What can I study in queer and trans linguistics?

Research on queer and trans language looks at all levels of language: from sounds and signs to pronouns and labels to discourse and ideology – and more!

You can learn about the history of trans and queer language, such as the evolution of specialized vocabulary and linguistic features used by these communities. Or you might look into how language can be used as a tool for activism and social change, such as through promoting inclusive language policies.

There are many ways to explore trans and queer linguistics as part of your coursework or research. You may have the opportunity to work with speakers of different languages, use databases of signed, spoken, and written language, and run experiments in schools, in the field, and in university labs.

You may draw on a range of theoretical frameworks during your studies, especially sociolinguistics, discourse analysis, and applied linguistics, as well as disciplines like gender and sexuality studies.

Get in touch with us!

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Language is a major part of current conversations about LGBTQIA+ communities. Do you want to learn more about exactly how and how linguistics can inform those conversations? Welcome to the world of queer and trans linguistics!

What is queer and trans linguistics?

Queer and trans linguistics (sometimes called LGBTQ+ Linguistics or Lavender Linguistics) is a rapidly growing field that focuses on the study of language use within and surrounding trans and queer communities.

Queer and trans linguistics involves examining how language is used to negotiate gender, sexuality, and identity, and how it shapes the way we think about and experience the world. Like other community-based approaches, it also explores how language can be used to empower and liberate marginalized communities.

What can I do with queer and trans linguistics?

As a trans/queer linguist, you will have many opportunities to use your expertise to positively impact society, to promote greater understanding and acceptance of LGBTQ+ individuals, and to build coalitions with other populations whose language is marginalized or politically contentious.

Within academia, you may pursue research and teaching in linguistics or interdisciplinary programs that focus on gender and sexuality studies.

Outside of academia, you can work with LGBTQ+ organizations, non-profits, and advocacy groups. You could also work in law, tech, education, public policy, journalism, medicine, or media.

RESOURCES

ACADEMIC JOURNALS

- Journal of Gender and Language
- Journal of Language and Sexuality

BOOKS

- From Drag Queens to Leathermen, Rusty Barrett
- Pronoun Envy, Anna Livia
- Representing Trans, Evan Hazenberg & Miriam Meyerhoff (eds.)
- Queer Excursions, Lal Zimman, Jenny Davis & Joshua Raclaw (eds.)
- The Oxford Handbook of Language and Sexuality, Rusty Barrett & Kira Hall (eds.)
- The Handbook of Language, Gender and Sexuality, Susan Ehrlich, Miriam Meyerhoff & Janet Holmes (eds.)
- Linguistics Out of the Closet, Tyler Kibbey (ed.)
- Beyond the Lavender Lexicon, William L. Leap (ed.)
- Queerly Phrased, Anna Livia & Kira Hall (eds.)
- Speaking in Queer Tongues, William L. Leap & Tom Boellstorff (eds.)
- Queering Language, Gender and Sexuality, Tommaso M. Milani (ed.)
- Language Before Stonewall, William L. Leap

CONFERENCES & INSTITUTES

- International Gender and Language Association (IGALA)
- Lavender Languages and Linguistics Conference
- The Lavender Languages Institute, Florida Atlantic University

GRADUATE PROGRAMS

- University of California, Santa Barbara
- UCSB Trans Research in Linguistics Lab
- University of Colorado, Boulder
- University of Kentucky
- University of Michigan
- Stanford University
- The Ohio State University
- University of Pittsburgh