of the U.S. where Spanish is a minoritised language and there is high acceptance of 2SLGBTQI individuals as reflected in local policies, demographics, and linguistic landscape.

In a variety of tasks, the speakers (L1 Spanish, L2 English, raised in the U.S.) map out first their general speech communities (GSC) and subsequently their queer speech communities (QSC), which consist of interactions with other 2SLGBTQI individuals and/or about 2SLGBTQI identity/sexuality. Preliminary results indicate marked differences between GSC and QSC with regards to code, modality, and depth of interaction.

In GSC, in-person interactions are balanced with regards to code (Spanish-English-Spanglish) and are very diverse regarding the age groups of the participants. Virtual interactions in GSC are rare in Spanish, except when they occur among Spanish-monolingual family members.

In QSC, in-person interactions are English-dominant among members of a similar age-group, as well as with older speakers in a university setting; in-person interactions in Spanish are rare, and in Spanglish they are limited to certain family members. Virtual interactions in QSC can be private (one-on-one), closed (WhatsApp group), or open (online forum or social media), and are primarily English dominant with very few occurring in Spanglish and almost none in Spanish.

The onset of university education marks a crucial shift in the development of QSC for this population. It is at this point that speakers report a shift in depth of interaction from greater depth in their GSC to their QSC. Regarding modality, the depth of interaction in QSC expands into the in-person realm as speakers interact with more 2SLGBTQI individuals of different age groups; there is also

an expansion of virtual interactions in QSC at this point, but this continues a trend that starts before university, corroborating the safety that virtual spaces provide to QSC.

This study contributes to the growing understanding of the nature of multilingual QSC among Latine/Latinx speakers in the U.S. (Cashman, 2017; Milani & Cashman, 2024), with a focus on people of colour that includes race, gender identity, and socioeconomic status in addition to sexuality (Hames-García, 2011). It also explores the role that universities play in the development of QSR and queer identity formation for speakers of colour (Rosado, 2011; Rosado & Toya, 2015). Finally, it approaches the topic within frameworks such as *jotería* that take into account intersectional theories of resistance and agency particular to Latine/Latinx populations (Gutierrez-Perez, 2026, 2016; Arreola-Reyes, 2017).

How to Do Things with Woofs: Examining the Use of Non-Human Vocalizations as a Genre of Paralanguage in the Queer Pup Play Kink Community

Terence McKeown

York University, North York, Canada

There has been growing scholarly interest in the ‘Pup’ subculture, a kink subculture based around ‘pup play’—a form of role play with one or more participants taking on the role of a dog—which has its roots in the 1970s-80s leatherqueer community (Lawson and Langdrige, 2020; Hammack and Wignall, 2024; Wignall et al., 2022; Pasoff et al., 2025). Despite a growing body of work on pups within psychology and related social sciences, there has been no research on the linguistic practices of this group. Working from an ethnographic sociolinguistic framework, this project aims to examine the use of vocalic canine mimicry, or non-human vocalizations (such as barks, whines, growls, etc.), henceforth NHVs, as utilized by members of the pup community.

Preliminary results based on 22 semi-structured interviews and 134 survey responses indicate that pups use NHVs to broadcast their emotional state and orientation towards actions or objects in their environment. The NHVs of pups also appear to serve as a site for identity performance – both of traits that a pup associated with themselves as a pup and traits found outside of their kink identity. NHVs appear to be utilized in a variety of scenarios, ranging from sexuality-focused events, to non-erotic social encounters with friends, to self-directed vocalizations. The specifics of communicating the illocutionary intent of a given NHV may be aided through gestures, pre-existing relationships, or modification of prosodic features of the NHV. Many of the vocalic strategies utilized by pups to index specific orientations or illocutionary goals broadly mirror prior scholarship on sound-symbolism in prosodic and suprasegmental features (Ohala, 1984; Gussenhoven, 2016) as well as the socio-pragmatic work of other linguistic and paralinguistic aspects of communication (Poyatos, 1993; Austin, 1965; Austin, 1975).

These early findings suggest that, situated within a specific queer community of practice, vocalizations with minimal formal semantic content can be used to

illocutionary and indexical effect through interaction with and interpretation through subcultural norms. I argue in the case of pup NHVs that the subcultural frameworks provided by this community of practice allow for the development of a communicative genre that blends the affective distinction between linguistic and paralinguistic modes of communication. This work on a kinky sexual minority community as a site of sociolinguistic research joins a growing body of linguistic scholarship engaging with the language practices and cultural works associated with kink communities (Crane and Ireland, 2022; Hughes and Hammack, 2018; Hanafi and Pratama, 2024; Chambers, 2019).

Citations:

Austin, J. L. (1975). *How To Do Things With Words: The William James Lectures delivered at Harvard University in 1955*. Oxford University Press.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198245537.001.0001>

Austin, W. M. (1965). Some social aspects of paralinguage. *Canadian Journal of Linguistics*, 11(1), 31–39. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0008413100005703>

Chambers, E. N. (2019). “Its Something You Do Bro”: Language and Identity on a Male Erotic Hypnosis Messageboard. *ProQuest Dissertations & Theses*.

Crane, P. R., & Ireland, M. E. (2023). Dominants, Submissives, and Bottom-up Text Analysis: Exploring BDSM Roles Through Romantic and Erotic Narratives. *The Journal of Sex Research*, 60(4), 452–462. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00224499.2022.2111400>

Gussenhoven, C. (2016). Foundations of Intonational Meaning: Anatomical and Physiological Factors. *Topics in Cognitive Science*, 8(2), 425–434. <https://doi.org/10.1111/tops.12197>

Hammack, P. L., & Wignall, L. (2024). “Be Dog Have Fun”: Narratives of Discovery, Meaning, and Motivation among Members of the Pup Subculture. *Sexuality & Culture*, 28(6), 2537–2556. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12119-024-10242-y>

Hanafi, M.H. & Pratama, R.R. (2024). Dominant and Submissive: Speech Act during BDSM Intimate in 50 Shades of Gray (2015) As submitted for Prosiding Seminar Nasional Linguistik dan Sastra (SEMANTIKS) 2024

Hughes, S. D., & Hammack, P. L. (2019). Affirmation, compartmentalization, and isolation: narratives of identity sentiment among kinky people. *Psychology & Sexuality*, 10(2), 149–168. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19419899.2019.1575896>

Lawson, J., & Langdridge, D. (2020). History, culture and practice of puppy play. *Sexualities*, 23(4), 574–591.

Ohala J. J. (1984). An ethological perspective on common cross-language utilization of F0 of voice. *Phonetica*, 41(1), 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.1159/000261706>

Pasoff, David & Davies, Adam & Neustifter, Orion & Joy, Phillip. (2025). *Canine Connections: Exploring the Interplay Between Community Events and Pup-Play Engagement*.

Poyatos, F. The many voices of laughter: A new audible-visual paralinguistic approach *Semiotica*, vol. 93, no. 1-2, 1993, pp. 61-82. <https://doi.org/10.1515/semi.1993.93.1-2.61>

Wignall, L., McCormack, M., Cook, T., & Jaspal, R. (2022). Findings From a Community Survey of Individuals Who Engage in Pup Play. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 51(7), 3637–3646. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10508-021-02225-z>

Transgressive Mouthings: Indexing Queerly in ASL

Erin Moriarty

University of Virginia, Charlottesville, United States

Octavian Robinson

The Ohio State University, Columbus, United States

This paper examines the politics of contact between hegemonic languages, such as English, and relatively minoritized languages, such as American Sign Language (ASL), with a specific focus on how gender and sexuality are indexed. ASL's multimodality affords infinite possibilities for queering binary understandings of gender, particularly through phenomena like mouthing and pointing. Mouthing, or the silent articulation of spoken/written words alongside the simultaneous production of a sign (Jaraisy & Stamp, 2024), has historically been marginalized in linguistic research. Similarly, pointing, an indexical feature of ASL, offers unique affordances for encoding meaning through non-arbitrary gestures, extending the possibilities available in spoken languages (McBurney, 2002). These elements, when analyzed through a gender-critical, queer, and trans lens, challenge conventional categorizations of linguistic normativity.

Historically, perspectives on Deaf language, such as those advanced by Helmer R. Myklebust (1960, republished in 2022), have framed certain ASL structures as language errors. Myklebust used the term deafisms to describe patterns of usage that deviate from spoken language norms. This pathologization reflects linguistic ableism, which constructs ASL as deficient rather than recognizing its expansive possibilities for world-making. Through a Crip Linguistics lens, we interrogate the assumptions underpinning such pathologization, highlighting how so-called errors are instead productive sites of linguistic innovation and self-determination.

A central concern of this paper is what happens when heteronormative expectations are applied to Deaf language practices. We specifically focus on the mouthing of pronouns in ASL. Pronoun use in ASL offers a compelling site for analyzing how gender is indexed and how modalities can reinforce or disrupt expectations of gender normativity. Given that ASL's visual-gestural

modality allows for fluid and expansive gender expressions, its pronoun system provides unique insight into how trans and nonbinary identities are signified, misread, or erased within hegemonic linguistic frameworks.

Queering the Sexual Script: Intimacy, Heteropatriarchy, Sex and Power

Manjot Multani

California Institute of Integral Studies, San Francisco, United States

This presentation explores how young unmarried Indian adults currently residing in Chandigarh, India navigate their sexuality. The research broadly addresses the following research questions: How is sexuality constituted in the lives of young people living in Chandigarh, India? How do various social institutions configure and consequently politicize sexuality in young people's everyday lives while living in Chandigarh? Participants included cis-gender and queer individuals between the ages of 19-23 of whom predominantly compose the middle-class in Chandigarh. The participants generally claim a Sikh or Hindu religious identity as well as specific caste-based identities within these religious ideologies.

During fieldwork from 2020-2021, participants shared their personal stresses, sexual curiosities, and personal and professional aspirations. It became clear that these three themes remain entangled in fated, traditionalist cultural scripts as the participants often place these at a junction in relation to one another in the contemporary moment. I propose that Indian youth in Chandigarh diverge from social norms or sexual scripts in a bid to fulfill their own desires, at times queering the sexual script. Ultimately, this study highlights the gendered realities of intimacy, virginity, sex, and queerness within a heteropatriarchal society to show how Chandigarh's youth define, discuss, and operationalize these concepts.

The concepts *intimacy* and *sexuality* discursively traverse local and global registers. From ethnographic fieldnotes, we understand how these are employed, revealing much about how power moves to inform the interpretations and experiences of female, non-binary, and queer young adults in Chandigarh (Fahs and McClelland 2016). This presentation emphasizes how the spoken and the unspoken in discourses of sexuality highlight the power differentials and discursive registers at play to reveal sexual scripting specific to this region. I argue young people coming of age in contemporary India are negotiating their aspirations as they recursively revise sexual scripts

they encounter across glocal (Herdt, Marzullo, and Petit, 2021) spatial registers in their daily lives, while also traversing their intimate self-making negotiations across social position of age, sex, caste, class, and gender.

A community-based approach to queer terminology provision in Irish

John Walsh

University of Galway, Galway, Ireland

Jamie Murphy

University College Dublin, Dublin, Ireland

Despite its status as an official and national language, Irish is in a minoritised position with only small numbers of active, regular speakers in a context of wider passive knowledge due to language policy since 1922, which made it a core subject throughout mandatory education. Terminology creation led by official agencies began in 1927, initially to focus on educational requirements. A Permanent Terminology Committee was established in 1968 and is now under the auspices of the national language planning agency, Foras na Gaeilge (Ní Ghallchobhair, 2014). Despite a huge increase in Irish language terminology in the past 20 years, due in part to the status of Irish as an official working language of the European Union, only recently has work begun on terminology related to LGBTQ+ identities and other related matters. The first part of this paper outlines the sociolinguistic context of Irish and reviews previous attempts, some ad-hoc, at LGBTQ+ terminology creation — for example, a first and second edition of a Queer Irish-language Dictionary ‘*An Foclóir Aiteach*’ (Ní Choistealbha, 2018 & Mac Eoghain, 2022). It also critically engages with debates about the need for sustained, reciprocal engagement between grassroots actors and authoritative bodies like the Terminology Committee.

The second half outlines the bottom-up approaches employed by the Terminology Working Group (An Mheitheal Téarmaíochta) within the queer arts collective AerachAiteachGaelach (‘GayQueerIrish’). The Terminology Working Group consists of members of the LGBTQ+ community interested in terminology creation and language usage who meet to discuss emerging and already established terms in the Irish language. This working group is one of many facets of AerachAiteachGaelach, an arts collective of around 80 members ranging from artists and writers to poets and drag performers. The efforts made by this working group within AerachAiteachGaelach contrast with

traditional top-down institutional models of term creation and dissemination. While discussion around queer terminology creation has been detailed in previous research (Murphy and Mac Murchaidh, 2025 & Mac Risteaird, 2023) this paper details the group's workflow, including the development of a bespoke Irish-language corpus for potential term extraction, consultation with the wider LGBTQ+ community and subsequent collaboration with the Terminology Committee to ensure authoritative dissemination within the Irish-language speaking community as a whole.

References:

Mac Eoghain, Tadhg, 2022. *An Foclóir Aiteach [The Queer Dictionary]*. 2nd ed. Union of Students in Ireland/Aontas na Mac Léinn in Éirinn. <https://amle.ie/an-focloir-aiteach-the-queer-dictionary-2nd-edition/>

Mac Risteaird, Seán, 2023. 'Móreagrán Aiteach'. *Iris Comhar*, 83(6). 1-43.

Murphy, Jamie and Mac Murchaidh, Ciarán, 2025. 'LGBTQ+ terminology in Irish and other Celtic languages: promoting pride in domain gain'. *Translation Spaces*, 14 (1), 99-119.

Ní Choisdealbha, Laoighseach. 2018. *An Foclóir Aiteach [The Queer Dictionary]*. 1st ed. Union of Students in Ireland/Aontas na Mac Léinn in Éirinn. <https://usi.ie/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/AN-FOCL%C3%93IR-AITEACH.pdf>

Ní Ghallchobhair, Fidelma. 2014. *Ár dtéarmaí féin*. Dublin: Cois Life.

How a transmedicalist subreddit constructs a dysphoric identity by exploiting the varying construals of dysphoric as a property

Sumeyye Nabieva

University of Colorado Boulder, Boulder, United States

This paper explores the identity-constructing element of the adjective *dysphoric* in transmedicalist spaces on the social media platform Reddit, where the transmedicalist framework asserts a disbelonging in the trans community of people who are "non-dysphoric." Gender dysphoria as a medicalized condition is encoded in DSM-5, the latest version of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, as "clinically significant distress or impairment related to a strong desire to be of another gender" (American Psychiatric Association 2013). However, the grammatical and semantic characteristics of the *dysphoric* property are not uniformly realized. For instance, *dysphoric* can be construed as either a stage-level property (SLP) ("I've been feeling dysphoric lately") or an individual-level property (ILP) ("I am a dysphoric person"), as described by Carlson (1977). Konnelly (2021, 2023) hypothesizes two different understandings of gender dysphoria, partially influenced by alignment or disalignment with transmedicalist ideology, under which one must experience gender dysphoria in order to be considered trans. One of these understandings relates to the time-bound mental state of dysphoria, while the other emphasizes dysphoria as a institutional, diagnosis-based threshold. This hypothesis is one I test in the present corpus annotation study, focusing on the SLP/ILP distinction.

To this end, I have gathered a Reddit-based corpus consisting of two ideologically defined subcorpora. The general/non-transmedicalist subcorpus includes text from subreddits r/Trans and r/Asktransgender, while the transmedicalist subcorpus subreddit includes text from the subreddit r/Truscum, which is more transmedicalism-aligned. Two linguistics experts annotated 608 instances of *dysphoric* in the corpus for the SLP/ILP distinction, as well as other variables like nominalization ("We need to organize a support group for all the dysphorics in the chat"), predicative ("If you feel/are dysphoric, try a different dress style.") vs. modifying ("Dysphoric people typically feel

better after transitioning.") adjective function, and animacy (e.g., in "Skirts are dysphoric for him," *dysphoric* is predicated of an inanimate object).

Annotation results show that individual-level use of *dysphoric* is dominant in the transmedicalist subcorpus, while stage-level use of *dysphoric* is dominant in the general trans subcorpus ($\chi^2 = 129.945, p = 4.212 \times 10^{-30}$), but not without several exceptions and crossovers. Through analysis of excerpts and sentences from both corpora, I illustrate that identity construction through intersubjectivity tactics (Bucholtz & Hall 2004) figures in individual-level uses of *dysphoric* on r/Truscum, against which the notion of a "non-dysphoric (person)" is positioned, adding a novel, sociopolitical component into the motivation behind the SLP/ILP distinction and arguing for a degree of contestedness of the notion of gender dysphoria. It also illustrates how trans disbelonging can be enforced at a semantic and constructional level, highlighting the importance of lexical and compositional meaning in discursive practices of both denaturalization and, simultaneously, the strife for authorization.

References

- American Psychiatric Association. 2013. *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders: Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (5th edn.)*. Arlington, VA: American Psychiatric Association.
- Bucholtz, Mary and Kira Hall. 2004. Theorizing identity in language and sexuality research. *Language in society* 33(4).469-515.
- Carlson, Gregory Norman. 1977. *Reference to kinds in English*. Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Amherst dissertation.
- Konnolly, Lex. 2021. Both, and: Transmedicalism and resistance in non-binary narratives of gender-affirming care. *Toronto Working Papers in Linguistics* 43(1).
- Konnolly, Lex. 2023. Transmedicalisms, transnormativities, and semantic authority. *Linguistics Out of the Closet: The Interdisciplinarity of Gender and Sexuality in Language Science*, ed. by Tyler Everett Kibbey, 3.169-193. Berlin, Germany: Walter de Gruyter GmbH & Co KG.

Reflections on the Politics of Secrecy and Visibility in Ulti

Enakshi Nandi

Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi, India

What does it mean to be a secret language? Who decides the conditions and limits of this secrecy, and who these secrets could be shared with? Does the language need to remain secret, consistently and eternally, to retain its value for its speech community? Can a queer language, nurtured and developed in secrecy, exist and thrive meaningfully, presumably in a slightly altered sociolinguistic context, when the shroud of secrecy is lifted?

In this paper, I reflect on these questions in the context of Ulti, a secret language spoken by the hijra-koti community in West Bengal. Drawing from observations during my research with the community, various discussions with and comments by hijras and kotis on the subject, and recent events involving the introduction of Ulti to mainstream society by certain members of the community, I explore the various undercurrents of personal security, economic benefit, emotional connection, assertion of in-group identity, and politics of visibility shaping this conversation. I also engage with questions of ethics, accountability, rights, permission and responsibility that necessarily follow any conversation on academic research and/or fictional work on secret queer languages.

As the prompt for this panel suggests, the sociopolitical context in which Ulti exists “elide(s) binary understandings of secrecy and visibility”. It exists in liminal spaces between the hijra-koti community and mainstream society, camouflaged structurally and used strategically such that even when it is “revealed” in a certain conversational context, it is not necessarily visible to the public. The nature and extent of the revelation is conditional, controlled, and dependant on the context and interlocutors, ensuring that even when it is spoken (about) in public platforms, Ulti retains a certain level of secrecy to protect the linguistic and embodied autonomy of its speakers.

References:

Nandi, Enakshi. 2024. Embedding Subversion and Gender Identity: 'Ulti', The Secret Language of the Hijra-Koti Community. New Delhi: Tulika Books.

Janata Speaks. (2025, February 23). ভাষা দিবসে উদযাপিত হল আঁধারের ভাষা আড়ালের ভাষা

উল্টি ভাষা | Language of Closet: Ulti #languageday. [Video]. YouTube. ভাষা দিবসে উদযাপিত

হল আঁধারের ভাষা আড়ালের ভাষা উল্টি ভাষা | Language of Closet: Ulti #languageday

They, dey, iel, elle: Towards a post-binary signifying economy

Sam Nartus

University of Essex, Colchester, United Kingdom

“In his language, women cannot signify themselves/their desire to themselves/each other”.” These are the words of Luce Irigaray (1977) in *Poverty of Psychoanalysis*, an essay where she criticises a masculinist ‘signifying economy.’ This talk takes the basis of the signifying economy established by Irigaray and applies it to grammatical gender systems across languages and trans speakers’ relationships with those systems. Particularly, it aims to provide a cross-linguistic description of ‘post-binary’ language, that is, movements made by trans and queer communities to *neutralise* gender in language. This will be supported by the theoretical framework of gender abolition in queer and feminist philosophy, as well as class theory. The study categorises features of grammatical gender and explicitly centres trans and gender-non-conforming speakers to be interviewed about their own strategies employed in day-to-day communication in order to navigate grammatical gender in their respective languages.

References:

Irigaray, L. (1977) “The Poverty of Psychoanalysis”, in *The Irigaray Reader*, ed. Margaret Whitford (United Kingdom: Wiley, 1991), 79

“Allowing More Speech”? – The legitimization of queerphobia in Meta’s hateful conduct policy changes

Vinicio Ntouvlis

European University Viadrina, Frankfurt (Oder), Germany

Recent years have seen a proliferation of queerphobic sentiment fuelled by an international “anti-gender ideology movement”, which bolsters authoritarian political agendas through its vilification of sexual and gender minorities (Butler 2024). Discourses in this vein largely find expression on social media, where spikes in queerphobic abuse have been linked to changes in platform leadership and policies, such as Twitter/X’s acquisition by Elon Musk and its subsequent removal of policy clauses protecting transgender people from hate speech (Hickey et al. 2025). In January 2025, social media giant Meta also updated its platforms’ hateful conduct policy, striking many protections from hate speech targeting gender and sexuality (Jetson 2025). This presentation takes Meta’s policy changes as a case in point to explore how such queerphobic discursive shifts are legitimised in the broader context of socio-political developments affecting the social media ecosystem. The analysis is informed by social media critical discourse studies (SM-CDS) (Kopf 2026), viewing policy texts as “discursive performances of [platforms’] values” (Southerton et al. 2021, 923) and examining them against their societal backdrop.

Adopting a queer perspective on critical discourse analysis (Leap 2015), the study asks: How do Meta’s company-authored texts legitimise the facilitation of queerphobic discourse through policy changes? The presentation thereby attempts to complement existing research on social media as breeding grounds for queerphobia from an understudied angle: While existing studies have tended to explore queerphobic discourse *on* social media (see Sánchez-Sánchez et al. 2024), this analysis interrogates queerphobia *in* social media policies.

Empirically, the study analyses: (a) Meta’s hateful conduct policy changelog (hereafter: PCL) published on their “Transparency Center” (Meta 2025), with emphasis on the most recent changes; (b) Meta’s “Newsroom” statement

(NRS) accompanying these changes (Kaplan 2025). The data are approached qualitatively with critical discourse analytical tools, primarily focusing on legitimisation strategies (van Leeuwen 2008) and argumentation analysis, to highlight fallacies in Meta's texts (*discourse-immanent critique*) as well as the "manipulative" character of [the] discursive practices" that lend persuasive power to queerphobic discourses (*socio-diagnostic critique*) (Reisigl and Wodak 2009, 88).

The analysis shows that Meta's policy changes are legitimated, firstly, through appeals to various forms of authority (*authorization*; van Leeuwen 2008), primarily the authority of conformity (e.g., "people sometimes use sex- or gender-exclusive language" [PCL] and allowing it is therefore justified), but also impersonal authority (e.g., religion) and the personal authority of Mark Zuckerberg. Meta's NRS provides more explicit argumentation relying on fallacies of liberation and democratic participation (Reisigl 2014), so that allowing queerphobic speech is presented as preventing users from being disempowered (e.g., "wrongly locked up in 'Facebook jail'") and as "giving more people a voice".

All in all, the analysis problematises the power of privately-owned platforms to reshape the normative parameters for public interactions, as seen in Meta's legitimisation of queerphobia as "mainstream discourse" in a fluctuating political landscape that demonises "gender ideology" (Butler 2024). The concomitant threats of increased gender- and sexuality-based marginalisation and abuse via social media underline the need for more work in SM-CDS adopting a queer perspective.

References

Butler, Judith. 2024. *Who's Afraid of Gender?* Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Hickey, Daniel, Daniel M. T. Fessler, Kristina Lerman, and Keith Burghardt. 2025. 'X under Musk's Leadership: Substantial Hate and No Reduction in Inauthentic Activity'. *PLOS ONE* 20 (2): e0313293. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0313293>.

Jetson, Freya. 2025. 'LGBTQ+ Advocates Alarmed by Meta's Hateful Conduct Policy Changes'. *ABC News*, January 10. <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2025->

01-10/meta-hateful-conduct-policy-changes-alarm-lgbtq-advocates/104800042.

Kaplan, John. 2025. 'More Speech and Fewer Mistakes'. *Meta Newsroom*, January 7. <https://about.fb.com/news/2025/01/meta-more-speech-fewer-mistakes/>.

Kopf, Susanne. 2026. 'Unravelling Social Media Critical Discourse Studies (SM-CDS) – Four Approaches to Studying Social Media through the Critical Lens'. *Critical Discourse Studies* 23 (2): 215–232. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17405904.2025.2463622>.

Leap, William L. 2015. 'Queer Linguistics as Critical Discourse Analysis'. In *The Handbook of Discourse Analysis*, 2nd edn, edited by Deborah Tannen, Heidi E. Hamilton, and Deborah Schiffrin, 661–680. Wiley Blackwell.

Meta. 2025. 'Hateful Conduct'. *Transparency Center*, January 7. <https://transparency.meta.com/policies/community-standards/hateful-conduct/>.

Reisigl, Martin. 2014. 'Argumentation Analysis and the Discourse-Historical Approach'. In *Contemporary Critical Discourse Studies*, edited by Christopher Hart and Piotr Cap, 67–96. Bloomsbury.

Reisigl, Martin, and Ruth Wodak. 2009. 'The Discourse-Historical Approach'. In *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*, 2nd edn, edited by Ruth Wodak and Michael Meyer, 87–121. Sage.

Sánchez-Sánchez, Ana M., David Ruiz-Muñoz, and Francisca J. Sánchez-Sánchez. 2024. 'Mapping Homophobia and Transphobia on Social Media'. *Sexuality Research and Social Policy* 21 (1): 210–26. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13178-023-00879-z>.

Southerton, Clare, Daniel Marshall, Peter Aggleton, Mary Lou Rasmussen, and Rob Cover. 2021. 'Restricted Modes: Social Media, Content Classification and LGBTQ Sexual Citizenship'. *New Media & Society* 23 (5): 920–38. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444820904362>.

van Leeuwen, Theo. 2008. *Discourse and Practice: New Tools for Critical Discourse Analysis*. Oxford University Press.

Yes, but: non-binary students' linguistic self-reference across languages

Bel Olid

University of Chicago, Chicago, United States; Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Barcelona, Spain

This contribution examines how learners of Catalan as an additional language negotiate non-binary (NB) linguistic self-reference, drawing on qualitative interviews with four multilingual non-binary speakers who have studied Catalan in higher education. All participants speak at least four languages, including Catalan and English, and their accounts reveal how gendered self-reference is strategically and contextually managed across their repertoires. The analysis sheds light on how gendered morphosyntax, linguistic ideologies, and interactional risks shape NB students' practices regarding NB language.

Participants identify three primary factors that guide their choice to use NB forms in any given language: knowledge of whether NB resources exist in that language; a sense of whether the emotional and conversational labor of disclosing a NB identity is worthwhile; and an expectation that NB language usage will not be rejected by interlocutors. NB linguistic self-reference is reserved for meaningful interactions where relational stability reduces perceived vulnerability and a long-term interaction compensates for the labor of disclosing a non-normative identity. When outside familiar contexts, participants typically default to binary gendering for pragmatic and protective reasons.

Within academic settings, the instructor's stance emerges as crucial. Regardless of the instructor's perceived identity, explicit LGBTQI+ support and clear discussion of NB linguistic resources significantly increase students' likelihood of using these forms. When instructors do not mention NB language options, students assume NB forms are absent or illegitimate in the language. Conversely, sustained use of NB forms in the classroom, regardless of their broader social prevalence, legitimizes them and signals that they can be safely adopted at least in LGBTQI+-friendly spaces. Participants strongly prefer NB forms when they are introduced early and used consistently; late or isolated

mentions make NB linguistic resources be perceived as forced and difficult to integrate.

Overall, NB learners adopt highly pragmatic strategies, often prioritising interactional ease over ideological alignment. Yet when NB identities are recognised, particularly through proactive “progendering”, students report increased belonging, wellbeing, and linguistic confidence. The findings highlight the powerful role of instructors in shaping linguistic ideologies and call for pedagogical approaches that equip learners with critical tools to challenge limiting beliefs about gendered language.

Out of Place, Yet Speaking: Affect, Normativity and Haitian Migrant Visibility across Media in Mexico

Diana Ortiz Rojo

Northeastern Illinois University, Chicago, United States

This paper examines how linguistic difference is entangled with regimes of normativity, affect, and embodiment in representations of Haitian migration in Mexico. Drawing on critical discourse analysis, raciolinguistics, and queer approaches to language, the study explores how media and digital discourses regulate which migrant bodies and voices become intelligible, acceptable, or excessive in public space.

The analysis is based on a qualitative corpus of Mexican press headlines and TikTok videos produced about and by Haitian migrants living in Mexico. Mainstream media discourse frequently frames Haitian migrants through narratives of crisis, management, and humanitarian control, while reproducing implicit norms of language and bodily comportment. Within these representations, Spanish monolingualism functions as a criterion of social legibility, and linguistic difference is often associated with disorder, opacity, or dependency. These framings generate affective responses such as suspicion, pity, or discomfort, positioning racialized migrant bodies as out of place.

In contrast, Haitian migrants' TikTok practices mobilize translanguaging, humor, music, and embodied performance to reconfigure these affective economies, including highly mediated creator personas that circulate with greater linguistic and social capital alongside more precarious, interactional forms of visibility. These digital performances unsettle normative assumptions about language, race, and embodiment (concerns central to lavender linguistics) by showing how marginalized speakers negotiate visibility, belonging, and dignity in public discourse.

By centering affect, normativity, and embodied linguistic practice in mediated contexts, this paper contributes to Lavender Languages and Linguistics by extending its analytical lens to racialized migration in Latin America and by

exploring how digital self-representation reconfigures possibilities for marginalized voices to be heard and recognized.

Queer Speech on the Malagasy Screen: *Knou* and the Mediation of Transgressive Femininity in *Vola*

Seth Palmer

Christopher Newport University, Newport News, United States

Johary Iharantsoa

University of Antananarivo, Antananarivo, Madagascar

In the early 2010s, a vibrant linguistic register known as *knou* circulated in Antananarivo, the capital of Madagascar, among same-sex desiring and gender non-conforming persons assigned male at birth, but also among some of their close friends and cisgender women sex workers. The register combined a specialized lexicon with distinctive phonological stylization, dramatic prosody, rising vowels, and expressive bodily gestures and came to signify transgressive femininity. *Knou* has acted as a socially meaningful linguistic register within queer urban networks since at least the 1960s, but by the mid-2010s, elements of the register became visible to a broader heteronormative public through mass mediation. *Lôla*, a transfeminine character from the widely viewed Malagasy film series *Vola*, regularly employed *knou* in dialogue with other characters who did not initially understand the register. As *Vola* gained popularity, several *knou* terms that *Lôla* voiced in the show began to be quoted by Antananarivian youth; its appropriation provided these youth with cultural values associated with stereotypical characteristics of queer personhood, namely verbal wit and material desire (Ilbury 2020).

This paper builds upon sociolinguistic scholarship on the enregisterment and mediation of queer speech by providing an in-depth analysis of how the *knou* register was mediated through the character *Lôla* in the film series (Boellstorff 2004; Gaudio 2008). We contextualize *Lôla*'s place within the series' narrative, the broader Malagasy-language media landscape and its representation of queerness (Rakotoniera 2018), and existing scholarship on queer representation in African-language cinema and television (Böhme 2015; Green-Simms and Azuah 2012; Gaudio 2008).

Our analysis draws on a corpus of transcribed scenes featuring Lôla across the seven films in the *Volà* series. We conducted a critical discourse analysis of these scenes, systematically coding the transcripts for instances of *krou* lexical items, phonological stylization, and interactional features associated with Lola's gendered stance-taking. The coding scheme also tracked metapragmatic moments in which *krou* was commented upon, repeated, or circulated among characters, allowing us to examine how the register is framed and made socially recognizable.

Our paper will focus on two aspects of Lôla's role in the mediation of *krou* to the broader Malagasy public. First, we consider Lôla's role as a "characterological figure" who reproduces culturally legible tropes of transgressive transfemininity and male homosexuality which are recognizable in Malagasy media (Agha 2003). These tropes include: a comedic figure who gossips and meddles in the affairs of others and a selfish figure who traffics in material excess. The latter, which is also associated with queer characters in other African films, reproduced longstanding Malagasy indexical associations between (trans)femininity, hedonistic consumption, and sexual economies. Secondly, we consider the pedagogical value that Lôla plays in rendering the register intelligible to the heteronormative viewer while simultaneously withholding insight into the everyday experiences of Malagasy persons with non-conforming genders and sexualities.

References

Agha, Asif. "The social life of a cultural value." *Language and Communication* 23 (2003), 231-273.

Boellstorff, Tom. "Gay Language and Indonesia: Registering Belonging." *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 14, no. 2 (2004), 127-308.

Böhme, Claudia. "Showing the Unshowable: The Negotiation of Homosexuality through Video Films in Tanzania." *Africa Today* 61, no. 4 (2015), 63-82.

Gaudio, Rudolf. "Out on Video: Gender, Language, and New Public Spheres in Islamic Northern Nigeria." in *Words, Worlds, and Material Girls: Language, Gender, and Globalization*. Ed. Bonnie McElhinny, Berlin: Walter De Gruyter (2008), 237-286.

Green-Simms, Lindsey and Unoma Azuah. "The Video Closet: Nollywood's Gay Themed Movies." *Transition* 107 (2012), 32-49.

Ilbury, Christian. "Sassy Queens': Stylistic Orthographic Variation in Twitter and the Enregisterment of AAVE." *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 24, no. 2 (2020), 245-264.

Rakotoniera, Zoly (2018). Hilariously queer: the transgender and transsexual body in Malagasy humour. *CODESRIA Bulletin* 1 (2018).

<https://journals.codesria.org/index.php/codesriabulletin/article/view/187>

Stance and the enactment of intimacy in Sri Lanka

Hasitha Pathirana

University of Bern, Bern, Switzerland

This paper examines how sex workers in Sri Lanka use *nachchi*, an enregistered speech style, as a way to construct solidarity and intimacy in interaction. Drawing on twenty-three interviews conducted during ethnographic fieldwork in Colombo, I explore how sex workers mobilise femininity and sexually explicit discourse in enacted metapragmatic (Silverstein, 2003) use of *nachchi*. Using a stance-based framework informed by Kiesling (2018), this paper shows how speakers dynamically construct the persona of a *baduwak* (Sinhala, derogatorily “loose woman”) through shifting stance dynamics that build trust and affiliation. These stances are relationally calibrated across frontstage and backstage enactments of the persona (Goffman, 1956), allowing speakers to modulate intimacy within the interaction. In initial encounters, speakers adopt a relatively restrained or “low-intensity” parodied femininity, characterised by playful but less sexually explicit expression and cautious interpersonal positioning. As familiarity develops, this shifts toward a more intensified, eroticised, and explicit performativity of parodied femininity, less constrained by respectability norms and spoken with boastful exaggeration. Linguistically, this transition is enacted by the feminine referential form, *akkā* (elder sister). As the conversation progresses, the shift in word-final vowel from *ā* to *é*, as in quasi-vocative form *akkā*, which indexes familiarity, teasing playfulness, urbanness, softness and solidarity, to the vocative form *akké*, which intensifies intimacy and affiliative alignment, enacts the interactional consolidation of solidarity and licenses increased use of sexual discourse and expletives. The emergent persona of the *baduwa* demonstrates how intensified stance dimensions transform sexual talk into a collective, participatory practice through which solidarity is co-constructed. Parodied femininity thus becomes an erotically charged relational resource for building affiliation and negotiating intimacy. In the talk, I describe how these stances practices must be understood in relation to the ethnographic context in which participants navigate sexual violence, economic precarity, and collective protection within a

broader condition of social disbelonging, where visibility, safety, and legitimacy are systematically denied.

Rainbow Beasts: Legitimizing Rightwing Christian Nationalist Queerphobic Governance in Project 2025

David Peterson

University of Nebraska at Omaha, Omaha, United States

As demonstrated by the Global Project Against Hate and Extremism (GPAHE 2026), the Heritage Foundation's *Project 2025* (Dans & Groves 2023) 'represents a sweeping attempt to reshape the United States and the global political order around a Christian nationalist framework'. Of particular concern for this presentation is the extent to which *Project 2025* targets LGBT rights. Out of 30 chapters—covering all Executive branch departments—ten (including the foreword) articulate anti-LGBT policy proposals and recommendations that, taken together, promote an 'all of government' approach to dismantling the numerous executive, legislative, and judicial apparatuses that promote and protect queer sociocultural belonging, political participation, civil rights, and economic supports.

Part of a larger project exploring queerphobic nationalist discourses, this presentation examines the legitimization strategies (van Leeuwen 2008) used to advance *Project 2025*'s queerphobic governance claims. My analysis was conducted by focusing on passages that reference 1) LGBT citizens; 2) governance policies implicitly or explicitly associated with LGBT issues; 3) previous Presidential administrations, political institutions, and organizations positioned as promoting (however obliquely) LGBT people and issues. The resulting corpus (about 8900 words from across the 10 chapters) was then examined in terms their legitimization strategies.

Of the four strategies discussed in van Leeuwen (2008), initial analysis indicates that text-makers draw on a wide range of authorizations, evaluations, rationalizations, and mythopoesis. Only two instances explicitly reference 'God' as a means of authorization (both from one chapter), the texts avoid drawing on legitimations that might be overtly sourced to Christian nationalist discourse. The rest of the examples are predominantly claims buttressed by impersonal authority, tradition, and conformity and especially by moral evaluations (the moral, cultural, or natural 'order of things') (van Leeuwen

2008: 108-111). Particularly in the case of *Project 2025*'s use of moral evaluations, the authors' legitimations appear untethered from explicit Christian nationalist reference. That is, they seem 'detached from the system of interpretation from which they derive' (110).

Such detachment explains, in part, why critiques of Project 2025 failed to gain traction during the 2024 campaign, especially in terms of the scope of its Christian-nationalist driven anti-LGBT agenda. However, as my presentation demonstrates, greater awareness and understanding of the features of Christian nationalist queerphobic discourses will enable us to better analyze their untethered legitimations and thus better counter their deleterious effects.

References

Dans, Paul, & Groves, Steven, eds. 2023. *Project 2025: Mandate for Leadership, the Conservative Promise*. Washington, DC: Heritage Foundation.

GPAHE. 2026. *Project 2025 Goes Global: The American Export of Authoritarianism and Christian Nationalism Worldwide*. *Global Project Against Hate and Extremism*. Accessed 13 Mar 2026, <https://globalextrremism.org/reports/project-2025-goes-global/>

van Leeuwen, Theo. 2008. *Discourse and Practice: New Tools for Critical Discourse Analysis*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

The time has come for you to lipsync for your life - Affective demands in rejections of application for asylum for queer refugees in Denmark

Nicolai Pharao

Kristine Køhler Mortensen

University of Copenhagen, Copenhagen, Denmark

In this study we examine what (dis)belonging entails for queer people seeking to gain access to another nation state than their country of origin. Focusing on the Danish immigration system we demonstrate how seeking asylum as a queer refugee requires navigating the technologies of state apparatuses and their affective economies (Ahmed 2004). In the case of Denmark queer asylum seekers must be given asylum, if they can convincingly show that they are themselves LGBT+ and if there is substantial documentation that members of this group risk persecution in the country of origin.

We focus on what being able to convincingly show that you are queer entails in this context. We do so by analysing reasons given for rejection of asylum by the Danish Refugee Appeals Board, the final instance in the treatment of asylum applications. These decisions are publicly available online, and a critical analysis of the reasons for rejection given in these decisions can reveal expectations held by caseworkers and decision makers in the immigration system. We have analysed rejections given in the period from June 2023 to March 2026. Our initial findings suggest a change from a more fact-based model of rejection with decisions resting on whether the queer asylum applicant was consistent in their explanation of events leading to them fleeing the country of origin to a model that includes affective demands. Towards the end of 2024 rejections begin to contain formulaic phrases that require queer asylum applicants to present about their “thoughts and feelings about” the people they have been involved with, as well as requiring them to be able to “reflect upon the thoughts they have had leading up to them realizing” their sexual orientation and/or gender identity. These formulations explicitly criticize accounts from queer asylum seekers that are “mainly factual in nature” (phrases in quotes are our translations from excerpts of the decisions). We argue that these formulaic phrases not only rest on the trope of “coming out as

journey” in Western culture (Wong 2009) a tendency also found in Verhaeghe et al (2023)’s analysis of decisions made on applications for asylum in Belgium by Lesbian refugees, but that it also reveals an expectation for queer asylum applicant to be able to account for inner thoughts and feelings both towards partners and as regards their own internal realization process in a way that is recognizable for the Danish officials. Lunau (2024) has previously shown how affective economies are at play in the reasoning of decisions made by the so-called Immigration Service in Denmark, while our study suggests that display of affect has been elevated to a demand for the successful queer asylum applicant. We therefore argue that there exists an affective imperative regulating who can and who cannot be read as a legitimate queer person and thereby who can belong to the Danish nation state.

References

- Ahmed, S. (2004). *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*. New York: Routledge.
- Lunau, M. (2024). *The Affective Politics of Queer Migration: On Affective Ambivalence, Truth and Queerness*. Roskilde Universitet. Ph.D. dissertation.
- Verhaeghe, L. & M. Jacobs & K. Maryns (2023). Discursive Tensions of Credibility and Performance in Assessing Lesbian Refugee Claims for International Protection, *Journal of International Migration and Integration*, vol. 24(4), 769-790.
- Wong, A.D. (2009). Coming-out stories and the "gay imaginary". *Sociolinguistic Studies*, 3, 1-36.

When voice signals belonging: on auditory gaydar in Catalan

Mercè Prat-Rubio

Universitat de Barcelona, Barcelona, Spain

Pop culture has coined the term «gaydar» to describe a supposed ability, specially from queer individuals, to correctly guess another's sexual orientation. Although academics have pointed out how such an ability could be a helpful tool helping queer people build community (Shelp, 2003), research fails to demonstrate whether LGBTIQ+ listeners actually have an advantage judging sexual orientation through voice (Fasoli et al., 2023; Daniele et al., 2020; Ruben et al., 2014). Furthermore, the topic is severely understudied in minoritized language communities, like Catalan. This research looks to determine if Catalan speaking communities are able to precisely identify sexual orientation from voice and if certain demographic groups, namely those belonging to the LGBTIQ+ community, demonstrate an advantage.

We conducted a perception test with 193 native Catalan speakers who were asked to judge 40 men's sexual orientation based on their voice. Listeners were trained with 4 samples of read speech with equal lexical content to focus their attention on the phonetic traits, and then judged the native speakers on a 4-point scale from «heterosexual» to «homosexual» based on a 5-second sample of lexically neutral spontaneous speech. We collected information on the judges' age, gender, sexual orientation, as well as declared pertinence to the LGBT community and socialization with other LGBT people. The results were analyzed with performance metrics and linear mixed general models in R.

Overall, judges showed an absolute accuracy level above chance (68'19%) and demonstrated relative accuracy by consistently judging gay speakers to sound more homosexual than other queer speakers, and both higher than heterosexual speakers. Differences in gender and sexual orientation did not correlate with accuracy, and none of the queer groups didn't outperform the cisheterosexual groups. Our study concludes Catalan speakers share intuitions on what «sounding gay» in Catalan entails and demonstrate an ability to correctly guess sexual orientation from voice. However, no in-group queer

advantage is observed, thus putting into question the usefulness of auditory gaydar for catalan queer people in finding community.

Daniele, M., Fasoli, F., Antonio, R., Sulpizio, S., & Maass, A. (2020). Gay Voice: Stable Marker of Sexual Orientation or Flexible Communication Device? *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 49(7), 2585-2600. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10508-020-01771-2>

Fasoli, F., Maass, A., & Berghella, L. (2023). Who Has a Better Auditory Gaydar? Sexual Orientation Categorization by Heterosexual and Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual People. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 70(5), 876-899. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00918369.2021.2004796>

Ruben, M. A., Hill, K. M., & Hall, J. A. (2014). How women's sexual orientation guides accuracy of interpersonal judgements of other women. *Cognition and Emotion*, 28(8), 1512-1521. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02699931.2014.890093>

Shelp, S. G. (2003). Gaydar: Gaydar. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 44(1), 1-14. https://doi.org/10.1300/J082v44n01_01

Between Secrecy and Exposure: Hijra Farsi and the Shifting Boundaries of Khawaja Sira (Dis)Belonging in Pakistan

Tayyaba Rafique

Aman Chaupal, Kasur, Pakistan

Who defines the secrecy of a language? And what happens when that language becomes visible? Is secrecy a fixed property or a negotiated practice shaped by context, power, and community boundaries?

Drawing on my ethnographic fieldwork with Khawaja sira communities across seven cities in Pakistan, I examine Hijra Farsi (Muhammad, 2011) as a linguistic practice that unsettles binary understandings of secrecy and visibility. I observed that Hijra Farsi is not a fixed hidden language but a dynamic cultural system shaped by context, interlocutors, and power. While recent developments, such as its circulation on social media and its mediated representation in television, have brought Hijra Farsi into partial public view, this visibility does not dissolve its secrecy. A notable example is the long-running Pakistani drama *Quddusi Sahab Ki Bewah* (Rehan Tayyab & Rizvi, 2024), where elements of Khawaja sira speech were represented across numerous episodes, contributing to a form of mainstream familiarity without full comprehension. Similarly, its use in contemporary media (TikTok and Instagram), including *Bajjo (Pakistani series)*, has generated backlash from within the community, particularly when the language is perceived as misused or stripped of its cultural context.

Based on interviews with 25 participants, importantly, 9 respondents reported actively developing modified forms of Hijra Farsi to maintain in-group exclusivity in response to increasing exposure. I also observed internal variation: participants from different regions, such as Multan, used distinct vocabularies, while some upwardly mobile or formally educated Khawaja siras distanced themselves from Hijra Farsi, associating it with working-class identity. These dynamics reveal an internal politics of language shaped by class and mobility. Engaging with M. A. K. Halliday's (1976) concept of anti-language, it is revealed that Hijra Farsi operates as a flexible boundary-making practice. Its lifecycle demonstrates that secrecy and visibility are not opposites but co-

constitutive processes; even when partially visible, Hijra Farsi remains effectively “secret” through reinvention, selective use, and community control.

‘Does anyone else find the use of “queer” problematic?’ Online LGBT+ identity and community construction across three languages

Max Reuvers

University of Nottingham, Nottingham, United Kingdom

In this paper, I present preliminary findings about how Reddit users construct LGBT+ identities across four Reddit communities in three languages: English (in an internationally oriented forum and a UK-specific one), Dutch (in a forum for users from the Netherlands and Flanders), and German (for users from Germany, Austria, Switzerland).

Online communities are a lifeline for many LGBT+ people, providing access to information, the opportunity to talk to other LGBT+ people and share experiences, and a space in which – contrary to most contexts – they are not the minority. This is especially true for people who do not have access to physical LGBT+-specific spaces, such as local support groups or cultural events. One of the most easily accessed online platforms where communities can form is Reddit, which is home to a large number of LGBT+-specific groups. However, the majority of Reddit is in English (Pimienta et al., 2023), with members (who are in principle anonymous) often assumed to be from the USA. This regularly results in incorrect assumptions about the circumstances and experiences of group members. As the creation and maintenance of Reddit communities is entirely user-driven (Medvedev et al., 2019), speakers of languages with little to no presence on Reddit may find that they need to use English if they want to be part of an interest- or identity-related Reddit community. Such communities may prioritise kinds of LGBT+ experiences, identities, and issues that are misaligned with what users need to navigate their (non-Anglophone, non-USA) home contexts.

By taking a Community of Practice-informed approach (Angouri, 2015; Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 1992) to the comparison of four different communities in three different languages, I show how the communities differ in their identity construction practices and where they are similar. I pay special attention to how community norms about LGBT+ identities and experiences are negotiated in the Reddit communities. For example, in the German community there is a

discussion about the use of identity labels in which ‘queer’ is problematised by some as an Anglo-Saxon import that does not necessarily have a place in non-Anglophone contexts, and which obscures individual identities while more specific labels are associated with concrete, ‘real’ identities. In a similarly norm-setting thread in the English international community, users debate whether the label ‘ally’ can include those who associate with homophobic people, and how drawing such a strong line may also negatively affect community members.

While Dutch and German are not linguistically marginalised communities, and are associated with countries in which LGBT+ rights are comparatively well-established, bringing other languages than English into focus is a step towards addressing some of the blind spots in queer linguistics. In this paper, I show the importance of looking beyond English-medium data to raise awareness of the invisible – and often invisibilised – diversity (linguistic and otherwise) that lies below and beyond the English-medium data that so often takes centre stage.

The Book Object and Transness: Metaphor and Metonymy in Trans Codicology and The Magnus Archives

Alba Roldán-García

Ainhoa Segovia-Ruiz

Universidad de Valladolid, Valladolid, Spain

Metaphor is the cornerstone of cognitive processing, as it facilitates the comprehension of abstract concepts through their extrapolation from concrete domains of human experience (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980; Kövecses, 2022). Consequently, metaphor, metonymy and other idealised cognitive models have proved useful in the explanation of nonmaterial phenomena, such as sexuality and gender identity ([Author 1], 2024). Traditionally, the metaphors ^{THE BODY IS A CONTAINER} and ^{TRANSITION IS A JOURNEY} have illustrated transness; nowadays, other metaphors have appeared and consolidated, questioning and challenging the previously linear and dichotomous understanding of transness (Hayward, 2008; Van Den Bossche, 2024). In their works, academic disciplines adjacent to Queer and Trans Studies have provided fertile ground for the configuration of new metaphors of transness, with trans codicology (Sargan, 2022) as a case in point. Thus, this paper sheds further light on metaphorical conceptualisations of transness and analyses the cognitive and discursive mechanisms underlying the novel metaphonymy (Goossens, 2003) ^{TRANSNESS IS A BOOK (OBJECT)} which Sargan (2022) articulates in his proposal for a trans codicology. It also delves into its possible ramifications as arguably represented in *The Magnus Archives*, a horror fiction podcast following Jonathan Sims, the new head archivist of the Magnus Institute, an organisation committed to researching the esoteric and paranormal (Rusty Quill, 2016-2021).

At the intersection between literary and queer studies, book history, and codicology, trans codicology is an emerging field which examines the physical properties of manuscripts to uncover trans, nonbinary, and non-conforming gender experiences (Sargan, 2022). This interdisciplinary case study combines cognitive linguistics, conceptual metaphor theory, and critical discourse studies with trans codicology, and book studies, particularly the area dedicated to the depiction of libraries and books in popular culture (Attar and Nash,

2025). Thus, the study departs from a close textual analysis of Sargan (2022) to identify and dissect the metaphors and metonymies of transness therein developed. Then, following the steps of trans codicology, we conduct an analysis of the Skin Book – a rare volume often featuring in *The Magnus Archives* – as described in its transcripts. These observations lead to a subsequent close textual analysis of the episode “Family Business” (Rusty Quill, 2018) to retrieve possible metaphorical entailments and metonymic inferences of transness as posited by Sargan (2022), and unravel their effects in the understanding of trans and nonbinary identities. The results demonstrate the potential of the metaphonymy ^{TRANSNESS IS A BOOK (OBJECT)} as a resistance metaphor (Filardo-Llamas and Pérez-Hernández, 2025), expanding on existing imagery of transness to include narratives that may not fit previous conceptualisations. Moreover, the analysis emphasises the highly contextual nature of metaphors, with their adequacy depending on the position of the subject. Any metaphor of transness will not cover the entire spectrum of trans and nonbinary experiences; however, this excluding specificity grants the speaker the agency to carve their own discursive space.

References

[Author 1]. (2024).

Attar, K., and Nash, A. (2025). *Books, Readers and Libraries in Fiction*. University of London Press. <https://doi.org/10.14296/ufnt1799>

Filardo-Llamas, L., and Pérez-Hernández, L. (2025). Metaphors of resistance in the counter-discourse of Spanish, English and Dutch cycling activists. *Russian Journal of Linguistics*, 29(1), 103–127. <https://doi.org/10.22363/2687-0088-42985>

Goossens, L. (2003). Metaphonymy: The interaction of metaphor and metonymy in expressions for linguistic action. In R. Dirven & R. Pörings (Eds.), *Metaphor and Metonymy in Comparison and Contrast* (pp. 349–378). Mouton de Gruyter. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110219197.3.349>

Hayward, E. (2008). More Lessons from a Starfish: Prefixial Flesh and Transspeciated Selves. *WSQ: Women's Studies Quarterly*, 36(3–4), 64–85. <https://doi.org/10.1353/wsqr.0.0099>

- Kövecses, Z. (2022). Extended conceptual metaphor theory: The cognition-context interface. In U. Schröder, M. Mendes De Oliveira, & A. M. Tenuta (Eds.), *Metaphorical Conceptualizations* (pp. 23–40). De Gruyter. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110688306-002>
- Lakoff, G., and Johnson, M. (1980). *Metaphors we live by*. University of Chicago Press.
- Rusty Quill. (2016-2021). *The Magnus Archives* [Audio podcast]. <https://rustyquill.com/show/the-magnus-archives/>
- Rusty Quill. (2018). Family Business. *The Magnus Archives* [Audio podcast]. <https://rustyquill.com/show/the-magnus-archives/>
- Sargan, J. D. (2022). What Could a Trans Book History Look Like? Toward Trans Codicology. *Criticism*, 64(3/4), 571–586. <https://doi.org/10.1353/crt.2022.a899738>
- Van Den Bossche, S. (2024). “How to Become a Rock”: Non-Human Metaphors as Trans Paranarratives. *Narrative*, 32(2), 202–214. <https://doi.org/10.1353/nar.2024.a926176>

Queering choirs: a collaborative exploration of trans+ vocality and flourishing in UK-based LGBT+ choirs

Pim Rommelaere

University of Sheffield, Sheffield, United Kingdom

Choral singing is increasingly recognised for promoting well-being. However, trans+ (transgender and non-binary) experiences in this area remain under-researched and trans+ voices are often excluded from research design decision-making. This PhD project explores how trans+ well-being is experienced within choral structures, which are traditionally rooted in cisnormative practice. Specifically, it examines LGBT+ choral environments which, as queer spaces, may disrupt traditional practice. However, there is currently little insight into if/how this disruption manifests for trans+ singers. The project comprises two phases. Phase one involved a consultation with trans+ LGBT+ choral singers on the research protocol, providing insights into linguistic and methodological appropriateness. Particularly, participants highlighted complexities and impacts of appropriate language-use in trans+ research design. Phase two consists of a six-month longitudinal study involving repeated interviews with 15 - 20 trans+ choral singers. Ultimately, this research aims to empower trans+ voices by aligning awareness of trans+ group-vocality with lived experience.

“There’s something about the way you look at me”: Sexualised synthetic personas encode gendered power asymmetries through voice

Alice Ross¹

Ariadna Sanchez¹

Elin Kanhov²

Catherine Lai¹

Éva Székely²

(1) University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh, United Kingdom

(2) KTH Royal Institute of Technology, Stockholm, Sweden

Drawing on a Feminist HCI perspective, this work examines how commercial voice AI systems reproduce and circulate specific performances of gender. In the 2010s, the characterisation of early voice assistants like Alexa and Siri as ‘female by default’, with stereotypical ‘secretary’ persona, was rightly criticised. We find evidence of some of these outdated roles persisting in a new context.

Our study focuses on sexualised AI-generated English-speaking voices offered by a popular commercial platform, ElevenLabs. To examine these voices, we explore listeners’ reactions to particular speech styles (defined in ElevenLabs’ Voice Library as ‘flirt’, ‘flirty’, and ‘temptress’) within sets of synthesised, gendered voices. We consider them gendered in that a sex/gender term (in this case, ‘male’ or ‘female’) is included in the voice descriptions offered by ElevenLabs. We carry out a listening test to gather reactions (selecting adjectives from a balanced list) from a diverse set of 120 North American English-speaking listeners. In recruiting the listeners, we aimed for balanced sets across four groups: women attracted to women; women attracted to men only; men attracted to men; and men attracted to women only. We examine whether male- and female-coded voices differ in the overall distribution of evaluative judgments assigned by listeners. To distinguish between effects of vocal and prosodic characteristics and those of linguistic content, we then compare responses across conditions where voice style and spoken text are independently varied. Finally, we explore whether listener

characteristics, including gender identity and reported attraction, are associated with differences in perception of the voices.

We find that a narrow range of gender expressions, almost exclusively binary and heteronormative, are represented, and we see qualitative and quantitative differences in reactions to male and female-coded sexualised voices. Namely, male voices were more likely to elicit positive adjectives and those relating to high agency or dominance compared to female voices, which more often elicited submissive and sexualised descriptions. Our qualitative analysis shows that comments on the male voices often pointed to either exaggerated dominance or to a lack of affect, while several comments on female voices can be read as indexing exaggerated performances of femininity: over-performed, excessively sexualised, and infantilised. We also observe some statistical differences based on listeners' own identity, notably between Group 4 (men who are attracted to women only) and other groups. Group 4 were more likely than any other to apply sexualised adjectives to sexualised female voices ($p = 0.0088$); less likely to apply negative adjectives to sexualised female voices ($p = 0.0009$); and more likely to choose positive descriptors for sexualised male voices ($p = 0.0017$).

On the surface, natural language prompted AI models offer creativity and customisability, but 'straight values' embedded in model design can marginalise queer users. The 21st century has seen an increase in representation of queer, trans and gender diverse identities in mainstream media; ElevenLabs appears to ignore this cultural turn in favour of dated stereotypes. The prescribed use of sexualised voices in this 'creative' platform reinforces cisnormative and heteronormative social biases.

“Between Analysis and Evocation”: A Discourse Analysis of First-Person Stances in Trans Scholarship

Mary Ann Saunders

Katja Thieme

University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada

Practices of writing and languaging can create spaces that make “not only a changed gender but also a *changing* gender possible” (Corfman 267). In this analysis, we explore the pragmatic forms through which trans and queer scholars foreground trans expression and belonging, including as resistant practices in the face of overwhelming hostility toward trans lives. In trans studies, the use of these first-person forms is rooted in critiques of conventional research practices and linked to desires for embodied attunement in trans knowledge-making. We analyze how authors assert first-person authority of their trans experience and how they relate aspects of their positionality to research purposes, processes, or participants. We work with a corpus of 36 research articles by trans scholars and in trans studies, gathered from the 2022-2024 volumes of three key English-language journals (*International Journal of Transgender Health*, *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly*, and *Bulletin of Applied Transgender Studies*). We code each article for phrases that express (1) first-person experience of research authors and (2) aspects of authors’ positionality in relation to research processes. By discussing these features in some detail, we attend to the possibilities of writing—in this case, research writing—as a “rhetorical lens on gendered becoming” (Corfman 263).

First-person authority has a central role in trans studies, including through memoir and autoethnography (Jacques; Bettcher; Kukla and Lance; Jones and Harris). As a method, autoethnography offers formal expression to the research-shaping nature of trans experience—including, perhaps especially, because this experience can be “fractured” and lacking coherence (Macdonald; O’Shea 17). In our corpus, we find two articles which, through brief narration, include first-person experience within otherwise non-autoethnographic analyses, and two more articles which are autoethnographic

studies (n=4). We discuss how, in the latter two pieces, the authors' discursively link their trans experience to desires for queer theorizing, trans world-building, as well as Indigenous self-governing.

Positionality, as a broad concept, relates authors' identity and history to the research they are pursuing (Ríos and Patel; Sybing; Secules et al.; Folkes). Positionality statements, as identifiable phrases inside research genres or as their own genre, respond to the need, or demand, to make aspects of researcher positionality explicit. Such expressions are present in the body of just over half of the 36 articles in our collection (n=19). We find that the majority of them highlight select aspects of professional or personal biography, such as employment status, academic qualification, or community expertise. Second most frequent are references to gender identity, and third are terms that broadly relate to sexuality. While a few of these positionality expressions are list-like mentions, most relate select identity aspects to how the authors decided on research questions, accountability measures, participant relations, and data interpretations (n=15).

Overall, our project presents current forms for foregrounding trans belonging in research writing. Based on our findings, we argue that what might otherwise appear as individualized aspects of identity and experience are consistently linked to the community-related needs to which this research responds.

References

Bettcher, Talia Mae. "Trans Identities and First-Person Authority." *"You've Changed": Sex Reassignment and Personal Identity*, edited by Laurie J. Shrage, Oxford University Press, 2009, pp. 98–120.

Corfman, S. Brook. "On Not Knowing Students' Genders, Nor Being Able to Predict When or How They Will Change." *College Composition & Communication*, vol. 73, no. 2, Dec. 2021, pp. 261–86.

Folkes, Louise. "Moving beyond 'Shopping List' Positionality: Using Kitchen Table Reflexivity and In/Visible Tools to Develop Reflexive Qualitative Research." *Qualitative Research*, vol. 23, no. 5, Oct. 2023, pp. 1301–18, <https://doi.org/10.1177/14687941221098922>.

Jacques, Juliet. "Forms of Resistance: Uses of Memoir, Theory, and Fiction in Trans Life Writing." *Life Writing*, vol. 14, no. 3, July 2017, pp. 357–70, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14484528.2017.1328301>.

Jones, Stacy Holman, and Anne M. Harris. *Queering Autoethnography*. Routledge, 2018, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315268590>.

Kukla, Quill, and Mark Lance. "Telling Gender: The Pragmatics and Ethics of Gender Ascriptions." *Ergo*, vol. 9, no. 0, July 2023, <https://doi.org/10.3998/ergo.2911>.

Macdonald, Joe. "An Autoethnography of Queer Transmasculine Femme Incoherence and the Ethics of Trans Research." *Studies in Symbolic Interaction*, edited by Norman K. Denzin, vol. 40, Emerald Group, 2013, pp. 129–52, [https://doi.org/10.1108/S0163-2396\(2013\)0000040009](https://doi.org/10.1108/S0163-2396(2013)0000040009).

O'Shea, Saoirse Caitlin. "This Girl's Life: An Autoethnography." *Organization*, vol. 25, no. 1, Jan. 2018, pp. 3–20, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1350508417703471>.

Ríos, Cati de los, and Leigh Patel. "Positions, Positionality, and Relationality in Educational Research." *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, Oct. 2023, pp. 1–12, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09518398.2023.2268036>.

Secules, Stephen, et al. "Positionality Practices and Dimensions of Impact on Equity Research: A Collaborative Inquiry and Call to the Community." *Journal of Engineering Education*, vol. 110, no. 1, 2021, pp. 19–43, <https://doi.org/10.1002/jee.20377>.

Sybing, Roehl. "Dead Reckoning: A Framework for Analyzing Positionality Statements in Ethnographic Research Reporting." *Written Communication*, vol. 39, no. 4, Oct. 2022, pp. 757–89, <https://doi.org/10.1177/07410883221114152>.

From Biology to Kinship: Doing Family beyond Heteronormative Anthropocentrism

Hannah Sawall

Miriam Lind

Europa-Universität Viadrina, Frankfurt (Oder), Germany

The definition of what constitutes a family has long been shaped by blood relationship and heteronormativity: people who are biologically related form a family, as well as married men and women who have children together; necessary for the constitution of family units usually is offspring (Hertz 2006; Jurczyk 2014). While cohabiting adults who are romantically and/or sexually involved with each other form a couple, their status as a family may be questioned without the presence of a child (Blackstone 2014).

Such traditional understandings of family have been increasingly challenged as single parents, co-parenting models, patchwork families and queer families are on the rise, as well as childless couples and people living with companion animals making claims to the family label. While both queer families (e.g. Allen & Mendez 2018) and interspecies families (e.g. Owens 2015) have been theorised and empirically investigated in the social sciences, little investigation so far has been conducted into their linguistic construction (but see Owens & Grauerholz 2019; Laing 2020; Lind 2024). Similarly, queer and more-than-human approaches to family have not yet been brought together, even though it may be argued that both challenge hegemonic concepts of family in similar ways.

This gap in research is the starting point for our paper. Following a posthumanist turn in linguistics that questions the binary division between human and animal (Pennycook 2017), we propose queering the field of human-animal interaction and investigating more closely the practices of *doing family* we can observe between humans and their cats/dogs. In doing so, we not only focus on queer subjects that interact with their animals but also investigate the harmful normativities (Motschenbacher 2011) that govern the relationship between humans and animals (Haraway 2016).

Based on video recordings and supplementary interviews in six households with different family structures using a conditional video recorder, an automated recording device that recognizes speech and cat/dog sounds and remains in the homes for two to three weeks, we analyse practices of doing family between human and non-human household members. Combining ethnographic methods, we address both how animals are constructed as (dis)belonging to the family and how the study of human-animal communication intersects with the study of queer linguistics more broadly. Based on this material, we argue that family is constructed through practices of kinship and care rather than notions of biological relatedness and procreation and extends far beyond the narrow, heteronormative traditions of who may or may not be a family.

Sexual identity, lexical association, and the ideological marking of place in San Francisco

Michael Senko

Grace Brown

Antón de la Fuente

Taiga Ikedo

Lorena Martín Rodríguez

Yin Lin Tan

Jonathan WuWong

Robert J. Podesva

Stanford University, Stanford, United States

Place identity comprises both physical space and the people who occupy it. Increasingly, sociolinguists frame place through intersectional identity: areas and their residents are classed, racialized, historicized, etc., through ideological processes (Calder & King 2022; Carmichael & Reed 2025). Despite extensive work on gayborhoods in allied fields (Ghaziani 2014, e.g.), the role that sexuality plays in differentiating place identity remains under-theorized within sociolinguistics. Focusing on the Castro, an iconic gayborhood in San Francisco, we examine how sexuality functions as a dimension of place ideology through a novel neighborhood-perception task. We find that city residents use sexuality to differentiate neighborhoods from one another and negotiate community belonging.

We implemented a modified rapid and anonymous survey (Labov 1964), prompting participants to describe the Castro using a single word, and then to similarly describe a comparison neighborhood (the Mission or Marina districts). We collected responses midday in residential areas of these three neighborhoods as a proxy for residents (CastroR/MissionR/MarinaR) and in the Castro's main commercial drag on a Friday night as a proxy for visitors

(CastroV). This yielded 1276 one-word responses describing the Castro, Mission, or Marina.

We devised separate annotation schemes to answer two questions. First, how do features of place connect to single lexical items produced by participants? Here, we labeled every response according to whether it described qualities attributed to people (e.g. “friendly”, “hipster”), space (“hilly”, “architecture”), activity (“food”, “busy”), or some combination thereof (“boring”). CastroV (46.25%) use much more People-only words when describing the Castro than CastroR (28.48%). Furthermore, CastroR descriptions of their home closely resemble those of MissionR and MarinaR in capturing People and Space jointly (Castro = 15.19%, Mission = 18.67%, Marina = 17.76%).

Second, what ideologies are implicated when these connections are drawn? Here, we labeled every response according to 24 categories developed through thematic analysis. While the Castro was ideologized as *gay* across fieldsites (30.66%), only the Marina elicited *straight* responses (3.2%), illustrating contrasts in sexuality between the two neighborhoods. Meanwhile, divisions emerged between visitors and residents: CastroV characterize the neighborhood as *chaotic* (5.63%), *fun* (27.5%), and overwhelmingly *gay* (40%), but not particularly *community-oriented* (2.5%). On the other hand, CastroR describe their home as *community-oriented* (9.49%), *fun* (27.22%), and to a lesser extent *gay* (24.68%), but not *chaotic* (1.27%).

Sexuality, like other social dimensions, differentiates neighborhoods from one another. The Castro has an ideological association with gayness, and the widespread availability of this association enables marking a place like the Marina for normative sexuality (as straight). Within the Castro, divergent notions of queer belonging emerge between residents and visitors. CastroV are most focused on qualities attributed to people, like chaos and gayness. Meanwhile, CastroR complicate monolithic gay representations of the neighborhood, emphasizing its spatial qualities and nature as a residential community. Alongside consideration of race, class, religion, etc., we argue that sociolinguistic work should also attend to the role that sexuality plays in constructing difference within and across local communities.

#momtok : Labeling motherhood in hashtags on TikTok

Katie Slemp

Yifan Wu

Marianne Laplante

York University, Toronto, Canada

TikTok has become one of the most popular content-based social media platforms globally. One of the topics on the app is to show daily life content, articulating a model way of life (influencing) for viewers to interact with under many sub-topics like family life, outfits and makeup, and cooking and cleaning. North American mothers have been described as highly accommodating to their children, using motherese and child-focused talk (Ochs & Schieffelin, 1995). Others have discussed how mothers tend to take on managerial or facilitating roles (Ochs & Taylor, 1992; Kendall, 2008), but few have examined various styles within motherhood that arise under heteronormativity. Following an interest in the representation of motherhood, we surveyed motherhood-related hashtags used on TikTok. Hashtags have been found to be used by TikTok creators as a strategy to increase content exposure and engage in activism (Sainsbury, 2021; Arafat & Khamis, 2025). We found that within this online linguistic landscape emerges the unmarked #momsoftiktok (43.5M videos), as a catch-all tag for a variety of videos about motherhood and family. Originating with Mormon influencers as a conservative, gender-normative community, #momtok (10.3M videos) has become in some places an umbrella term and in other places retains the specific meaning of its origin. A frequent hashtag #sahm (stay at home mom) (8.4M videos) is marked as a specific type of motherhood, although still a normative model. For queer mothers, the most frequently used #twomoms (110K videos) is marked as well, although it is a non-normative family structure, which can be seen in part from the discrepancy between the number of videos. The current project considers the different articulations of motherhood on TikTok in (largely North American) English videos, wherein sahmm; momtok; and momsoftiktok are non-queer (very normative) and exclusively exist under heteronormativity, but queer motherhood must be marked as such. The first thirty videos for each term

(momsoftiktok; momtok; sahm; twomoms) were collected in incognito mode and compiled into a corpus in order to compare the hashtags that appear across the videos via labeling analysis.

Queer mothers are markedly othered in this linguistic landscape and diverge from the norm in a marked way through the use of hashtags for labeling. The terms #sahm; #momtok; and #momsoftiktok do not collocate with #twomoms but rather other normative gender role terms like #cleaning (n=2) while #twomoms collocates with other queer terms almost exclusively, such as #lesbiancouple (n=12), although tagging the content like #vlog like their non-queer counterparts sometimes do. While only one of the #twomoms videos is tagged with #momsoftiktok, none of the videos tagged with #twomoms are also tagged with #momtok nor #sahm (although this phrase and acronym do appear in-text on some of the videos). There is a distinction made between the practices of the queer and non-queer moms. This leads us to believe that while a normative gender role may occur (e.g., sahm) in a queer parent household, they are not using this label as a categorization on TikTok, thus reinforcing their non-inclusion.

References

- Arafat, R., & Khamis, S. (2025). Unveiling the online dynamics influencing the success and virality of TikTok social movements: A case study on pro and anti hijab feminist activism. *Media, War & Conflict*, 18(2), 251-272.
- Kendall, S. (2008). The Balancing Act: Framing Gendered Parental Identities at Dinnertime. *Language in Society*, 37(4), 539–568.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/20108178>
- Ochs, E. and Schieffelin, B. B. (1995) The impact of language socialization on grammatical development. In P. Fletcher and B. MacWhinney (eds.), *The Handbook of Child Language*. 73–94. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Ochs, E. and Taylor, C. (1992) Science at dinner. In C. Kramsch (ed.), *Text and Context: Cross - disciplinary Perspectives on Language Study*. 29–45. Lexington, MA: D. C. Heath.

Sainsbury, C. (2021). LGBTQ+ Content on TikTok and Everyday Activism
(Publication ID 151) [Master's Thesis, Utrecht University]
<https://studenttheses.uu.nl/handle/20.500.12932/60>

Locating Queer Politics in Leeds

Amy Smethurst

University of Leeds, Leeds, United Kingdom

Rusty Barrett asserts that ‘queerness’ is defined in terms of its ‘otherness’, characterised ‘not in terms of who belongs but in terms of what queers react against’ (Barret 2006, pp.822-3). This paper outlines the use of the term ‘queer’ in a local, situated context, to describe identity and to designate space. I argue that such situated uses of ‘queer’ evidence more than ‘a new sexual fluidity’ (Coleman-Fountain 2014, p.802) and are used instead to indicate alignment with specific political principles and social causes. In this way, I argue that queer spaces embody both belonging and dis-belonging, a phenomenon exemplified by the subtle politics of the language used by speakers in these spaces. I frame ‘queer’ as a contemporary Keyword (after Raymond Williams), my focus being on its multiaccentuality and the contexts of its uses within queer spaces. Using long-form, semi-structured interview perspectives from situated queer subjects in Leeds, I interrogate how its many simultaneous uses contribute to both the inclusivity and exclusivity embodied within the term. Participant perspectives highlight the significance of current gender politics in their alignment with, and use of ‘queer’, where, at least locally, the term seems to be used as deliberately trans-inclusive sexual identity label. I find that ‘queer’ is a label which is viewed by speakers as distinct from ‘gay’, and consequently that ‘queer’ spaces are viewed differently from ‘gay’ spaces by those who attend them. I will examine how participants navigate identification with a term ‘understood as both reclaimed and stigmatized’ (Worthen 2023, p.5) and explore the levels of awareness participants demonstrate of the privileged and deprivileged aspects of their own identities within intersectional queer spaces. I answer questions on the complexities of specific identity relations within a queer space through transcripts of participant examples. I conclude that the specific political program associated with identification with ‘queer’ in Leeds involves both local and global politics, and that these politics are consistently represented within the queer space I examine.

References

Barrett, R., 2006. Queer talk. Encyclopedia of Language & Linguistics. Amsterdam: Elsevier.

Coleman-Fountain E., 2014. Lesbian and gay youth and the question of labels. Sexualities. 17(7)

Worthen, M.G., 2023. Queer identities in the 21st century: Reclamation and stigma. Current Opinion in Psychology. 49.

Williams, R., 1976. Keywords: A vocabulary of culture and society. Oxford university press.

LGBTQIA* – Usage, expansion and meaning of LGBT-based initialisms in German

Lars Sörries-Vorberger

University of Hamburg, Hamburg, Germany

Personal designations, including those for queer individuals, play a central role in identity and labelling discourses (cf., e.g., Motschenbacher 2026). Despite their social importance, research on this topic in German remains limited. A project—*L, S, B, T, I, Q, A* and **/+?* – Linguistic visibility of queer people—investigated abbreviated personal designations such as *LSBT*, *LSBTQ*, *LGBTIQ**. These multi-segmental initialisms have emerged as independent lexical units through abbreviation from longer expressions.

The aim of the project was to gain insights into the usage, expansion and meaning (reference) of these initialisms. For this purpose, a corpus was compiled using data from the DWDS (Digital Dictionary of the German Language). Supplementary data (e.g., initialisms, definitions) were gathered from queer associations, and organisations (e.g., Hirschfeld-Eddy-Foundation, SPDqueer), dictionaries, and glossaries (e.g., Duden, Queer Lexikon).

The corpus comprises 30,453 instances of initialisms in context, which have been annotated and analysed quantitatively and qualitatively. The evidence is spread across 169 different variants of initialisms. The initialisms were expanded 2,405 times into their full forms. The analysis considers not only explicit references but also indirect definitions and contextual meanings, highlighting how these initialisms function beyond segmental expansion.

The presentation will report key findings on: (a) frequencies of variants, (b) the usage of special characters (<+>, <*>), (c) the distribution across different sub-corpora (e.g., various newspapers), (d) the number of segments, (e) the variation in the segments' expansion (e.g., <T> *trans**, *transgender*, etc.) and (f) referential and semantic dimensions of initialisms investigated. These findings are enriched by an ongoing survey study on knowledge, usage and meaning of *LGBT*-based initialisms.

In some cases, a semantic detachment between initialisms and their full forms can be observed, raising questions about their function in labelling and categorisation processes. The discussion at the end of the presentation will take up the implications for linguistic labelling, categorisation and daily usage—also in relation to the main theme of the conference—, engaging with current theoretical perspectives (cf., Motschenbacher 2026, Scheller-Boltz 2017).

References

Motschenbacher, H. 2026. Labeling theory in language and sexuality studies. *Journal of Language and Sexuality*. Online-first article, 1–22. <https://doi.org/10.1075/jls.24029.mot>

Scheller-Boltz, D. 2017. LGBT? LGBTQ+? LGBTTQQFAGPBDSM? Or just: QUEER! Critical Remarks on an Acronym in Slavonic and Non-Slavonic Languages. In Handler, P., Kaendl, K., Wochele, H. (Ed.): *Ceci n'est pas une festschrift. Texte zur Angewandten und Romanistischen Sprachwissenschaft für Martin Stegu*. Berlin 2017, 279–291.

We can change the language: Linguistic (r)evolution among nonbinary high school learners of French & Spanish

Julia Spiegelman

The University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada

In the U.S., one in four LGBTQ+ young people identifies outside of the gender binary (The Trevor Project, 2021). The majority of students learning a language in US schools study so-called “gendered” languages such as French and Spanish (ACTFL, 2017), which apply a label of either “masculine” or “feminine” to inanimate and animate nouns and to many corresponding modifiers. While grammatical gender is distinct from social gender, the two are often conflated (Knisely, 2020; Tudisco, 2024). As French and Spanish evolve in queer communities to include nonbinary pronouns and morphemes (Ashley, 2019; George et al., 2025), linguistic authorities such as language academies remain resistant to linguistic forms and practices aiming for gender inclusion (e.g., Diaz et al., 2022; Kosnick, 2019). Nonbinary students learning “gendered” languages like Spanish or French may feel frustrated by a lack of official gender-neutral options, experience misgendering as traumatic, and/or use grammatical gender as a strategic tool (Baros, 2021; Spiegelman, 2022), yet these voices are barely represented in research. As power dynamics grounded in cisheteronormativity, teacher authority, and ideologies of linguistic “correctness” and “legitimacy” play out in classrooms (Moore et al., 2024; Spiegelman, 2024a, 2024b), these students also have agency to interpret and act upon the language in creative ways (Author, forthcoming). More research is needed to understand how nonbinary learners of “gendered” languages understand and navigate grammatical gender.

To investigate this question, this paper draws from a larger collaborative study grounded in trans epistemologies (Jourian & Nicolazzo, 2017), which engaged 12 nonbinary learners of French and Spanish in U.S. high schools in a Zoom community focused on gender and language learning. The project, facilitated by a cisgender researcher and nonbinary research assistant, took place over a six-month period and engaged students individually and collectively through surveys, interviews, focus groups, journals, and artifacts including artwork. Reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022) showed that many

nonbinary students experienced grammatical gender as an obstacle to self-expression, an effect which was heightened by a perceived lack of power and legitimacy as learners. At the same time, many learners adopted stances as linguistic revolutionaries, taking an active role in the evolution and re-creation of the languages they learn. By analyzing students' linguistic strategies, metalinguistic statements, and examples of their creative work, the findings highlight students' agency, innovation, and claimed authority even when they are positioned as disempowered. In closing, we will discuss the structuring role and liberating potential of language ideologies as purveyed by teachers.

Contextualizing (dis)belonging: Nonbinary attitudes towards style shifting beyond the queer safety vs. risk paradigm

Ariana Steele

Elanur Sönmez

Pennsylvania State University, State College, United States

Recent research on queer speech has shown that queer speakers modulate their voices and other stylistic resources to signal or conceal aspects of identity depending on audience, setting, and goals, often contextualizing these shifts as due to safe vs. unsafe or queer vs. non-queer environments (e.g., Russell, 2017; Khoo & Ilbury, 2023; Podesva and Van Hofwegen, 2016; Gratton, 2016). While these shifts in language use reflect queer speakers' shifting senses of safety and comfort, they also construct safety and comfort as dichotomous for queer people - where a context is either "safe" or "unsafe," or "queer" or "not queer" - and overlook moment-to-moment interactional contexts and affectual stances. Other recent work on nonbinary language practices suggests that nonbinary individuals use semiotic resources in creative ways that go beyond simple with-or-against responses to cisnormative social structures (e.g., Calder, 2019; Steele, 2022; Jones, 2022). Extending sociolinguistic variationist analyses of specific linguistic variables at stake, nonbinary *discourses* about the varied contexts in which they shift their speaking styles can help shed light onto the complex motivations that queer speakers rely on to adjust their language practices.

In this study, we therefore ask: what if the line between (dis)belonging were more fuzzy than clear, more queer than straight? The present study analyzes how a multiracial group of twenty nonbinary individuals in the American Midwest affectively discuss their shifting speech and embodied presentations across various contexts, including family, professional, and social settings. Interviews were analyzed through discourse analysis informed by a grounded theory approach, involving iterative coding of emergent themes (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The findings show that nonbinary individuals strategically monitor their voice modulation and embodied presentation in ways that move beyond a binarious safety–risk paradigm, encompassing communicative aims

such as asserting their nonbinary identity, fostering comfort, or subverting dominant understandings of gender and embodiment. For instance, participants discuss combining shifts in pitch and tone with embodied presentation to subvert normative expectations of gendered embodiment and navigate the emotional terrains of their social interactions. More specifically, one speaker reports adopting a “deeper voice” with conventionally feminine clothing to “fuck with their [their interlocutors’] idea...” of “what sort of voices can be attached to a look”. Another participant reports that, rather than consistently opting for safety in confrontational settings, they purposefully adopt a lowered pitch to “aggressively present” to their family members who fail to recognize their nonbinary identity despite prior disclosure.

By centering discourse, embodiment, and affect, this study advances sociolinguistic understandings of style shifting as a relational and context-sensitive practice, where speaking style carries social meaning through indexicality (Eckert, 2012; Niinisalo, 2024). It moves beyond macro-level contrasts between cisnormative and queer speech to foreground the micro-level interactional contexts in which speakers negotiate interlocutors’ expectations alongside and part-and-parcel to their own comfort, safety, and nonconformist urges. In doing so, it shows that nonbinary individuals’ stylistic practices are not simply oppositional to normativity or motivated by a zero-sum game of safety and risk, but dynamically responsive to the demands and affordances of each interaction.

References

- Calder, J. (2019). From sissy to sickening: the indexical landscape of /s/ in SoMa, San Francisco. *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology*, 29(3): 332-358.
- Eckert, P. (2012). Three waves of variation study: The emergence of meaning in the study of sociolinguistic variation. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 41(1), 87-100.
- Glaser, B., & Strauss, A. (2017). *Discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. Routledge.

Gratton, C. (2016). Resisting the gender binary: The use of (ING) in the construction of non- binary transgender identities. University of Pennsylvania Working Papers in Linguistics, 22(2).

Jones, Jacq. (2022). "Authentic Self, Incongruent Acoustics: A Corpus-Based Sociophonetic Analysis of Nonbinary Speech." [Doctoral Thesis, University of Canterbury]

Khoo, J, and C Ilbury. (2023). Navigating 'Safe' and 'Non-Safe' Queer Spaces: A Study of Style-Shifting in Singapore. *Journal of Language and Sexuality*.

Niinisalo, T. (2024). Finnish queer teachers' understanding of their language use in the workplace. *Gender and Education*, 36(6), 682-697.

Podesva, R. J., Roberts, S. J., & Campbell-Kibler, K. (2002). Sharing resources and indexing meanings in the production of gay styles. *Language and Sexuality: Contesting Meaning in Theory and Practice*, 175-189.

Podesva, R. & Van Hofwegen, J. (2016). /s/exuality in Smalltown California. In E. Levon & R. Beline Mendes (Eds.), *Language, Sexuality, and Power*. Oxford University Press

Russell, E. L. (2017). Style shifting and the phonetic performance of gay vs. straight: A case study from French. *Journal of Language and Sexuality*, 6(1), 128-176.

Steele, A. J. (2022). Enacting New Worlds of Gender: Nonbinary Speakers, Racialized Gender, and Anti-Colonialism. In *Oxford Handbook of Language and Sexuality* (pp. 1–26).

<https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190212926.013.74>

Sexuality and gender presentation predict vowel production

Liza Sulkin

Boston University, Boston, United States

This study examines how gender presentation (expression of gender through behavior and appearance) and sexuality function as predictors of variation in vowel production among 45 assigned female at birth US English speakers from New England. This work builds on the minimal literature exploring correlations between sexuality and vowel production and further explores gender presentation as a predictor of variation (as proposed by Sulkin (2025)) through a large-scale spontaneous speech corpus. We find that queer participants have significantly higher vowels compared to straight participants and that sexuality and gender presentation interact in their correlations with vowel dispersion.

Previous literature links vowel production to gender and sexuality. Lowered formants (F1, F2) and contracted vowel spaces are associated with masculinity and higher formants and expanded vowel spaces are associated with femininity (e.g. Neel (2008), Simpson (2001)). Additionally, Pierrehumbert et al. (2004) and Munson et al. (2006) both found that, in the Chicago and St. Paul/Minneapolis metropolitan areas, respectively, queer women produced lower average F1 and F2 values for certain vowels compared to straight women; Pierrehumbert et al. found that straight women had more contracted vowel spaces than queer women, while Munson et al. found the opposite effect. In Canadian English, Rendall et al. (2008) found that queer women had lower formants and more contracted vowel spaces than straight women. More recently, however, a large-scale study (Holmes et al., 2024) on British English found no significant differences in vowel quality with respect to sexuality in structured spontaneous speech interviews, although they examined tokens from only three words (*bed*, *cat* and *go*).

The present data comes from sociolinguistic interviews conducted with 15 lesbian, 15 bisexual and 15 straight participants from New England. There were no significant differences in height between these three groups, and none reported regular smoking habits or any testosterone use. Each speaker was

also asked to rate themselves on a gender presentation Likert scale, ranging from 1 (=hyper-feminine) to 5 (=hyper-masculine). The interlocutor was a feminine-presenting cisgender lesbian from New England. Recordings were made as 48kHz, 24bit .wav files using a Zoom H4n Pro with an AKG C520 condenser microphone. Segmentation was done using the Montreal Forced Aligner (McAuliffe et al., 2017) and manually corrected. F1 and F2 values were collected at the midpoint of each vowel in Praat, resulting in 2000 stressed vowel tokens per participant of the vowels [i, ɪ, e, ε, ʌ, æ, ɑ, o, u, ʊ]. Vowel space dispersion was calculated by finding the average Euclidean distance between each vowel and the calculated center of each speaker's F1/F2 space.

We find that lesbian and bisexual speakers have significantly *lower* F1 and F2 compared to straight speakers (but do not differ significantly from each other). Additionally, feminine-presenting bisexual and straight speakers have significantly *more dispersed* vowel spaces than masculine-presenting bisexual and straight speakers, while feminine-presenting lesbians have significantly *less dispersed* vowel spaces compared to their masculine-presenting counterparts. These results partially support the results of previous studies and underscore the importance of large-scale analysis for understudied communities.

Lost in Translation, Found in Language: Queer (Dis)Belonging among Japanese-English Multilingual Nonbinary Individuals

Yuka Takao

University of Wollongong, Wollongong, Australia

Belonging is not only a social or political condition—it is also linguistic, cultural, and increasingly technological. For nonbinary individuals navigating Japanese and English, questions of belonging are inseparable from how language and culture intersect with gender identity. This paper argues that queer (dis)belonging among multilingual nonbinary individuals is co-constructed by diverse factors comprising an assemblage of belonging that shape how identities are articulated, negotiated, and lived across contexts.

This paper draws on a qualitative doctoral study of nine Japanese-English multilingual individuals who identify as neither exclusively male nor female and who live in Japan, Australia, and the United States. Data were collected through semi-structured and object interviews and analysed using assemblage theory (DeLanda, 2006), which conceptualises social phenomena as comprising heterogeneous, interacting elements.

The findings show that participants' sense of (dis)belonging is dynamically shaped through ongoing self-exploration and negotiation among gendered subjectivity, social norms, sexuality, and embodiment. Many participants described alienation from the community associated with their assigned gender, while others experienced difficulty establishing belonging within queer communities, where nonbinary identities remain somewhat unintelligible. The difficulty was further compounded by other intersecting identities, such as non-normative sexualities.

At the same time, cyberspaces, including metaverse, emerged as a site for authentic identity development for many trans and nonbinary individuals (Freeman et al., 2022). Metaverse platforms particularly enabled forms of embodiment aligned with their sense of self, unconstrained by gender, body, and even species (Bācharu Bishōjo Nemu, 2022). One participant designed a demi-human avatar of ambiguous gender, and her lived experience through this

avatar contributed to eroding gender categories. These dynamics are linked to what Winer (2025) conceptualises as gender detachment—a phenomenon where gender becomes irrelevant to one’s sense of self. My study identified three pathways to gender detachment: asexual/aromantic identification, process of gender deconstruction (Butler, 1990), and the erosion of gender categories through multiple, interacting factors. These processes can reconfigure how belonging is experienced and negotiated.

Language plays an important role in mediating these experiences across contexts. The acquisition of English provides access to a wider range of gender discourses and identity labels, as well as an individualistic cultural frame that facilitates self-expression (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). However, these affordances remain partial and context-dependent. One participant expressed ambivalence towards English, associating it with colonial histories and experiencing limitations in articulating their identities. Japanese, by contrast, offers different affordances, including flexible first-person pronoun use and the possibility of avoiding gendered reference by using gender-neutral descriptors. Within Japanese-speaking queer communities, participants negotiated belonging through highly context-sensitive linguistic practices, as English loanwords such as LGBT may evoke foreignness and political connotation while carrying limited cultural intelligibility (Miyajiri, 2023). As a result, participants developed nuanced, context-specific linguistic strategies that vary considerably in vocabulary and depth of self-disclosure both within and outside queer communities.

Taken together, these findings reconceptualise queer (dis)belonging as an assemblage emerging across linguistic, cultural, and technological domains. They highlight how belonging is not fixed but continuously produced through situated practices of meaning-making, embodiment, and interaction across multiple social worlds.

Bācharu Bishōjo Nemu. (2022). *Metabāsu shinkaron: Kasō genjitsu no kōya ni mebuku “kaihō” to “sōzō” no shinsekai* [metaverse evolution: A new world of “liberation” and “creation” sprouting in the wilderness of virtual reality] [メタバース進化論: 仮想現実の荒野に芽吹く「解放」と「創造」の新世界]. Gijutsuhyoronsha. <https://ci.nii.ac.jp/ncid/BC13483233>

Butler, J. (1990). *Gender trouble : Feminism and the subversion of identity*. Routledge.

DeLanda, M. (2006). *A new philosophy of society: Assemblage theory and social complexity*. Continuum. <https://doi.org/10.5040/9781472546043>

Freeman, G., Maloney, D., Acena, D., Barwulor, C., Barbosa, S., Appert, C., Lampe, C., Shamma, D. A., Yatani, K., Drucker, S., & Williamson, J. (2022, 2022). (re)discovering the physical body online: Strategies and challenges to approach non-cisgender identity in social virtual reality. New York, NY, USA. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3491102.3502082>

Markus, H. R., & Kitayama, S. (1991). Culture and the self: Implications for cognition, emotion, and motivation. *Psychological Review*, 98, 224-253. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-295X.98.2.224>

Miyajiri, K. (2023). *Ethnography on sexual minorities who do not support policies and movements for LGBT* Future University Hakodate]. <https://fun.repo.nii.ac.jp/record/2000030/files/b1019246.pdf>

Winer, C. (2025). Does everyone have a gender? Compulsory gender, gender detachment, and asexuality. *Socius : sociological research for a dynamic world*, 11. <https://doi.org/10.1177/23780231251339382>

Owning it, owning us: experiences of belonging and solidarity as a reaction to HIV/AIDS in the Swedish queer press, 1982–1986

Martina Terrazzano

Umeå University, Umeå, Sweden

For more than forty years, the queer community has been indissolubly associated with the Western HIV/AIDS epidemic. Identified as the first so-called “risk group” of the new disease, during the 1980s and 1990s the community – and more specifically, gay and bisexual men – was at the centre of media discourses on the epidemic. Previous research highlighted how these discourses often reinforced prejudice and dehumanised people with HIV/AIDS, with trends such as the distinction between “guilty” and “innocent” victims being identified across several countries.

Not much scholarly attention, however, has been devoted to how queer media themselves reacted to and discussed the health crisis. This is a significant lack of knowledge. In light of the vital role of queer activism in response to the disease, and the wider impact that this activist movement had on discourses around health, prevention, and the duty of care, any depiction of the HIV/AIDS epidemic that fails to highlight the community’s agency will be an incomplete one.

As part of a wider linguistic project on discourses around the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Swedish mainstream and queer media, this paper focuses on how the Swedish queer magazine *Revolt – mot sexuella fördomar* employed language to give form to belonging and solidarity in the face of the epidemic, thus consolidating the community’s subjectivity through its response to the crisis.

The project employed a combination of critical discourse analysis and corpus linguistics. A corpus was created with all the articles discussing HIV/AIDS published from 1982 to 1986 in the magazine *Revolt*. A smaller portion of the material was then selected for a critical discourse analysis. The qualitative analysis formed the basis of the project, while corpus methods were employed

subsequently as a way to test hypotheses, so that the researcher's intuitions would be at the core of the investigation.

By employing the concepts of collectivisation (Reisigl and Wodak 2001) and deviancy doubling (Potts 2013), the project showed that *Revolt* shaped, strengthened and encouraged belonging and solidarity among members of the queer community throughout the early years of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Moreover, solidarity was also extended to other so-called risk groups, such as women in prostitution and drug users, thus showing what the researcher termed deviancy owning, a development of Potts's previously mentioned concept. Finally, results showed the pivotal role of prevention and proactivity discourses in queer media, a trend in stark contrast with tendencies identified in among mainstream media.

References

Potts, Amanda (2013). *At arm's length: methods of investigating constructions of the 'other' in American disaster and disease reporting*. Lancaster: Lancaster University.

Reisigl, Martin and Wodak, Ruth (2001). *Discourse and discrimination. Rhetorics of racism and antisemitism*. London: Routledge.

Languages of (Dis)Belonging: Chinese Gay Men Navigating Queer Identity Across Chinese, English, and Japanese

Chuan Tian

Sophia University, Graduate School of Foreign Languages and Linguistics,
Tokyo, Japan

The notion of belonging is often treated as self-explanatory, commonly associated with the feeling of attachment to a particular place (Antonsich, 2010). However, Antonsich conceptualizes belonging as a multidimensional construct, encompassing both an emotional sense of comfort and safety, and a discursive resource through which individuals negotiate socio-spatial inclusion and exclusion. Within this framework, language plays a key role in enabling shared semiotic understandings and fostering a sense of being “at home”. For multilingual queer individuals, belonging may be unevenly experienced across linguistic contexts: while some contexts facilitate the expression of queer identity and desire, others constrain, regulate, or render such expressions illegible (Milani & Levon, 2024). Despite growing attention to the relationship between multilingualism and sexuality (Milani & Cashman, 2024), how these uneven conditions are navigated in transnational contexts remains underexplored. This study addresses this gap by examining how Chinese gay men living in Japan navigate belonging through their linguistic repertoires.

Drawing on interview data from a linguistic ethnographic study of 15 participants, this paper focuses on one focal participant, R, as an illustrative case, while using data from others to contextualize the analysis. R’s interview provides detailed accounts of coming-out experiences across different linguistic contexts, enabling a discourse-analytic examination of how he links different languages to varying degrees of safety, recognition, and legitimacy in the expression of queer identity and desire.

The findings show that R’s sense of belonging shifts across languages. In Chinese, queer identity is difficult for him to articulate, as relevant terms (e.g., *tóngxìngliàn*, “homosexual”) are perceived as stigmatized and emotionally distant. This leads him to rely on softened or mitigated expressions (e.g., “I might not like girls”), through which he distances himself from socially marked

labels, suggesting a sense of (dis)belonging. In contrast, English is experienced by R as a space of safety and acceptance, grounded in his prior positive interactions with English-speaking interlocutors. This perception enables direct use of identity labels (e.g., “I’m gay”), with English associated with greater recognition and legitimacy of queer identities.

Japanese presents a more ambiguous case. Although situated within an environment he perceives as relatively queer-friendly compared to China, R tends to disclose his sexuality in an indirect manner. In one case, he carefully structures the conversation, moving from broader social issues (e.g., Japan’s low birth rate) toward self-disclosure by stating “I don’t get married” to index queerness. This strategy appears to be shaped by his perception that interlocutors may have limited familiarity with queer identities, leading to a more interactionally managed negotiation of belonging.

R’s case demonstrates that belonging is not simply tied to geographic location, but is unevenly attached to languages. Chinese emerges in his account as a site of constraint and distancing, English as a site of recognition and safety, and Japanese as a space of cautious negotiation. Languages in this case are not neutral resources, but sites where queer (dis)belonging is unevenly enabled, negotiated, and constrained, demonstrating that belonging in transnational queer lives is not anchored in geography, but constructed through language.

References

- Antonsich, M. (2010). Searching for belonging: An analytical framework. *Geography Compass*, 4(6), 644–659. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1749-8198.2009.00317.x>
- Milani, T. M., & Cashman, H. R. (2024). Why should we care about multilingualism, gender, and sexuality? *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 27(5), 631–642. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13670050.2024.2309529>
- Milani, T. M., & Levon, E. (2024). Theorizing checkpoints of desire: Multilingualism, sexuality and (in)securitization in Israel/Palestine. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 27(5), 702–714. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13670050.2024.2306390>

Playful pronouns then and now: historical and current practices of explorative digital gender

Theresa Heyd

Heidelberg University, Heidelberg, Germany

Sol Tovar

Heidelberg University, Heidelberg, Germany; Berliner Hochschule für Technik, Berlin, Germany

Pronoun sharing practices have become a central factor in gendered language and language about gender, providing a means for speakers to do gender talk, including flagging their own gender identities and referring to others in gendered ways. At the same time, the very mention of *pronouns* has become politicized and provides pathways to antifeminist, homophobic and transphobic discourse about enregistered forms of “gender ideology” (Borba 2022). While practices of pronoun sharing have been widely recognized and explored (e.g. Zimman 2019, Zimman and Brown 2024), there is surprisingly little secured knowledge about the fine ethnographic details of its emergence. Zimman (2019: 162), describing face-to-face scenarios, dates the emergence of pronoun sharing to the mid- 2010s, noting that “(t)hough the practice is not entirely novel, it is only within the last several years that asking for pronoun preferences has become a common part of interacting in trans (or transfriendly) spaces.”

In our talk, we focus on digital practices of pronoun sharing, as it is achieved through digital pronoun-wearing for example in social media profiles, email signatures and other instantiations of our digital bodies. Specifically, we want to make two claims:

(1), that digital pronoun sharing involves many practices of playful, explorative, and non-literal forms of pronominal discourse, included but not limited to derisive mock pronouns (King and Crowley 2023, [Author 1]);

(2), that the origins of pronoun sharing as a discursive routine lie in digital, rather to face-to-face contexts, and thus constitute a linguistic practice originating from queer digital spaces.

Our study is based on a parallel reading of digital data from two eras. We use archival data of early digital communities of the 1990s, specifically LambdaMoo (Deuel 1996). In addition, we use a corpus of TikTok data ([Author 2]). In both datasets, non-canonical forms of pronoun sharing are prevalent, in particular “Spivak pronouns” in the historical data, and “nounself pronouns” (Miltersen 2016) in the TikTok data. We compare the playful and explorative ways in which pronoun sharing becomes discursivized in these digital spaces, separated by a time span of almost 40 years. We argue that playful explorations of gender expression have been, and continue to be, an important and under-explored discursive function of digital pronoun sharing, and constitute a catalyst for explorative gender expressions also beyond digital spaces.

-

References:

[Author 1. Anonymised for review]

[Author 2. Anonymised for review]

Borba, R. (2022). Enregistering “gender ideology” The emergence and circulation of a transnational anti-gender language. *Journal of Language and Sexuality*, 11(1), 57-79.

King, B. W., & Crowley, A. (2023). The future of pronouns in the online/offline nexus. In *The Routledge handbook of pronouns* (pp. 74-86). Routledge.

Miltersen, E. H. (2016). Nounself pronouns: 3rd person personal pronouns as identity expression. *Journal of Language Works-Sprogvidenskabeligt Studentertidsskrift*, 1(1), 37-62.

Zimman, L., & Brown, C. (2024). Beyond Pronouns 101. In Hudley, A. H. C., Mallinson, C., & Bucholtz, M. (Eds.): *Inclusion in Linguistics*. Oxford University Press., 313-338.

Zimman, L. (2019). Trans self-identification and the language of neoliberal selfhood: Agency, power, and the limits of monologic discourse. *International journal of the sociology of language*, 2019(256), 147-175.

Performative Males: The Making of a “Fake” Male Persona

Yu-Xuan Tsai

National Taiwan University, Taipei, Taiwan

The term *performative male* has circulated widely in online discourse to describe a male persona perceived as inauthentically performing progressivism, feminism, and emotional sensitivity in order to appeal to women. This figure is constructed through a recognizable assemblage of semiotic resources, including commodity signs (e.g., matcha drinks, tote bags, vinyl records by female artists), stylized aesthetic choices, and exaggerated invocations of feminist discourse, whose stance toward gender is treated as strategic rather than sincere.

Building on existing scholarship that draws on Agha’s (2003) notion of enregisterment and Eckert’s (2008) discussion of personae, this study analyzes performative male discourse as the formation of a persona constituted through indexical cues. Extending Jaffe’s (2016) concept of fields of indexicality, I argue that the performative male emerges through a constellation of stance-bearing semiotic signs that cohere into a recognizable style. However, these discourses are also saturated with what I term *contradictory indexicality*: progressive gender stances are juxtaposed with cues of insincerity, producing layered metadiscursive evaluations. Across videos, on-camera reactions, and commentaries, this figure is reflexively constructed and flattened into an emblem of inauthentic masculinity.

Engaging Gal and Irvine’s (2019) theorization of language ideology, the analysis demonstrates how ideological processes of erasure selectively suppress conflicting indexical cues, transforming complex stance configurations into a coherent “fake” persona. Importantly, while parody appears to expose the citational nature of gendered performances (cf. Butler 1990, 1997; Inoue 2006), the mockery surrounding performative males does not ultimately destabilize dominant gender ideology. Instead, it reaffirms an unmarked normative masculinity in which feminist engagement are rendered fundamentally incompatible with “authentic” manhood.

Finally, the study considers how sexuality and race enter the field of interpretation through indexical indeterminacy, as signs associated with the performative male intersect with indexical associations related to gay identity, femininity, or Asianized cultural imaginaries. Through processes of indexical recontextualization, appropriated semiotic resources are at times mobilized to evaluate those very groups as inauthentic, thereby revealing the layered and unstable nature of indexical meaning. By situating performative male discourse at the intersection of indexical and ideological reproduction, this study contributes to ongoing investigations in linguistic anthropology and sociolinguistics concerning indexical disalignment in sexuality discourse identified by Barrett and Hall (2024).

References

- Agha, Asif. 2003. "The Social Life of Cultural Value." *Language & Communication* 23(3–4): 231–273.
- Butler, Judith. 1990. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge.
- Butler, Judith. 1997. *Excitable Speech*. New York: Routledge.
- Eckert, Penelope. 2008. "Variation and the Indexical Field." *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 12(4): 453–476.
- Gal, Susan, and Judith T. Irvine. 2019. *Signs of Difference: Language and Ideology in Social Life*. 2nd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hall, Kira and Rusty Barrett. "Sexuality Discourses: Indexical Misrecognition and the Politics of Sex." *Annual Review of Anthropology*, vol. 53, 2024, pp. 127–46.
- Inoue, Miyako. 2006. *Vicarious Language: Gender and Linguistic Modernity in Japan*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Jaffe, Alexandra. 2016. "Indexicality, Stance and Fields in Sociolinguistics." In *Sociolinguistics: Theoretical Debates*, edited by Nikolas Coupland, 86–112. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Queering the reclamation and revitalisation of Meänkieli in Sweden

Riitta-Liisa Valijarvi

University College London, London, United Kingdom; Uppsala University,
Uppsala, Sweden

Elsa Woodmeade

University College London, London, United Kingdom

Meänkieli is a threatened Finno-Ugric language traditionally spoken in northern Sweden by 20,000-75,000 people. It became threatened due to the colonial and assimilatory policies of the Swedish state during the period 1880-1950. A recent Truth and Reconciliation Commission (SOU 2023) has addressed the trauma of eugenics, marginalisation, and language loss.

Meänkieli was once part of the Finnish dialect continuum, which is why its status as a language was initially contested. Following community initiatives and a cultural revival, Meänkieli was officially recognized as one of the national minority languages of Sweden in 2000 alongside Finnish, Romani Chib, Sámi, and Yiddish.

Today, most fluent speakers of Meänkieli are middle-aged or older. However, the language is being revitalised through the state-funded language centre, language courses, summer camps, bi- or multilingual pre-schools, learning materials, and language technology. The revitalisation of Meänkieli is made challenging by a great deal of variation and the advanced state of language shift. Fortunately, young, middle, and old generations are reclaiming their Meänkieli heritage and processing the loss through music, theatre, and media (e.g. Ackermann-Boström et al. in press, Kolu 2022).

Walsh et al.'s (2025) recent book *Queering Language Revitalisation* discusses the way in which queer speakers of Irish, Breton, Catalan, and Welsh navigate their queer identities, and handle nonbinary and gender-inclusive language. The book also challenges Fishman's (1991) model of intergenerational language transmission and highlights the role of new speakers, i.e. those who have learned the language later in life, drawing parallels between their linguistic

journey and that of queer coming out that challenge traditionalism and heteronormativity (Walsh et al. 2025: 24-31, 33, 63). Previous research on Meänkieli shows that the young generations and new speakers' language is different, and the revitalisation space is home to sometimes conflicting ideologies (Ackermann-Boström 2021, Molnár Bodrogi 2022, Valijärvi 2025).

Our study contributes to the emerging field of queering language revitalisation by focusing on the dual minority belonging, i.e. being both someone with a Meänkieli heritage and a queer person. These two identities, as they intersect with history, geographical marginalisation, northern Swedish masculinities, state institutions, and language ideologies, can lead to parallel, contributing and conflicting experiences of belonging. For instance, one might have certain life experiences at 'unexpected' times, find community outside of the family unit, seek out intergenerational connections or negotiate complex in group/out group structures.

Our case studies include: 1) the Meänkieli youth organisation Met Nuoret's Queer-sanakirja/Queerordbok - Meänkieli/Svenska 'Queer dictionary - Meänkieli/Swedish' (2016) and its reception; 2) the artist duo Karin Keisu and Josse Thuresson's examination of Sweden's colonial history through their respective languages, Meänkieli and Swedish Sign Language; 3) the role of the Tornedalen Pride festival held in the Arctic town of Pajala and one of its founders, David Forsberg, also known under the drag name Miss Knapsu. Our data comes from news articles, websites, podcasts, and social media. Our analysis focuses on the themes of belonging, community, and resistance on one hand, and disbelonging, loss, and marginalisation, on the other hand.

“He’s Here, He’s Not Queer”: The Indexical Potential of Pronoun Use on American Drag Reality Television

Finn Verdonk

Swarthmore College, Swarthmore, PA, United States

It is well-documented that drag performers play with gendered language to shift perceptions of their own identities (e.g. Barrett 2017). However, little research has explored the ways that gendered language might index a performer’s perception of someone else. Looking specifically at early seasons of RuPaul’s Drag Race (RPDR), Myers (2018) found that contestants used more masculine descriptors and pronouns when “throwing shade” (humorous/exaggerated critique). Using new corpus data from RPDR and The Boulet Brothers’ Dragula, I critically reexamine Myers’s claims and argue that he/him reference on RPDR may instead indicate “outsider” status in the drag community—as portrayed by RPDR—and that, on Dragula, singular they/them reference appears far more frequently due to the more diverse contestants.

I drew data from three sources: RPDR Season 4 (RPDR4), RPDR Season 14 (RPDR14), and Dragula Season 5. A 6-hour sample was selected from each season, and every instance of third-person singular pronominal reference (1,623 total tokens) was transcribed and coded for pronoun gender, speaker, addressee, referent, and emotional affect (praise, neutral, critique, or shade). Finally, demographic data was gathered from the RPDR Wiki site. These tokens were then analyzed quantitatively, and their indexical potential was discussed within Silverstein’s framework of indexical order (Silverstein 2003).

My data show a clear shift in the emotional affect of he/him pronouns. I found that over half the he/him references in RPDR4 (out of 31 total he/him tokens) were shady or critical, confirming Myers (2018). However, this does not remain true 10 years later in RPDR14, where only 1 token (out of 11 total he/him tokens) was shady or critical. Notably, the most frequent referents of he/him across both seasons of RPDR were all queens with some degree of social separation from the core cast. For example, Maddy Morphosis is the lone straight, cisgender contestant on her season, while RuPaul, as the judge, does not socialize with the contestants outside of formal judging. I argue that using

he/him for these queens indicates not shade, but their outsider status with respect to the community of drag queens on RPDR.

On *Dragula*, I found that the association between he/him reference and criticism is even less present. Additionally, I encountered singular they/them reference for the first time in my sample. *Dragula* is an alternative, horror-focused drag show, notably featuring drag kings competing with queens, and there is a greater diversity in drag aesthetic and contestant identity than on RPDR. The correlations, if any, between they/them pronoun reference and contestant identity on *Dragula* remain a topic of further investigation, though drag kings may be they/them-ed more than other performers on the show.

My data indicate that the layers and orders of indexicality at play in pronoun use among American drag performers on reality television are context dependent and can shift over time. These findings highlight the importance of continually reinvestigating prior conclusions, especially when working with sociolinguistic minorities known for their linguistic creativity.

Bibliography

Barrett, Rusty. 2017. *From Drag Queens to Leathermen: Language, Gender, and Gay Male Subcultures*. *Studies in Language, Gender, and Sexuality*. Oxford University Press.

Myers, Allyson Christie. 2018. "Do You Feel like a Woman or Do You Feel like a Drag Queen? a Queer Linguistic Analysis of Drag Queen Speech." M.A., San Diego State University.

<https://www.proquest.com/docview/2093845060/abstract/C2E369EA620E4C48PQ/1>.

Silverstein, Michael. 2003. "Indexical Order and the Dialectics of Sociolinguistic Life." *Language & Communication* 23 (3–4): 193–229. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0271-5309\(03\)00013-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0271-5309(03)00013-2).

Reading the Room: Environmental Coding and Queer Belonging

Rob Vinall

University of the Arts London, London, United Kingdom

This paper argues that queer spatial environments operate as communicative infrastructures that shape belonging beyond verbal exchange. Focusing on the gay sauna as a spatial condition, the paper examines how atmosphere operates as non-verbal, embodied discourse. Rather than treating belonging as articulated through identity labels or verbal affirmation, the paper proposes that it is structured through affective signalling, coded material cues, negotiated proximity and the para-domestic spatial conditions that render intimacy legible without requiring declaration.

Queer communities have long relied on indirect and coded forms of communication in response to surveillance and criminalisation (Leap, 1996; Baker, 2002). Practices such as Polari functioned as covert linguistic systems that enabled recognition while maintaining discretion (Baker, 2002). Similarly, the handkerchief code transformed colour and placement into a wearable semiotic structure for signalling desire and role without explicit declaration (Halberstam, 2005). Spatial practices such as cottaging depended on architectural layout, ritualised movement, and tacit recognition rather than speech, producing what might be understood as environmental indexicality, or the capacity of space itself to signal affiliation and possibility (Chauncey, 1994).

The contemporary sauna extends this lineage. Orientation is initiated before entry, emerging through architectural signalling rather than explicit instruction. Externally, these venues often occupy architecturally discreet or repurposed sites, such as upper floors above shops, former retail units, industrial estates, or buildings accessed via side or rear entrances. Subdued façades, limited signage, and buzzer-entry systems produce a register of discretion. Such positioning operates as environmental signalling, communicating availability and opacity through architectural understatement. Recognition depends on shared spatial literacy: knowing where to look, how to approach, and how to interpret architectural marginality as invitation rather than exclusion.

Internally, explicit instruction remains minimal. Orientation occurs through gradients of light and darkness, temperature shifts, humidity, sound, circulation patterns, and thresholds of opacity. These atmospheric conditions subtly organise encounter, shaping how bodies approach, pause, signal interest, or withdraw, much like linguistic cues regulate interaction in conversation. Drawing on Ahmed's (2006) account of orientation and Anderson's (2009) theorisation of affective atmospheres, the paper reframes atmosphere as a medium of discourse. Belonging emerges not through propositional language but through embodied literacy and the capacity to read and respond to spatial cues.

In this context, spatial protocols operate as shared but unspoken agreements governing visibility, discretion, invitation, and refusal. The sauna becomes a site of intimate publicness (Berlant and Warner, 1998) in which community is sustained through environmental coding rather than explicit speech. It also operates as a para-domestic environment: a space of congregation, repetition, and shared presence that exceeds singular sexual encounter. Lounges, resting areas, and social rooms enable forms of collective inhabitation that blur the boundaries between public venue and domestic interior.

At a moment when queer belonging is increasingly mediated through digital taxonomies and platform categorisation, this paper reasserts the importance of non-verbal, architectural forms of communication. By positioning atmosphere as non-verbal queer discourse, it extends debates in language and community studies beyond speech, proposing spatial cues as a critical dimension of queer communicative practice.

“I’m Every Woman”: Mapping the conditions of a contested category

Lexi Webster

University of Southampton, Southampton, United Kingdom

The constitution of the category of woman has long been a site of sustained theoretical and social contestation. In the last year alone, this contestation has underpinned significant socio-political regress. From government-sponsored reports on data collection (Sullivan, 2025), reinterpretations of terminology in equality legislation (*For Women Scotland Ltd v The Scottish Ministers*, 2025), and an international sporting body’s reintroduction of physiological testing practices (International Olympic Committee, 2026), decisions on who is legitimately included in the category of woman – and, whether by extension or in contrast, female – have ramifications spanning multiple domains. However, despite the rhetorical intensity of its contestation, the underlying cognitive structures that organise the category remain under-examined in the current antagonistic political context. In this paper, I argue that differential cognitive models of woman often positioned in competition to one another have substantial overlap. Further, I contend that the differences between, for example, models for woman and trans woman are insufficient for sustaining the categorical exclusions currently being legislated and enforced.

Broadly, this paper takes a socio-cognitive approach to discourse studies (van Dijk, 2008; Webster, 2021) in generating empirical evidence for the features, conditions, and structures that organise the category woman in trans-inclusive and trans-exclusionary imaginaries. Building on foundational category structure research from cognitive linguistics (e.g. Rosch, 1973; Lakoff, 1987), I identify the central, peripheral, essential, prototypical, and exemplar conditions that constitute woman as a category in each cognitive model. I then put forward a novel method of cognitive mapping, combining conceptual blending (Fauconnier & Turner, 2002) and deictic space theory (Chilton, 2014), to plot these conditions and render them visually comparable. Overlaying differential models of the category makes immediately apparent the substantial overlap and insufficient structural differences across trans-inclusive and trans-exclusionary variants.

The primary contribution of this paper is twofold. Methodologically, it puts forward a novel approach to visual cognitive mapping that makes comparison within and across categories immediately legible. It also generates an empirical and evidence-based challenge to 'gender-critical' politicking, demonstrating that the conditions comprising woman as a trans-exclusionary cognitive category are insufficiently different from its trans-inclusive counterpart to warrant or enable a stable foundation for long-term legislative and social exclusions, which are currently being executed in its name.

References

Chilton, P. 2014. *Language, Space and Mind: The conceptual geometry of linguistic meaning*. Cambridge University Press.

Fauconnier, G. & Turner, M. 2002. *The Way We Think: conceptual blending and the mind's hidden complexities*. Basic Books.

For Women Scotland Ltd v The Scottish Ministers. 2025. UK Supreme Court (UKSC) 16.

International Olympic Committee. 2026. International Olympic Committee announces new Policy on the Protection of the Female (Women's) Category in Olympic Sport. 26 March, 2026.

<https://www.olympics.com/ioc/news/international-olympic-committee-announces-new-policy-on-the-protection-of-the-female-women-s-category-in-olympic-sport>

Lakoff, G. 1987. *Women, Fire & Dangerous Things*. University of Chicago Press.

Rosch, E. 1973. On the internal structure of perceptual and semantic categories. In T. Moore (ed.), *Cognitive Development and the Acquisition of Language*. Academic Press.

Rosch, E. 1978. Principles of categorization. In E. Rosch & B.B. Lloyd, *Cognition and Categorization*. Routledge.

Sullivan, A. 2025. *Review of Data, Statistics and Research on Sex and Gender*. UCL Social Research Institute.

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/67d98b8a4ba412c67701ed92/review-of-data-statistics-research-on-sex-and-gender.pdf>.

van Dijk, T.A. 2008. *Discourse and Context: A socio-cognitive approach*. Cambridge University Press.

Webster, L. 2021. Erase/rewind: How transgender Twitter discourses challenge and (re)politicize lesbian identities. *Journal of Lesbian Studies*, 26(2), 174–191. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10894160.2021.1978369>

Conceptualising non-binary: a cognitive multimodal study of gender (self-)representation on YouTube

Anna Wyrwa

University of the National Education Commission (UKEN), Kraków, Poland

The study investigates how non-binary is conceptualised in online discourse through the interaction of linguistic and visual modes. Adopting a cognitive-multimodal perspective, it examines how multimodal texts construe gender beyond binary categorisation. The dataset consists of a corpus of public posts on YouTube that include textual content and visual cues, including image, colour or gesture. Rather than treating non-binary as a fixed gender identity category, the study approaches it as a dynamic conceptual structure emerging from multimodal meaning-making processes. Drawing on insights from cognitive linguistics and multimodal discourse analysis, the study aims to identify recurrent conceptual patterns across semiotic modes, i.e. in both linguistic and visual layers of the online texts. It considers how the two modes interact, i.e. complement, supplement or disambiguate one another co-constructing the idea of non-binarity in (self-)representation online posts. The study contributes to gender and identity studies within the cognitive linguistics framework by demonstrating how multimodal discourse shapes emergent gender concepts, and it argues for the analytical value of multimodal data in understanding the concept of non-binarity in contemporary digital contexts.

The Linguistic Landscape of Transnational Queer Activism in Collage Art

Ashley Xing

University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh, United Kingdom

Over the past decade, LL scholarship has increasingly investigated public street demonstrations (or alternative forms) for LGBTQ+ rights across Global South and North contexts (e.g., Rollett et al., 2024; Milani & Levon, 2016). Building on this work, the study explores how the Chinese LGBTQ+ community in UK materializes queer activism and diasporic experience in a transnational semi-public space. Focusing on the collage works exhibited in the 2024 Community Residency for LGBTQIA+ East and Southeast Asians at Queer Britain Museum in London, the study aims to unravel how meanings are mediated through recontextualized protest placards in new semiotic, material and spatial relations.

Collage refers to the art technique with which fragments of pre-existing materials (such as images, texts, and objects) are rearranged to create a new configuration. Drawing on Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) concept of assemblage, the analysis moves beyond the representational accounts of LL but, instead, reflects on the relation between heterogeneous elements in the collection. In this sociomaterial assemblage (Pennycook, 2024), language is not privileged as central to meaning making but functions alongside bodies, objects, institutional spaces, and regimes of signs. The collage art program was facilitated by Chinese queer artists in response to their Pride protest memories. Protest slogans, paper textures, display arrangements, absent creators, curators, museum space configuration, and viewers who may or may not belong to the community form a relational network in which meanings emerge. From this perspective, the analysis is informed by field visits to the exhibition and draws on the photographic data of collages, field observations, and conversations with participating artists, curators and viewers. My three years of ethnographic engagement and positionality as a member of the Chinese queer diaspora in the UK inform the analysis. Rather than occupying an interpretive centre, my viewing body and reflexive interpretation are treated as elements within the assemblage.

The study has two key arguments: Firstly, through processes of deterritorialization and reterritorialization, protest signs are detached from their original context and reorganized within a more personal and self-expressive form of activism. Secondly, the collage art entangles bodies of multiple temporalities and spatialities, such as past Pride marches, moments of artistic production, and present encounters in the museum. By presenting a relational rather than representational reading of linguistic landscape, the paper shows how collage functions as a material archive of diasporic queer experience and activism that reinforces in-group queer belonging and visibility.

Key words: linguistic landscape, Pride, collage, assemblage theory, queer diaspora

References

Deleuze, G., & Guattari, F. (1988). *A thousand plateaus: Capitalism and schizophrenia*. Bloomsbury Publishing.

Milani, T. M., & Levon, E. (2016). Sexing diversity: Linguistic landscapes of homonationalism. *Language & Communication*, 51, 69–86.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.langcom.2016.07.002>

Pennycook, A. (2024). *Language assemblages*. Cambridge University Press.

Rowlett, B. J., Saisuwan, P., Go, C., Chen, L. C., & Hiramoto, M. (2025). *Pride in Asia: Negotiating ideologies, localness, and alternative futures*. Cambridge University Press.

Queer FC? A cross-linguistic comparison of identity labels and inclusion-oriented lexis in amateur women and queer football clubs

Cheryl Yeo

Ludwig Maximilian University, Munich, Germany

Océane Foubert

University of Picardy Jules Verne, Amiens, France

Sports are often presented as spaces of teamwork, community and belonging. Wearing rainbow armbands at the 2025 UEFA Women's Euro gave players the opportunity to demonstrate that sport could be a place of queer belonging (Holmes 2025), despite news reports and polls on homophobia and transphobia clearly showing otherwise (Denison & Kitchen 2015; Sports for all Genders & Sexualities 2022; Ipsos 2023). This tension, between symbolic inclusion and ongoing exclusion (Schnurr & File 2024), makes football a particularly revealing site for examining queer (dis)belonging.

A vast body of research on linguistic representations of gender and sexuality in sport exists. Foundational work in language, gender and sport has shown that sport is a key site for the reproduction of gender hierarchy, and that language contributes directly to this process through mechanisms such as naming conventions (Segrave et al. 2006). While much work has focused on the marginalisation of women in sport in the media, more recent research has shown how discourse reproduces homonegative culture (Smits et al. 2021; Cleland et al. 2023), lesbian taboo and erasure in women's football (Nuhraat 2022), and cisnormative fairness-versus-inclusion framings of trans participation (Bailey & Jones 2024). Less attention has been paid to how grassroots clubs themselves linguistically construct welcome, membership, and queer legibility in their own self-descriptions.

This study is the first in an ongoing project examining the linguistic representation of queer identities in amateur women and queer-inclusive football clubs. This initial study focuses on the labels used in Instagram descriptions of clubs in the United Kingdom, France, and Germany. The research questions are: which identities are represented in the clubs'

Instagram descriptions, and consequently, which queer identities are acknowledged in amateur football clubs?

Drawing on queer linguistics and work on naming as a socially consequential practice (Lo Vecchio 2026), we examine Instagram bios as ideologically dense micro-texts in which clubs publicly signal who they are, who/what they stand for, and what kinds of belonging they make explicit. To answer this question, 77 football clubs were identified – 31 in the UK, 30 in France, and 16 in Germany – and the labels used in their Instagram bios were extracted. The analysis combines qualitative discourse analysis (Leap 2015) with a cross-national comparison of identity labels and inclusion-oriented lexis.

Preliminary results show that linguistic strategies vary across contexts. While no single term stands out as predominant in the Instagram bios of French clubs, where terms such as ‘queer’, ‘féminin inclusif’, or ‘transféministe’ (‘transfeminist’) can be found, most German clubs use ‘FLINTA*’ in their bios. This could be explained by the German Football Association’s regulations regarding the rights of trans, intersex, and non-binary people in amateur football. Regarding British teams, several strategies are employed. However, one frequent strategy is to list women, trans and non-binary people, with a preference for a women-first order.

Rather than treating labels as merely descriptors, this paper argues that they actively construct the boundaries of belonging: they can make some identities visible and accepted while leaving others implicit, or peripheral.

References:

- Bailey, Aimee, and Lucy Jones. 2024. “Fairness versus Inclusion’: Representations of Transgender Athletes in British Newspaper Reports.” In *The Language of Inclusion and Exclusion in Sports*. Ed. Stephanie Schnurr and Kieran File. Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter Mouton. 193–216.
- Cleland, Jamie, Ellis Cashmore, Kevin Dixon, and Connor MacDonald. 2023. “Analyzing the Presence of Homosexually-Themed Language Among Association Football Fans in the United Kingdom.” *Communication & Sport* 11.3: 551–569.

- Denison, Erik, and Alistair Kitchen. 2015. *Out on the Fields: The First International Study on Homophobia in Sport*. Report. Accessed 26 Mar. 2026.
- Holmes, Jon. 2025. "Out Gay Player Is First to Wear Rainbow Armband for Italy, but France Likely to Opt Out." *Outsports*. 14 July. Accessed 26 Mar. 2026.
- Ipsos. 2023. "Une majorité de Français considère les milieux sportifs comme étant homophobes." Ipsos. 6 Sept. Accessed 26 Mar. 2026.
- Leap, William L. 2015. "Queer Linguistics as Critical Discourse Analysis." In *The Handbook of Discourse Analysis*. 2nd ed. Ed. Deborah Tannen, Heidi E. Hamilton, and Deborah Schiffrin. Chichester: Wiley Blackwell. 661–680.
- Lo Vecchio, Nicholas. 2026. "For a Sociolexicology of Queer Naming: On Problematizing the LGBTQ Lexicon in Historical Linguistics." In *Battlefield Linguistics: Queer, Trans, and Feminist Interventions in Linguistic and Discursive Change*. Ed. Scott Burnett and Francesca Vigo. Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton. 159–178.
- Nuhrat, Yağmur. 2022. "Linguistic Taboo, Ideology, and Erasure: Reproducing Homophobia as Norm and Lesbianism as Stigma in Women's Football in Turkey." *American Anthropologist* 124.1: 141–153.
- Schnurr, Stephanie, and Kieran File. 2024. "Approaching Issues of Inclusion and Exclusion in Sports through Language." In *The Language of Inclusion and Exclusion in Sports*. Ed. Stephanie Schnurr and Kieran File. Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter Mouton. 1–16.
- Segrave, Jeffrey O., Katherine L. McDowell, and James G. King III. 2006. "Language, Gender, and Sport: A Review of the Research Literature." In *Sport, Rhetoric, and Gender: Historical Perspectives and Media Representations*. Ed. Linda K. Fuller. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. 31–41.
- Smits, Froukje, Annelies Knoppers, and Agnes Elling-Machartzki. 2021. "‘Everything Is Said with a Smile’: Homonegative Speech Acts in Sport." *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* 56.3: 343–360.
- Sport for all Genders and Sexualities. 2022. *Including Transgender and Non-Binary People in Sport: Good Practices*. Málaga/Vienna: Diversport

Torremolinos and fairplay – Vienna Institute for International Dialogue and Cooperation (VIDC). Accessed 26 Mar. 2026.

The Lexicalisation of Gay: Language, Normativity, and Queer Belonging in Chinese Sina Weibo ‘Tree-Hole’ Discourse

Ningxin Yin

University of Birmingham, Birmingham, United Kingdom

This paper presents a corpus-assisted critical discourse analysis of how Chinese same-gender-attracted (SGA) men discursively construct community and navigate normativity on a Chinese social media platform, Sina Weibo. The study focuses on SGA men who follow Key Opinion Leaders (KOLs, or influencers) on Weibo, who are either individual queer influencers or collective account run by queer supporting groups, and the ‘tree-hole’ posts and the comments in their accounts. ‘Tree-hole’ originally refers to a metaphorical safe space for secrets and now denotes posts where followers anonymously submit personal stories to a KOL, who then reposts them on their behalf, allowing other followers to discuss this post in the comment (Hu, 2021). This genre of post provides a platform for KOLs and their followers to share personal stories, feelings, and experiences anonymously, enabling anonymous self-disclosure and peer interaction.

The analysis draws on a purpose-built 1.9-million-token Weibo Tree-Hole Corpus, consisting of 2,365 posts and 135,789 comments collected from five influential KOL accounts. Using Sketch Engine, keywords and collocations are identified through comparison with the zhTenTen17 Simplified Chinese reference corpus. Quantitative patterns are interpreted by adapting Fairclough’s (1989) three-dimensional model of critical discourse analysis, allowing attention to textual patterning, interactional practice, and wider socio-political conditions (Baker, 2008; Gillings et al., 2023).

A key finding focuses on the widespread use of English loanword *gay* (n=1047), which functions as a noun in the data and serves as a morphosyntactically natural alternative to Chinese terms such as *‘tong xing lian’* (gay). Its adaptation indexes a modern, cosmopolitan queer identity and reflects code-switching practices that signal in-group affiliation and alignment with global queer discourse (Wong, 2010). Beyond describing individuals, *gay* frequently operates as a collective identity label through which users categorise the

group, express stance, and evaluate social norms. These lexical and discursive patterns, alongside broader themes of intimacy, masculinity, and social expectations illustrate how linguistic interactions reinforce social norms and homonormative ideals while also providing spaces for subtle contestation. The analysis demonstrates that discourse in these digital spaces actively shapes social relations, enabling participants to negotiate belonging, legitimacy, and moral frameworks in the community. By situating these linguistic practices within the Chinese queer socio-cultural context, the study contributes a non-Western perspective on how language functions as a driving force in shaping social norms, community coherence, and identity within marginalized groups.

References

- Baker, P. (2008) *Sexed texts : Language, gender and sexuality*. London: Equinox Publishing Ltd.
- Fairclough, N. (1989) *Language and power*. London: Longman.
- Gillings, M., Mautner, G. and Baker, P. (2023) *Corpus-assisted discourse studies*. Elements in corpus linguistics. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hu, J. (2021) “The Secrets of “Tree Hole”: Analysis of Online Interpersonal Interaction Based on @Tree Hole Account in Weibo.” In *Proceedings of the 2021 International Conference on Public Relations and Social Sciences (ICPRSS 2021)*. Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research Kunming, China, 2021. Atlantis Press. pp. 1137–1143.
- Wong, D. (2010) Hybridization and the emergence of “gay” identities in Hongkong and in China. *Visual Anthropology*, 24 (1–2): 152–170.

Keynotes

1: Prefer Not To Say, Dr. Kevin Guyan – University of Edinburgh

2: Freedom to hate: Anti-gender discourse and the forging of fascist consensus, Prof. Erez Levon – Universität Bern

3: The Love Language of Black Lesbians: Longing, Loss, and the Materiality of Black Lesbian Magazines in California's Bay Area, Dr. Nikki Lane – Duke University

4: ‘But we who?’ The interactional making of queer (dis)belonging: From public discourse to psychotherapy, Dr. Stamatina Katsiveli – The American College of Greece

In this talk, I argue that language is not only a vehicle through which queer identities, political claims and hierarchies of value are publicly articulated but also a fundamental tool in psychotherapy. In therapeutic encounters, language is used to interpret experience, negotiate conflicting identifications, and recognise and revalue devalued aspects of the self. From this perspective, moving from public discourse to psychotherapy, I explore the communicative processes through which social meanings become personally and relationally consequential, and through which they may become available for therapeutic exploration and transformation.

In previous research, I have examined how sexuality intersects with Greek national belonging in public discourse, and how this intersection is locally constructed in talk-in-interaction, so that ‘Greek queerness’ may be contested, questioned, negotiated, and/or reclaimed through language (Katsiveli, 2021a, 2024). Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork and conversation analysis, I show how belonging is organised through category accounts, pronoun uses, and evaluative stance-taking. Such linguistic practices may reproduce the perceived incompatibility between queerness and Greekness, but they may also reconfigure it, by reframing internalised identity borders (Levon & Katsiveli, 2025) or attaching value to alternative queer person-types, and cultural symbols (Levon & Katsiveli, in press).

In this talk, I revisit these processes through the lens of psychotherapy, asking what happens when public categories and hierarchies of value become articulated as therapeutic concerns. Drawing on Elias’s (1978) rejection of a strict division between the individual and society, group-analytic approaches to psychotherapy (Foulkes, 1975) treat socialisation and individuation as interdependent processes: people become distinctive selves through communicative relations, while also reproducing, reinterpreting and potentially transforming the social worlds they inhabit. The group-analytic concept of the **social unconscious** (Weinberg 2007), provides a complementary vocabulary for historically specific assumptions, affective associations, cultural memories and relations of value that remain consequential within individual experience, even when consciously rejected. Against this

background, I approach psychotherapy as a field of sociolinguistic inquiry in which socially inherited meanings become personal, interactionally negotiated and potentially revalued. Therapist-client interaction, including questions, formulations, categories, metaphors and narratives, does not merely describe pre-existing queer selves; it participates in constructing what counts as distress, authenticity, autonomy, integration and desirable change. As previous research on apparently inclusive public interaction suggests, affirmative intentions do not necessarily prevent the reproduction of normativity (Katsiveli, 2021b). Through a closer examination of therapeutic discourse and clinical vignettes, I show how alternative formulations construct different problems, subject positions and possible futures.

I argue that sociolinguistic attention to psychotherapy is necessary both for identifying the assumptions that organise queer (dis)belonging and for understanding how therapeutic interventions may help bring conflicting aspects of the self into a more workable relationship. In this sense, the study of language reveals its role in the (re)production and contestation of power in the public sphere but, importantly, it also shows how language itself may become a therapeutic resource. “But we who?” thus becomes both a public and a therapeutic question: which voices, attachments and identifications are allowed to belong within a person’s account of who they are?

References

- Elias, N. (1978). *What is sociology?* Hutchinson.
- Foulkes, S. H. (1975). *Group-analytic psychotherapy: Method and principles*. Gordon and Breach.
- Katsiveli, S. (2021a). *Intersections of sexuality and Greek national belonging: A conversation analytic approach* [Doctoral dissertation, Queen Mary University of London].
- Katsiveli, S. (2021b). “It is this ignorance we have to fight”: Emergent gender normativities in an interview with Greek transgender activists. *Gender and Language*, 15(2), 158–183.

Katsiveli, S. (2024). If I want to join this queer thing, will they accept me? Queer identities and identities of queer in talk-in-interaction [In Greek]. In G. Tembridou (Ed.), *Kouir*. Psifides.

Levon, E., & Katsiveli, S. (2025). Borders, norms, and the dialogic construction of self. In Y. Bürki & A. N. García Agüero (Eds.), *Language, borders and bordering practices: Sociolinguistic perspectives* (pp. 305–338). Au Press.

Levon, E., & Katsiveli, S. (in press). Sexuality and the interactional micro-politics of belonging. In M. S. Karrebæk & M. Maegaard (Eds.), *Language, nation, value*. John Benjamins.

Weinberg, H. (2007). So what is this social unconscious anyway? *Group Analysis*, 40(3), 307–322.

Dr. Eddie L. Ungless – Synthesising queerness: how AI represents queer identities, the University of Surrey