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LANGUAGE, IDENTITY, AND SEXUALITY: A SYSTEMATIC NARRATIVE REVIEW OF LGBT DISCOURSE IN LINGUISTIC RESEARCH

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Abstract

This article systematically reviews recent linguistic research on LGBT/queer discourse, focusing on how language mediates identity, sexuality, gender, normativity, and social recognition. The review used a Scopus seed strategy, targeted hand-searching of language-and-sexuality outlets, PRISMA 2020-informed screening, and narrative-thematic synthesis. Eligible studies were English-language peer-reviewed journal articles published from 2021 to May 2026 that centrally examined language, discourse, communication, semiotics, or sociolinguistic practice in relation to LGBT, LGBTQ+, queer, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, non-binary, or gender-diverse identities. Forty-four studies were included. Four findings structure the synthesis: naming and labeling are central mechanisms of recognition; normativity operates through heteronormative, homonormative, transnormative, mononormative, and anti-gender registers; digital platforms intensify queer visibility while producing new forms of vulnerability; and intersectional multilingual research is essential for understanding race, migration, religion, locality, and language hierarchy. The review contributes a legibility-vulnerability model showing that linguistic practices make LGBT/queer identities recognizable while also exposing subjects to misrecognition, surveillance, stigma, and regulation. The evidence is conceptually coherent but limited by English-language selection, strong representation of specialist language-and-sexuality outlets, and methodological heterogeneity. Future research should expand multilingual, Global South, computational, and community-accountable approaches.

Keywords: Queer Linguistics; Normativity; Self-Labeling; Digital Discourse; Multilingual Identity

البحث مستخلص

تستعرض هذه المقالة بصورة منهجية أحدث البحوث اللسانية التي تناولت خطاب المثليين/الكوير، مع التركيز على الكيفية التي تتوسط بها اللغة في تشكيل الهوية، والجنسانية، والنوع الاجتماعي، والمعيارية، والاعتراف الاجتماعي. وقد اعتمدت المراجعة على استراتيجية البحث الأولي في قاعدة سكوبس، والبحث اليدوي الموجّه في الدوريات المتخصصة في اللغة والجنسانية، والفرز المسترشد بإرشادات PRISMA 2020 ، إضافة إلى التحليل السردي الموضوعي. وشملت الدراسات المؤهلة مقالات علمية محكّمة باللغة الإنجليزية، منشورة في دوريات علمية خلال الفترة الممتدة من عام 2021 إلى مايو 2026، وتتناول بصورة مركزية اللغة أو الخطاب أو التواصل أو السيميائيات أو الممارسات السوسيولسانية في علاقتها بهويات المثليين، والمثليات، ومزدوجي الميل الجنسي، والعابرين جندريًا، وغير الثنائيين، ومتنوعي النوع الاجتماعي، أو الهويات الكويرية. وقد ضُمِّنَت في هذه المراجعة أربع وأربعون دراسة . وتنتظم نتائج التحليل في أربعة محاور رئيسة: أوّلها أن التسمية ووضع التصنيفات يمثّلان آليتين مركزيتين في إنتاج الاعتراف؛ وثانيها أن المعيارية تعمل من خلال سجلات خطابية متباينة، منها المعيارية الغيرية، والمعيارية المثلية، والمعيارية العبورجندرية، والمعيارية الأحادية، والخطابات المناهضة للنوع الاجتماعي؛ وثالثها أن المنصات الرقمية تكثّف مرئية الهويات الكويرية، لكنها في الوقت نفسه تنتج أشكالًا جديدة من الهشاشة؛ ورابعها أن البحث التقاطعي المتعدد اللغات يظل ضروريًا لفهم قضايا العرق، والهجرة، والدين، والمحلية، وتراتبية اللغات.وتسهم هذه المراجعة في تقديم نموذج «المقروئية/الهشاشة»، الذي يوضح أن الممارسات اللغوية تجعل هويات المثليين/الكوير قابلة للتعرّف والاعتراف، لكنها في الوقت ذاته قد تعرّض أصحابها لسوء الاعتراف، والمراقبة، والوصم، والتنظيم الاجتماعي. وتبدو الأدلة المتاحة متماسكة من الناحية المفاهيمية، غير أنها تظل محدودة بسبب الاقتصار على الدراسات المنشورة باللغة الإنجليزية، والتمثيل الكبير للدوريات المتخصصة في اللغة والجنسانية، والتباين المنهجي بين الدراسات. لذلك، توصي المراجعة بأن تتجه البحوث المستقبلية إلى توسيع المقاربات المتعددة اللغات، ودراسات الجنوب العالمي، والمناهج الحاسوبية، والبحوث المسؤولة أمام المجتمعات المعنية.

أساسية كلمات : اللغات المتعددة الهوية الرقمي؛ الخطاب الذاتية؛ التسمية المعيارية؛ الكويرية؛ اللسانيات

Introduction (المقدمة)

Language is not a neutral channel through which LGBT identities are simply expressed. It is one of the social mechanisms through which sexual and gender categories become recognizable, contestable, institutionalized, pathologized, translated, normalized, or refused. In linguistic research, this premise has produced a major shift: rather than asking whether lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and other gender- and sexuality-diverse people possess stable speech styles, recent scholarship asks how identities become socially meaningful through discourse, interaction, narrative, naming, pronouns, stance, indexicality, style, media circulation, and institutional categories.

This shift is especially important because LGBT/queer identities are never merely lexical objects. Terms such as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, non-binary, queer, homosexual, same-sex, equal marriage, SOGIESC, and gender-diverse are historically situated labels. They carry unequal social force across languages, institutions, publics, and communities. A label can become a resource for self-recognition and solidarity, but it can also become a tool of surveillance, ridicule, legal exclusion, medical gatekeeping, platform moderation, or family discipline. The linguistic study of LGBT discourse therefore requires attention not only to what labels mean, but to who uses them, who refuses them, which institutions authorize them, and what kinds of subject positions they make possible.

Recent language-and-sexuality research is theoretically rich but dispersed. Relevant studies appear across sociolinguistics, discourse studies, communication, applied linguistics, education, corpus linguistics, sociophonetics, digital humanities, linguistic anthropology, media studies, sexuality studies, and policy analysis. They also use very different methods. Critical discourse analysis may examine how anti-gender rhetoric circulates across political and religious contexts. Corpus-assisted analysis may reveal the ideological load of marriage labels in newspapers. Interactional analysis may track how trans youth claim agency in the face of misgendering. Sociophonetic experiments may test how bisexuality complicates binary assumptions in voice perception. Digital studies may examine dating apps, hashtags, language models, or online comment threads. These studies cannot be combined through meta-analysis because they do not report commensurable outcomes, but they can be synthesized to identify patterns in how linguistic practices mediate identity, sexuality, and normativity.

A systematic narrative review is needed for four reasons. First, the field has grown rapidly since 2021, especially in specialist outlets such as the Journal of Language and Sexuality and in adjacent journals concerned with discourse, multilingualism, media, education, and digital culture. Second, newer scholarship has challenged earlier Anglophone, white, cisgender, and gay-male-centered assumptions by foregrounding trans linguistics, bisexuality, non-binary naming, multilingualism, race, migration, religion, and locality. Third, public debates around pronouns, gender-neutral language, sexuality education, same-sex marriage labels, platform moderation, and anti-gender politics have made language a high-stakes political site. Fourth, linguistic research on LGBT discourse is fragmented across methods and disciplines, leaving a need for synthesis that can clarify conceptual trends without flattening the diversity of evidence.

This review uses several terms deliberately. LGBT/LGBTQ+ is treated as a socio-political umbrella for named sexual and gender minority identities. Queer is treated both as an identity label and as a theoretical stance that contests normativity and fixed categorization. Gender-diverse refers to identities and embodiments that do not conform to binary gender expectations. SOGIESC refers to sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sex characteristics, especially in policy contexts. These terms are not interchangeable, and one contribution of the reviewed literature is to show that terminological precision affects who becomes visible, which harms become recognizable, and what forms of agency are available.

The primary review question is: How has recent linguistic research conceptualized and analyzed LGBT/queer discourse in relation to language, identity, and sexuality? Four secondary questions guide the synthesis. First, which linguistic objects are most frequently studied, including labels, names, pronouns, narratives, voice, style, media frames, digital interaction, multilingual practice, and institutional texts? Second, which theoretical concepts organize recent work, including normativity, labeling, performativity, stance, indexicality, language ideology, intersectionality, and queer/trans linguistics? Third, what methodological patterns and limitations

characterize the evidence base? Fourth, what does recent research suggest about the relationship between discursive visibility and vulnerability for LGBT/queer subjects?

The review contributes a synthetic model of legibility-vulnerability tension. Legibility refers to the discursive conditions that make LGBT/queer identities recognizable to people, communities, institutions, media systems, and platforms. Vulnerability refers to the risks that arise when recognizability exposes subjects to misrecognition, surveillance, stigma, exclusion, harassment, normative regulation, or erasure. This model is not intended to replace existing theories of queer linguistics, trans linguistics, labeling, or intersectionality. Rather, it integrates them into a framework for explaining why linguistic recognition can be both necessary and dangerous.

Methods (منهج البحث)

This article was designed as a systematic narrative review. It follows PRISMA 2020 reporting principles for transparent identification, screening, eligibility assessment, and inclusion, while using narrative-thematic synthesis rather than meta-analysis. A meta-analysis was not appropriate because the included studies were conceptually and methodologically heterogeneous and did not report comparable quantitative outcomes.

The review protocol was not prospectively registered. The search, screening, and extraction logic were documented through a reproducible screening framework. This absence of registration is reported as a limitation.

The review used a SPIDER-style framework suitable for qualitative and mixed-methods evidence. The sample comprised texts, interactions, speakers, media corpora, institutional documents, platforms, interviews, surveys, and public discourse involving LGBT/queer/gender-sexual diversity. The phenomenon of interest was the linguistic, discursive, communicative, semiotic, or sociophonetic construction of identity, sexuality, gender, normativity, visibility, and recognition. Eligible designs included qualitative discourse analysis, corpus-assisted discourse analysis, ethnography, narrative analysis, sociophonetics, multimodal analysis, computational audit, and mixed-methods research.

The search began with the supplied Scopus export dated May 8, 2026 and used the following seed string:

TITLE-ABS-KEY (("language" OR "linguistic*" OR "discourse" OR "communication") AND ("identity" OR "gender identity" OR "sexual identity" OR "queer identity") AND ("sexuality" OR "sexual orientation" OR "gender" OR "queer") AND ("LGBT" OR "LGBTQ" OR "LGBTQ+" OR "lesbian" OR "gay" OR "bisexual" OR "transgender" OR "queer")) AND (LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA , "SOCI")) AND (LIMIT-TO (LANGUAGE , "English")) AND (LIMIT-TO (OA , "all")) AND (LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE , "ar")) AND (LIMIT-TO (PUBSTAGE , "final"))

The Scopus search was supplemented by targeted hand-searching of relevant journals and publisher records, including the Journal of Language and Sexuality, Language in Society, Journal of Sociolinguistics, Discourse, Context & Media, International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism, PLOS ONE, Cogent Arts & Humanities, TESOL Quarterly, Journal of Linguistic Anthropology, and selected publisher pages. Hand-searching was used to confirm bibliographic metadata, DOI links, and relevance to linguistic or discourse analysis.

Studies were included when they met all of the following criteria: (1) peer-reviewed journal article or peer-reviewed proceedings article with stable DOI; (2) English-language publication from 2021 to May 2026; (3) final publication or online-first record with verifiable bibliographic metadata; (4) central analysis of language, discourse, communication, style, labeling, naming, interaction, media framing, sociophonetics, or language ideology; (5) central relevance to LGBT, LGBTQ+, queer, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, non-binary, gender-diverse, or sexual/gender minority identity; and (6) sufficient methodological or conceptual detail for extraction.

Studies were excluded when they were book reviews, editorials without substantive conceptual contribution, theses, conference abstracts without full peer-reviewed text, non-English publications, articles without DOI/stable publisher records, or studies in which gender/sexuality was present but language or discourse was not a central analytic object. Clinical, psychological, legal, and public-health studies were included only when communication, discourse, labeling, terminology, or narrative was central to the analysis.

The search and supplementary tracing identified 156 records. After removal of duplicates, nonjournal items, nonfinal items, and records without sufficient bibliographic traceability, 114 records were screened by title and abstract. Forty-eight records were excluded at this stage because they did not centrally address language/discourse or did not focus on LGBT/queer identity. Sixty-six reports were assessed at full text or publisher record level. Twenty-two reports were excluded at eligibility stage: nine lacked central linguistic/discourse analysis, five were not centrally LGBT/queer focused, four were not eligible article types, and four lacked sufficient bibliographic verification. Forty-four studies were retained for synthesis.

Extracted fields included author, year, title, journal, DOI, source type, region or data context, object of analysis, method, article type, LGBT/queer focus, key concept, principal finding, quality rating, and role in the synthesis. Extraction prioritized claims that could be supported by titles, abstracts, methods, findings, and publisher metadata.

A six-domain appraisal rubric was applied: clarity of research question, transparency of corpus/sample, analytic fit, reflexivity or positionality where relevant, ethical handling of marginalized communities or digital data, and evidentiary support for interpretation. Studies were rated High when they met five to six domains, Moderate when they met three to four domains, and Moderate with Cautions when they were conceptually relevant but had limitations in data

transparency, ethics, or evidentiary grounding. No study was excluded solely on quality grounds if it remained central to the review question.

Synthesis proceeded in three stages. First, studies were grouped by primary object: labeling and naming, institutional discourse, media discourse, digital platforms, sociophonetics and style, multilingualism and migration, race and locality, education, and field/theoretical reflection. Second, recurring concepts were coded: normativity, labeling, performativity, visibility, safety, intersectionality, ideology, resistance, and platform governance. Third, themes were integrated into the legibility-vulnerability model. Because several studies addressed more than one theme, thematic counts are overlapping.

Results (نتائج البحث)

Figure 1 presents the PRISMA-informed flow of study selection. The final corpus comprised 44 studies. Table 1 summarizes the review protocol, and Table 2 summarizes the final evidence base. Figure 1 and Table 1 are read together: the review has a systematic search and screening logic, but its heterogeneous evidence base supports narrative-thematic synthesis rather than quantitative meta-analysis.

Figure 1. PRISMA 2020 Flow Diagram for the Systematic Narrative Review

Identification	Records identified through Scopus seed search and targeted hand-searching: 156
Screening	Records screened by title and abstract after removal of ineligible records: 114
Exclusion	Records excluded at title/abstract stage: 48
Eligibility	Reports assessed at full text or publisher-record level: 66; reports excluded: 22
Included	Studies retained for narrative-thematic synthesis: 44

Figure 1 shows that the most consequential screening decision concerned whether language, discourse, communication, or semiotics was central rather than incidental. This decision shaped the evidence base in Table 2 and explains why several otherwise relevant LGBT studies were excluded. Figure 1 is also important for interpreting Figure 4, because the dominance of discourse-analytic methods reflects the eligibility criteria rather than the whole field of LGBT research.

Table 1 clarifies that the review is systematic in search logic and transparent in inclusion criteria, while remaining narrative in synthesis. This distinction is important because Table 2 includes empirical, theoretical, corpus-assisted, digital, and sociophonetic studies rather than a single outcome-defined intervention literature.

The included studies cluster around specialist language-and-sexuality scholarship but extend into wider journals in communication, education, digital culture, anthropology, and multilingualism. Most studies used qualitative or mixed discourse-analytic methods. Corpus-assisted approaches were prominent in media and online-discourse studies. Sociophonetic and folk-linguistic studies remained fewer but contributed important evidence on how sexuality and gender are heard rather than only named. Computational research was emergent and significant because it links queer language to content moderation and algorithmic governance.

Geographically, Anglophone contexts, Europe, Singapore, Japan, Brazil, Finland, Nigeria, Lebanon, Norway, China-related contexts, South Africa, and multilingual immigrant contexts appeared in the corpus. However, English-language selection means that many non-Anglophone debates are represented only through English-language scholarship. This uneven geography should be considered when interpreting the intersectional and multilingual claims below.

Table 2 shows that the field is not defined by one method or one population. It also shows why the synthesis below is organized by mechanisms rather than by country or method. The same study can contribute simultaneously to labeling, normativity, digital mediation, and intersectional positioning.

Table 1. Search and Eligibility Framework

Element	Final Decision	Rationale
Review type	Systematic narrative review	Fits heterogeneous qualitative, corpus, sociophonetic, digital, and theoretical studies
Reporting guideline	PRISMA 2020-informed	Supports transparent reporting of identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion
Date range	2021–May 2026	Captures recent five-year scholarship
Language	English	Matches search restriction; treated as limitation
Publication type	Peer-reviewed journal articles and DOI-indexed peer-reviewed proceedings article	Supports bibliographic integrity
Databases/sources	Scopus seed search plus targeted hand-searching of specialist and adjacent journals	Broadens coverage beyond one outlet while retaining focus
Core concepts	language/discourse/communication; identity; sexuality/gender; LGBT/queer terms	Mirrors the Boolean logic and review questions
Synthesis	Narrative-thematic synthesis; no meta-analysis	Outcomes and methods are not commensurable
Quality appraisal	Six-domain rubric: question, data, method, reflexivity/ethics, theory, evidence	Fits qualitative and mixed-method evidence

Table 2. Included Studies and Extracted Evidence Base

No.	Study	Evidence Type	Context/Data	Main Contribution to Synthesis	Quality
1	Leap (2021)	Theoretical reflection	Language-and-sexuality field	Maps concerns for the next decade of the field	High
2	Jones (2021)	Field synthesis	Queer linguistics	Identifies queer theory and identity as central developments	High
3	Motschenbacher (2021)	Conceptual analysis	Field terminology	Clarifies queer linguistics and critiques problematic terminology	High
4	Hiramoto (2021)	Field reflection	Japan and JLS field	Shows why locality matters in language-and-sexuality scholarship	Moderate
5	Makoni (2021)	Critical reflection	Knowledge production	Links sexuality studies to racialized and gendered epistemic exclusion	High
6	Lane (2021)	Field commentary	Journal/community accountability	Highlights community-facing obligations of queer scholarship	Moderate
7	Webster (2021)	Conceptual analysis	Terminology	Demonstrates risks of conflating sex, sexuality, and gender	High
8	Konnelly (2021)	Interview/discourse analysis	Non-binary health-care narratives	Nuances transnormativity as survival strategy	High
9	Cashman (2021)	Field synthesis	Multilingual queer scholarship	Calls for multilingualism, race/ethnicity, queerness, ethnography, and age	High
10	Thompson (2022)	Digital discourse analysis	OkCupid linked profiles	Shows non-monogamy and normativity negotiated through platform affordances	Moderate
11	Jantunen and Kytölä (2022)	Corpus-assisted discourse analysis	Finnish online religion/homosexuality discourse	Shows religion as recurrent in online discussions of homosexuality	High
12	Borba (2022)	Critical discourse/register analysis	Anti-gender discourse	Defines “gender ideology” as a transnational anti-gender register	High
13	Adegbola (2022)	Media discourse analysis	Nigerian newspapers	Shows gay people constructed through agency, process, and moral positioning	High
14	Jones, Chałupnik, Mackenzie, and Mullany (2022)	Digital discourse analysis	Twitter #NotAllMen	Shows resistance to misogyny and gendered violence discourse	High
15	Jones (2023)	Interactional discourse analysis	Trans youth support-group discourse	Demonstrates agency amid misgendering and embodied contestation	High
16	Lind (2023)	Naming/speech-act analysis	Trans name changes	Frames self-naming as performative recognition work	High
17	Mackenzie	Narrative analysis	Gay parents’ small	Shows negotiation of family, gender, and sexuality	High

No.	Study	Evidence Type	Context/Data	Main Contribution to Synthesis	Quality
	(2023)		stories	normativities	
18	Crespo-Fernández (2023)	Critical discourse analysis	Pornographic film titles	Shows euphemism in heterosexual male sexual scripts	Moderate
19	Podboj (2023)	Pragmatic/discourse analysis	RuPaul's Drag Race reading challenge	Analyzes reading as stylized insult and community practice	Moderate
20	Kontovas (2023)	Sociolinguistic analysis	RuPaul's Drag Race	Connects code-switching, sass, race, and queer performance	Moderate
21	Colosi, Cowen, and Todd (2023)	Review/analysis	Social media identity work	Shows sexual and gender identity work as relational and platformed	Moderate
22	Nonnenmacher (2024)	Discourse analysis	American puberty videos	Links heteronormative futurity to affective distress	High
23	Willis (2024)	Experimental sociophonetics	Bisexual speakers	Challenges binary assumptions in sexuality and voice research	High
24	Bergozza, Coco, and Burnett (2024)	Multimodal CDA	#GaysForTrump on Twitter	Shows homonationalist gay subject positions in right-wing discourse	High
25	Levand, Olvera Moreno, and Sitron (2024)	Conceptual communication analysis	Sexology communication	Introduces cross-cultural code-switching for sexuality professionals	Moderate
26	Lindeman (2024)	Folk-linguistic survey/interviews	Finnish gay-sounding speech	Links perceived gay male speech to stereotypes of young women's speech	High
27	Paterson and McGlashan (2024)	Corpus/category analysis	UK newspaper marriage labels	Shows same-sex/gay/equal marriage labels encode distinct category positions	High
28	García-Gómez (2024)	Mediated discourse analysis	Gay male hook-up apps	Examines mediated intimacies and aggressive sexual behaviors	Moderate
29	Saito (2024)	Social-media discourse analysis	Japanese coming-out-to-family clips	Shows normativity in family-oriented coming-out discourse	High
30	Khoo and Ilbury (2024)	Style-shifting analysis	Queer spaces in Singapore	Links safety and non-safety to sexual identity performance	High
31	Ren (2024)	Qualitative discourse analysis	Gay Chinese immigrants in ESL contexts	Connects English hegemony, internalized oppression, and performative identity	High
32	Mashazi and Oostendorp (2024)	Narrative/linguistic citizenship	Black queer multilingual narrative	Links multilingualism, race, sexuality, and cultural marginality	High
33	Milani and Cashman (2024)	Introductory theoretical synthesis	Queering multilingualism special issue	Argues that gender/sexuality expand understandings of multilingual power relations	High
34	Ferrer (2024)	Semantic/lexical analysis	Filipino queer language	Examines semantic nuance and patterned meanings in queer language	Moderate
35	Dorn, Kezar, Morstatter, and Lerman (2024)	Computational audit	Harmful-speech detection	Shows content-moderation models can encode gender-queer dialect bias	High
36	Nguyen et al. (2024)	Media corpus analysis	Singapore news corpus, 2010-2020	Tracks LGBT portrayals in a 400-million-word news corpus	High
37	Turton (2025)	Historical discourse/lexicography	Intersex trial afterlives	Shows sex/gender categorization across legal, news, and dictionary texts	High
38	Crowley (2025)	Linguistic anthropology	Trans communities in U.S. South	Shows race, innovation, and appropriation in queer/trans slang	High
39	Jones (2025)	Sociocultural linguistic analysis	LGBTQ+ youth and race discourse	Demonstrates race as structuring queer positionality	High
40	Calder and Steele (2025)	Reflexive applied-linguistics analysis	Applied linguistics positionality	Shows cisgender positionality remains undertheorized	Moderate
41	Motschenbacher (2026)	Theoretical synthesis	Labeling theory	Positions labeling theory as a framework for language-and-sexuality studies	High
42	El Sammak (2026)	Interview/linguistic strategy analysis	Queer women in Lebanon	Shows Arabic-speaking queer women use linguistic strategies under social/legal risk	High
43	Bugge, Bukve, and Myklebust (2026)	Language policy/narrative analysis	Norwegian pronoun hen	Shows codification and self-labeling reshape majority-minority language relations	High
44	Santonocito (2026)	Queer linguistics/labeling analysis	EU directives in English	Shows sex/gender labels in policy texts enact identities and exclusions	High

Thematic Findings

Naming and Labeling as Identity Infrastructure

The first finding is that naming and labeling have become central analytic objects. Labels do not merely describe pre-existing identities; they help organize the conditions under which identities are recognized. Lind (2023) treats trans name changes as performative speech acts, while Paterson and McGlashan (2024) show that same-sex marriage, gay marriage, homosexual marriage, and equal marriage are not interchangeable newspaper categories. Motschenbacher (2026) provides the broadest theoretical framing by positioning labeling as a central mechanism in language-and-sexuality studies.

This finding is visible across institutional contexts. Bugge et al. (2026) show that the gender-neutral pronoun hen reshapes language-policy relations in Norwegian, while Santonocito (2026) demonstrates that sex/gender labels in EU directives enact social identities and exclusions. Together, these studies support the claim that labels are identity infrastructure: they affect self-recognition, bureaucratic recognition, public legitimacy, and the distribution of vulnerability. This pattern is summarized visually in Figure 2 and supported by the study-level details in Table 2.

Normativity as the Field's Cross-Cutting Problem

The second finding is that normativity is the dominant cross-cutting concern. Studies did not treat normativity as a single structure. Instead, they examined heteronormativity, homonormativity, transnormativity, mononormativity, anti-gender normativity, and cisnormative policy or educational discourse. Borba (2022) shows how "gender ideology" functions as a transnational anti-gender register. Konnelly (2021) complicates critiques of transnormativity by showing that normative gender presentation can be a survival strategy in health-care settings. Mackenzie (2023) and Saito (2024) show how family discourse remains a powerful site for negotiating recognition.

Normativity is also reproduced inside LGBT or queer spaces. Bergozza et al. (2024) show how #GaysForTrump constructs a right-wing gay subject position, while García-Gómez (2024) examines mediated intimacies and aggression in gay hook-up apps. Thompson (2022) shows how non-monogamous identity is negotiated within platformed dating infrastructures. These studies show that LGBT visibility can reproduce dominant hierarchies even when it challenges heterosexual exclusion.

Digital Platforms Intensify Visibility and Vulnerability

The third finding is that digital platforms are not neutral containers for identity performance. They shape what identities are selectable, searchable, desirable, risky, and punishable. In dating contexts, linked profiles and app genres structure how users negotiate non-monogamy, desire, aggression, safety, and sexual scripts (Thompson, 2022; García-Gómez, 2024). In public social media, hashtags and comment threads shape political belonging, resistance, misogyny, and trans inclusion (Jones et al., 2022; Bergozza et al., 2024).

Algorithmic governance extends this issue. Dorn et al. (2024) show that harmful-speech detection can misclassify gender-queer dialect and reclaimed language as harmful. Nguyen et al. (2024) also demonstrate how corpus-scale analysis can track LGBT portrayals across a 400-million-word news dataset. Together, these studies show that digital queer visibility is ambivalent. It can create community and recognition, but it can also generate harassment, misclassification, datafication, and disproportionate moderation.

Intersectionality, Multilingualism, Migration, Race, and Locality

The fourth finding is that intersectionality and multilingualism are now conditions of validity, not optional extensions. Makoni (2021) critiques racialized and gendered exclusions in knowledge production, and Cashman (2021) calls for language-and-sexuality scholarship to thicken its engagement with multilingualism, race/ethnicity, and queerness. Milani and Cashman (2024) further argue that gender and sexuality expand how multilingual power relations are understood.

Empirical studies confirm this point. Ren (2024) shows how gay Chinese immigrant identities are shaped by English hegemony and internalized oppression in ESL contexts. Mashazi and Oostendorp (2024) link Black queer multilingual narrative to linguistic citizenship. El Sammak (2026) shows how queer women in Lebanon develop linguistic strategies in contexts of legal and social risk. Khoo and Ilbury (2024) show how style-shifting in Singapore is shaped by safe and non-safe queer spaces. Crowley (2025) and Jones (2025) show that race is not a demographic variable added to queer identity but a structuring condition of queer/trans language practice.

Figure 2. Legibility–Vulnerability Model of LGBT/Queer Discourse

Linguistic practices	Legibility	Vulnerability
Names, labels, pronouns, narratives, styles, policy categories, platform forms	Recognition, self-description, institutional visibility, community affiliation	Misrecognition, surveillance, exclusion, moderation bias, normative regulation
Analytic implication	Study how language makes identities publicly intelligible	Study how the same visibility can generate social, institutional, and platform risk

Figure 2 is the central interpretive contribution of this review. It explains why naming, pronouns, policy categories, digital profiles, and queer slang can be empowering and risky at the same time. Table 2 provides the study-level basis for Figure 2, while the discussion below uses the model to connect labeling, normativity, digital mediation, and multilingual intersectionality.

Figure 3. Distribution of Studies by Overlapping Thematic Cluster

Thematic cluster	Relative prominence in the synthesis
Normativity	Most frequent cross-cutting cluster
Naming and labeling	Highly frequent and central to recognition
Digital mediation	Strong and growing cluster
Intersectionality and multilingualism	Important validity condition
Methods and implications	Cross-cutting methodological concern

Figure 3 shows that normativity and labeling are the most frequent thematic clusters. Because studies could be coded to more than one cluster, totals exceed 44. This overlap is substantively important: for example, a study on marriage labels can also be a study of media normativity, and a study of queer style-shifting can also be a study of safety.

Figure 4. Methodological Profile of the Included Studies

Methodological orientation	Role in the evidence base
Discourse analysis	Dominant approach for identity, normativity, and media analysis
Corpus-assisted and computational approaches	Used for scale, patterns, and platformed language
Sociophonetics and style analysis	Used for voice, perception, embodiment, and local style
Ethnographic and reflexive approaches	Used to ground interpretation in community, positionality, and context

Figure 4 confirms that discourse-analytic methods dominate the evidence base. This does not mean that discourse analysis is the only method available to queer linguistics; rather, it reflects the review's focus on language, communication, and discourse. Figure 4 also reveals growth areas, especially sociophonetics and computational audit.

Figure 5. Evidence-to-Implication Map

Evidence	Synthesis	Implication
Labels, names, pronouns	Recognition is discursively produced	Design inclusive terminology with attention to local meaning
Digital profiles, hashtags, moderation systems	Visibility and risk are platformed	Audit digital systems for queer and trans language bias
Multilingual, racialized, migrant, and local contexts	Identity is intersectional	Avoid Anglophone universalization
Methods across discourse, corpus, ethnography, and sociophonetics	No single method captures the field	Use triangulated and ethically reflexive designs

Figure 5 translates the synthesis into research implications. It is cited again in the Discussion because it connects descriptive findings to the practical and theoretical recommendations of the review.

Discussions (المناقشة)

This review asked how recent linguistic research conceptualizes and analyzes LGBT/queer discourse in relation to language, identity, and sexuality. The answer is that recent work treats identity not as a stable demographic variable but as a discursive accomplishment shaped by labels, names, pronouns, stance, style, media framing, platform affordances, multilingual repertoires, institutional categories, and normative regimes. Across the 44 included studies, linguistic practices organize who becomes recognizable, how recognition is achieved, and what risks recognition creates.

Labeling and the Politics of Recognition

The first contribution of the review is to show that labeling is not a peripheral topic but a central mechanism of LGBT/queer discourse. Labels produce social realities by classifying people, legitimizing relationships, authorizing bureaucratic categories, and shaping the intelligibility of bodies and identities. Lind (2023), Paterson and McGlashan (2024), and

Motschenbacher (2026) provide particularly strong evidence that labels operate as performative and ideological resources rather than neutral descriptors.

This finding matters for policy and media practice. When institutions choose between sex, gender, gender identity, sex characteristics, same-sex, gay, queer, or equal marriage, they do more than select vocabulary. They enact assumptions about whose identities count and how recognition is distributed. Figure 2 captures this point through the legibility-vulnerability model: the same label that enables recognition can also expose a person to regulation or misrecognition.

Normativity Beyond Heteronormativity

The second contribution is the clarification that normativity is multidimensional. Heteronormativity remains important, but the reviewed literature also documents homonormativity, transnormativity, mononormativity, cisnormativity, and anti-gender registers. Borba (2022) demonstrates how anti-gender discourse travels transnationally as a recognizable register. Konnelly (2021) shows that transnormativity cannot be dismissed only as conformity because it may be used tactically for safety. Bergozza et al. (2024) show that gay identity can be articulated with nationalist and right-wing political subject positions.

The implication is that inclusion and regulation should be analyzed together. A discourse may appear inclusive while still regulating acceptable forms of LGBT/queer personhood. Inclusive churches, diversity initiatives, family narratives, media labels, and platform profiles may all create recognition while narrowing the range of legitimate queer life. This is why Figure 5 frames normativity as an implication that requires analysis of inclusion and regulation simultaneously.

Digital Mediation and Platform Governance

The third contribution concerns digital mediation. Platforms are not merely spaces where LGBT/queer identities appear; they are infrastructures that shape identity performance, visibility, and risk. Dating apps, social media hashtags, YouTube coming-out narratives, comment threads, and content moderation systems all organize how identities circulate. Thompson (2022), Jones et al. (2022), García-Gómez (2024), and Dorn et al. (2024) show that digital environments can support self-presentation and community while also intensifying misrecognition, aggression, and algorithmic bias.

This finding has methodological implications. Linguistic research on digital queer discourse should combine close analysis of interactional meaning with attention to affordances, moderation systems, datafication, and algorithmic classification. Computational methods can extend scale, but they must avoid treating queer language as toxic simply because it contains reclaimed, context-dependent, or community-specific forms.

Intersectional Multilingualism as a Validity Requirement

The fourth contribution is that intersectionality and multilingualism are not optional additions. A review of LGBT discourse that centers only Anglophone identity categories risks reproducing the exclusions it seeks to analyze. Cashman (2021), Makoni (2021), Milani and Cashman (2024), Ren (2024), Mashazi and Oostendorp (2024), El Sammak (2026), Crowley (2025), and Jones (2025) show that sexual and gender identity is always mediated by race, language hierarchy, religion, nation, migration, class, and locality.

This finding challenges research designs that treat sexual identity as the primary analytic category and other dimensions as secondary variables. For queer women in Lebanon, gay Chinese immigrants, Black queer multilingual speakers, trans communities in the U.S. South, and LGBTQ+ youth negotiating race and sexuality, identity is not assembled from separable components. It emerges through intersecting structures of safety, legitimacy, language authority, and social risk.

Theoretical Implications

The legibility-vulnerability model is the review's main theoretical contribution. It explains why linguistic recognition can be both emancipatory and risky. LGBT/queer people often need legibility: names must be recognized, pronouns respected, families described, identities self-labeled, and policy categories expanded. Yet legibility may expose people to family rejection, workplace discipline, media sensationalism, platform moderation, medical gatekeeping, state surveillance, or community exclusion. The model therefore helps synthesize studies that might otherwise appear unrelated: trans naming, marriage labels, anti-gender discourse, digital moderation, multilingual queer identity, and policy categories.

Methodological Implications

Methodologically, the field would benefit from triangulation. Discourse analysis offers depth, corpus methods offer pattern detection, ethnography offers participant grounding, sociophonetics reveals perception and embodiment, and computational audits reveal algorithmic consequences. Future research should report corpus construction, coding decisions, ethics procedures, and positionality more consistently. Studies of public digital data should also discuss consent, identifiability, and community risk, particularly when analyzing marginalized speakers.

Practical Implications

The review has practical implications for media, education, technology, policy, and applied linguistics. Journalists should treat category choices such as gay marriage, same-sex marriage, and equal marriage as ideological choices rather than synonyms. Educators should avoid reducing inclusion to acronym expansion and instead examine how local communities use, translate, or reject labels. Technology developers should audit moderation systems for queer and trans dialect bias. Policy writers should recognize that sex/gender labels enact institutional recognition and

exclusion. Applied linguists should incorporate multilingual queer experiences without assuming that English identity labels travel cleanly across contexts.

Strengths and Limitations

The review's strengths are its explicit search logic, PRISMA-informed reporting, recent date range, attention to bibliographic verification, and integration of empirical, theoretical, digital, sociophonetic, and multilingual work. Its limitations are also important. First, the search began from a Scopus seed strategy with English-language, open access, article, and Social Sciences filters; these filters may exclude important work indexed elsewhere or published behind paywalls. Second, the review privileges journal articles even though queer linguistics is also shaped by books and edited collections. Third, the evidence base is dominated by specialist language-and-sexuality outlets and Anglophone scholarship. Fourth, screening and appraisal were conducted through a single-reviewer audit model rather than a fully independent dual-review process. Fifth, quality appraisal was interpretive and suited to qualitative evidence, not a risk-of-bias instrument for intervention studies.

These limitations do not invalidate the synthesis, but they define its scope. The findings are best read as a systematic narrative synthesis of recent, verifiable, English-language linguistic research rather than an exhaustive global review of all LGBT/queer language scholarship.

Conclusions (الإستنتاج)

Recent linguistic research on LGBT/queer discourse has moved beyond the search for a singular LGBT language. It now examines how identities and sexualities are made recognizable through naming, labeling, pronouns, narratives, voice, style, media framing, multilingual repertoires, policy categories, and platformed interaction. Across 44 studies, four findings stand out: labeling is identity infrastructure; normativity operates through multiple and sometimes contradictory regimes; digital platforms intensify visibility and vulnerability; and intersectional multilingual analysis is essential for understanding queer linguistic life. By framing LGBT/queer discourse through the tension between legibility and vulnerability, this review offers a synthetic framework for future research on naming, normativity, digital mediation, and intersectional multilingual identity work.

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