**Research Article**

## From Secret Code to Mainstream: The Rise of Gay Vernacular in Filipino Society

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**ABSTRACT**

This study aimed to explore how social media and social platforms influenced the mainstreaming of gay vernacular and its impact on cultural expression and identity. This qualitative research paper utilized a phenomenological approach to know the experiences and perspectives of both the heterosexual and homosexual participants in the municipality in region 3. Through thematic analysis of focus group discussions, the findings revealed that social media platforms have significantly contributed to the normalization and acceptance of gay language. Along with the growing acceptance within the gay community, several issues also arose, such as misinterpretation and cultural appropriation. The challenges highlighted the need to further study and understand the gay language, as well as the importance of cultural sensitivity in using it. Despite these challenges, the integration of gay vernacular into everyday language enhanced the visibility and acceptance of LGBTQ+ identities. The findings of this study enabled the researchers to create a community language-based framework or the ACCLA Framework. Researchers can use this framework to further strengthen their study. This phenomenon underscored the relationship between language, culture, and identity. This research has served as evidence of the transformative power of language and its ability to promote inclusivity and foster understanding within the community.

*Keywords*: *Gay language, LGBTQ+, Mainstream, Philippines, Social media*

## Background

The evolution of language often mirrored societal changes and cultural movements, with vernaculars as indicators of shifts in acceptance and identities. One particular case was the rise of gay vernacular, which has

transitioned from a subculture to one embraced by the mainstream. The mainstream referred to the thoughts, beliefs, and choices that are accepted by the largest number of people (Merriam-Webster). Over the past generations, noticeable trends have shown gay terminologies entering mainstream language. Homosexual language/slang was a secret code based on an ingroup lexicon originating from the standard language but underwent a process of resemantization as a way to exclude outsiders and remain secretive (Passa, 2023). In the Philippines, the term originally used was "swardspeak," which later evolved into "gayspeak" and "gaylingo" (Ay, 2016). According to Remoto (2008), since the 1960s, Taglish has become widely accessible, leading to the incorporation and use of numerous gay terms by the general public. This historical foundation laid the groundwork for gay language to shift from a coded, protective form of communication within the LGBTQ+ community to a broader linguistic phenomenon that transcends its original boundaries. Terms like "char," "jowa," "tea," and "slay" have entered the mainstream and evolved in their meanings. No longer limited to queer circles, these terms have been adopted by the wider population, illustrating how subcultural language can influence and reshape everyday communication.

Additionally, gay language has become more widely accepted in the Philippines, with both gay and non-gay individuals now using these expressions (Casabal, 2008). Gay language was often employed as an alternative for words that are too harsh (Romero, 2019). These terms were frequently popularized by media representations in film, television, and social media platforms like TikTok For example, television programs such as Drag Race Philippines have played a significant role in increasing the visibility of gay vernacular by showcasing it prominently on screen, which has contributed to its wider adoption by mainstream audiences. According to Muftah (2022), the common use of smartphones, laptops, and tablets, along with popular social media apps, provided users easy access to many languages, helping them create clearer second-language output. This media and technological exposure helped catapult gay language into popular discourse, making it a visible and influential element of Filipino pop culture.

However, with increased visibility and usage came new cultural tensions. The widespread use of gay language often led to misinterpretations of the original meanings of words, depending on context. Words unfamiliar to some people also caused ambiguity in communication. Moreover, issues arose when speakers of the dominant language adopt these words without understanding their historical context, origin, purpose, or the struggles of the LGBTQ+ community. Abbas and Visha (2024) stated that heterosexual individuals often use gay slang words like "shade," "read," and "yas queen" without knowing their cultural meanings or origins. Understanding this linguistic journey—from coded communication to cultural integration—highlights the importance of examining not just how gay language is used today, but how it is perceived, adapted, and sometimes misused by the broader society.

While some studies touched on its usage, existing literature often focuses on broader aspects of the LGBTQ+ community, lacking focused analysis on how gay language contributed to personal and communal communication and identity within the Filipino context. Additionally, there was limited research addressing the perception of mainstream society, particularly straight individuals, regarding the usage of gay language. There was also a gap in understanding its usage and meaning, which led to misinterpretation, as well as limited exploration of how social and cultural factors shaped gay language.

By analyzing its meaning, social media influences, and the perception of the community outside the LGBTQ+ spectrum, this research aimed to inform society about the significance of gay language and its societal context. It also sought to contribute to educating the broader community about the role of gay language in fostering understanding and respect for the gay community, while addressing perceptions of identity and ideas among straight men who used the language in a way that may have come across as gay.

This study examined how terms originating within the gay community were adopted and integrated into everyday language by both

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer (LGBTQ+) individuals and heterosexual speakers. Rather than focusing on broader LGBTQ+ issues, this study centers on the linguistic and cultural unification fostered by gay language, highlighting its role in bridging social and cultural divides. By exploring the history, meaning, and mainstream adaptation of these terms, this research aimed to offer insights into how language both shaped and reflected the broader cultural acceptance of marginalized identities in the Philippines.

## Review of Related Literature and Studies

### Evolution of Language in the Gay Community

The powerful and innovative complexion of language guided the improvement of linguistic divergence, like the use of gay language. Just like any other language, the gay language had its own history which led to significant movements within the community. Society defined gay individuals as different from the others, often distinguishing and calling them by names far removed from their true identity. Eventually, they were acknowledged by a name that suited them and their community. Consequently, many people found their language interesting and appealing to hear. As specified by Quimosing-Ocay and Ocampo (2023), gay language captivated individuals of all ages, genders, and sexualities, making it unavoidable, even for students. As per Caliguia (2022), bakla symbolized being feminine, as well as being sexually and romantically attracted to the same sex. Due to this, people often stereotype them as weak and fragile, inauthentic women or replicas of women and counterfeit of men. A research study examined the etymology of bakla and discovered that it became a tag name for gay individuals during the 1960s.

The gay community used such language to shield themselves from societal hatred and to foster a sense of belonging within their community. As maintained by Moral (2022), gay language, generated by the LGBTQ+ community, was recognized as one of the most interesting contemporary languages. This language served to protect the community from the societal loathing. It had unique linguistic characteristics, like phonemic diphthongs, which were often discussed by LGBTQ+ teachers. The social frame of reference of gay language concealed sultry topics, facilitated gossip, and upscaled one's status. Individuals outside the gay community who used gay language in communication and interaction often demonstrated affirmation for the gay community.

Language and gender are deeply connected, particularly in the context of gay language, where individuals use it to express and navigate their gender identity. For many in the gay community, language serves as a powerful tool for affirm their gender and communicate their relationship to societal norms. Romero (2019) highlights that within their community, gay language functions as a reflection of social identity. This implies that gay language is not merely a marker of sexual orientation but also a means of shaping and expressing gender identity, offering a linguistic space where gender can be redefined and articulated.

Deborah Cameron, a leading linguist on language and gender, provides insight into how gendered language operates in society. Cameron argues that language does more than convey messages—it reinforces societal ideas about masculinity, femininity, and traditional gender roles. Across cultures, language reflects and perpetuates dominant beliefs about gender. Gay language, however, challenges these conventions by blurring the lines between traditional notions of masculinity and femininity. In this way, gay language allows members of the LGBTQ+ community to explore and express gender identity in fluid, creative, and less conventional ways. Through playful word choices, metaphors, and adaptations, it creates a space where individuals can defy rigid gender norms, offering a sense of liberation and affirmation. This linguistic flexibility not only fosters self-expression but also reshapes broader perceptions of gender within society.

### Swardspeak in the Philippine Context

Swardspeak, widely recognized as gay language in Philippine culture, was especially prevalent as a spoken language. However, its written structure and arrangement were not yet been established due to the language's dy-

namic and enterprising nature, being predominantly used as slang or jargon—a hidden medium for connection and conversation. There was a need to create a wordbook of commonly used terms in swardspeak, not to disclose its intentional meaning but to help users understand the language clearly (Catacutan, 2015).

To craft comprehensive and inclusive terms, the gay community considered their native language as a reference for words and phrases. According to Rosales and Careterro (2019), the gay lingo functions the same as languages having particular parts like nouns, pronouns, verbs, adverbs, and adjectives. The gay community used these as substitutes for mainstream systematic words. The vocabulary of gay language could be identified through the phonology of any first or last syllable of a word, by mistakenly using or mishearing a word with a similar sound, or through references to the word. The invention of words or phrases often involved adding prefixes or suffixes to any of the first or last syllables of vocabulary derived from mainstream Tagalog, Filipino, or English, along with references to famous celebrity names or brand names with similar sounds. The stylistic evolution of gay language transformed mainstream words into newly registered terms by words by adding or connecting prefixes or suffixes to their syllables (Rosales & Careterro, 2019).

Gay language serves as a creative and adaptive form of communication that extends beyond the gay community, significantly influencing mainstream culture. One of its central roles is as a set of euphemisms—expressions that soften the impact of harsh or direct meanings, making conversations more palatable and less likely to cause offense. According to Romero (2019), gay language functions as a tool for navigating sensitive or controversial topics, offering alternative expressions that balance humor with subtlety.

For example, the term shutakels is a softened of a more vulgar expressions, making it more acceptable and less abrasive in conversation. Similarly, jologs is a term from Filipino gay slang that humorously describes someone or something perceived as outdated, uncool, or out of sync with current trends. Unlike directly labeling someone as uncool or old-fashioned,

jologs conveys the idea in a more playful, lighthearted manner. Often used with humor, it pokes fun without being overtly cruel or judgmental, turning a potentially negative remark into something more approachable and affectionate. These examples highlight how gay language facilitates smoother social interactions by addressing difficult or sensitive topics through humor, metaphor, and creative wordplay. It provides speakers with a way to navigate awkward or uncomfortable conversations while minimizing the risk of offending others, making it a dynamic and inclusive linguistic tool in both personal and public discourse.

### Acceptability of Language Jargons in the Mainstream

Due to the evolution of language, individuals in the gay community were able to create and construct their own words and phrases. Although some of these terms were derived from the native language of the speaker, members of the community creatively established and transformed words into forms that allowed them to speak freely and comfortably in public without the fear of discrimination. This development facilitated socialization between the gay community and society, influencing the integration of these words into mainstream usage. According to Ulla et al. (2024), captivating terms and call signs like beh/bhie were used as expressions of endearment for loved ones and friends. Entertaining words or phrases such as echos/chos/charot/char/chariz were often perceived as playful hints in a joke. The arrangement of these words reflected the lively, energetic, and playful nature of conversations. Furthermore, terms like kepay and shupatembang demonstrated the flexibility of gay language in addressing sensitive topics with creativity and humor, highlighting its distinctiveness and adaptability. While gay language was predominantly used in the Philippines, the advancement of technology particularly through social media, amplified its reach. Some expressions gained prominence through known queer personalities featured on television. However, not all Filipinos understood these expressions, as certain members of the gay community

remained hesitant to use their language openly due to the fear of discrimination.

### *Faced Challenges of the Gay Community in the Society*

The gay community was often characterized as a source of ridicule, frequently discriminated against due to physical appearance, victimized by sexual offenders, harassed, and unjustly blamed for these experiences. Members of the community faced challenges such as self-identity crises, along with their feelings and opinions being disregarded and mistreated by society. People belonging to the community were misunderstood, overlooked, and mislabeled. Berg et al. (2008) claimed that the most common problems faced by the gay individuals included depression, anxiety, and relationship issues. Furthermore, these challenges extended to past or present abuse, substance abuse, financial difficulties, employment struggles, recent catastrophes such as the loss of a loved-one, and family problems. However, the majority of diagnoses involved depression, anxiety disorders, and adaptation and habituation disorders.

People often recognized and labeled women, as only being, exclusively tailored to the experiences of domestic and sexual violence, reinforcing the perception that women were the primary victims of such crimes, which are usually committed by men. However, previous studies revealed that LGBTQ+ individuals faced barriers that were distinct from the circumstances typically encountered by women or opposite-gender victims (Harvey et al., 2014).

### Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored and grounded on Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory (SLT). Social Learning Theory suggests that individuals outside the LGBTQ+ community learn gay language through a process of observation, attention, retention, and interaction. In the context of gay language, SLT illustrates how language is not merely a product of personal experience but a social phenomenon influenced by cultural exchanges and media representations (O'Rorke, 2006). For instance, heterosexual individuals may learn gay terms through various forms of media, including television shows, films, and social media platforms where gay characters or LGBTQ+ influencers are prominently featured. These platforms often showcase gay vernacular, presenting it as a mode of expression that carries cultural significance and humor. Influencers and social media personalities, out of bravery, uses the gay language to express emotion and identity, which became the medium of the audience to imitate the language based on what they see and hear. Individuals outside the community acquire a sense of amusement and entertainment which causes for them to adapt the language. SLT is highly relevant to this research topic, as it provides a framework for understanding how gay language, once a subcultural vernacular, has evolved into mainstream language.

### Aim of the Study

This study aimed to explore the relation between the society and the gay community in using words or phrases relating to expressing thoughts or feelings. The research sought to understand the knowledge of the broader society on gay language and explored how those who do not belong in the LGBTQ+ community affected their identity within the society. This paper focused on how society was influenced by the use of words or phrases of the gay community to the mainstream and vice versa.

Specifically, the following questions were:
1. In what ways had media representation influenced the acceptance and normalization of gay vernacular in mainstream culture?
2. How did the mutual influence between gay vernacular and mainstream language shape the identity and expression within and outside the gay community?
3. In what ways did the mainstreaming of the gay vernacular affect its original meaning and usage within the gay community?
4. What common misunderstandings or misinterpretations arose from the use of gay language among non-LGBTQ+ speakers, and how did these affect communication?
5. Based on the findings, what community language-based framework could be established?

### Methods

### Research Design

This research study utilized a qualitative research method, which was a systematic and scientific approach to data collection aimed at achieving specific objectives and applications. According to Creswell (2013), qualitative research was characterized by its focus on understanding the core of human experiences by collecting in-depth, detailed data. This was achieved through techniques such as interviews, focus groups, and observations, which were particularly suited for exploring how individuals communicated and interpreted their experiences. This study specifically employed a phenomenological approach to explore the development and integration of gay vernacular in the Philippines. Phenomenological research was well-suited for this study, as it sought to understand the essence of lived experiences from the perspectives of individuals. Given thefore this study, as it sought to understand the essence oflived experiences from the perspectives of individuals. Given the study's objective to examine how terms originating within the gay community had been adopted by both LGBTQ+ individuals and heterosexual speakers, a phenomenological approach allowed researchers to delve deeply into the meanings and interpretations that participants ascribed to their use of gay language. By prioritizing participants' subjective experiences, phenomenological research uncovered the cultural and social contexts that shape the understanding and acceptance of gay vernacular. This approach was essential for addressing the gaps identified in existing literature, particularly regarding the perceptions of heterosexual individuals and the broader societal implications of gay language.

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### Participants

This research focused on the experiences and perspectives of both the gay community and individuals outside the LGBTQ+ spectrum. The participants, whose ages ranged between 20 and 30, were selected using purposive sampling to ensure they possessed specific characteristics or experiences directly relevant to the research objectives. The research included 5 participants from the gay community and 7 participants from heterosexual individuals. a specific number of participants was selected because of data saturation obtained by the researchers. As a result, the search for participants was subdued. This approach aligned with Creswell's (2014) perspective that a smaller sample size could provide in-depth insights, rather than necessitating a large number of participants. The research participants were limited to a specific municipality in region 3.

*Table 1. Numbers of homosexuals and heterosexuals by age*

| Age (a) | Heterosexual (t) | Homosexual (m) |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 20 | 1 | 1 |
| 22 | 2 | 1 |
| 23 | 1 | 1 |
| 28 | 1 | |
| 30 | 1 | 1 |
| 35 | 1 | 1 |
| Total | 7 | 5 |

n=12

## Instruments

This research study utilized a self-made tool that was validated by two education experts (N=2), and one expert in psychometry (N=1), in order for the researchers to gather data from the participants. The researchers used this self- made tool, which included the explanation of what is their insight about gay language being integrated into the mainstream, their understanding of the origin of gay language, the participant's relation with gay peo-

ple and the impact of gay language on the participants. The tool used for gathering data was attached in appendix C.

## Data Gathering Procedures

The researchers sought permission through a letter to the school's dean to interview participants inside the institution. The objectives of the study were contained in this letter. The study primarily focused on the perspectives and experiences of the participants with regards to using the gay language, focusing on its impact on identity formation, social communication and interaction, and effects of social media representations. This was conducted face-to-face and was designed to be completed in 20-30 minutes. The researchers obtained permission from the participants through an informed consent form, the letter discussed the participation requested and provided assurance of confidentiality. The researchers explained the importance of their responses to the study. The researchers clarified some terms to the participants so that the participants could answer the questions with full knowledge of what the topic is about. The data were collected using focus group discussion. Focus group discussions were identified as a valuable and efficient approach for obtaining insights into social dynamics (Basnet, 2018). This method proved effective for gathering a wide range of insights from participants and creating a sense of community, encouraging participants to feel more comfortable speaking up in a group setting, which led to more open and dynamic conversations. After the participants responded to the questions, the researcher collected and analyzed the data for interpretation. The researcher conducted thematic analysis to interpret the data. Based on the findings, the researcher formulated conclusions and recommendations for the study.

## Ethical Considerations

To successfully collect data, informed consent was first obtained from the targeted respondents. The researcher ensured that permission was granted before participants took part in the study. Additionally, the research complied with the Data Privacy Act (RA No. 10173), leading to the establishment of a Non-Disclosure Agreement (NDA) between the researcher and participants. This agreement underscored the researcher's commitment to maintaining the confidentiality of participants' personal information, ensuring that no collected data would be publicly disclosed. Furthermore, the data gathered were used solely for the purposes of this study and would not be repurposed. The data remained unaltered and were permanently deleted once the research was complete. Participation in the study involved minimal risk, with interviews lasting between 15 to 30 minutes. Participants could withdraw at any time without facing any questions or penalties. While there were no direct benefits for participants, the information gathered assisted the researcher in completing the project and may serve as a reference for others interested in similar research topics. Additionally, the Belmont Report emphasized three (3) key ethical principles: (1) Respect for persons, (2) Beneficence, and (3) Justice.

## Data Analysis

Thematic Analysis helped the researchers identify, analyze, and interpret shared meanings within a given data set. By closely examining the data the researchers identified the common themes, ideas, topics, and patterns that come up repeatedly. The researchers utilized Qualitative Data Analysis (QDA) to explore the meaningful and symbolic content of qualitative data, focusing on explanations and interpretations provided by participants within specific contexts. The data was processed using Thematic Analysis (TA). TA, a widely used method for examining qualitative data by identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (Braun & Clarke, 2006), guided this study. Themes were critical in answering the research questions and are developed through a series of phases outlined by Braun and Clarke: (1) Familiarization with the data; (2) Generating initial codes; (3) Searching for themes; (4) Reviewing themes; (5) Defining and naming themes; and (6) Writing the report. (1) Familiarization to the data: The first step involved reading and re-reading the transcripts to become familiar with the data. During this phase, the researchers took note of significant responses from participants. (2) Generating initial codes: In this stage,

the researchers extracted keywords or codes based on the main points from participants' responses. This helped organize a meaningful and systematic way by creating codes. (3) Searching for themes: The researchers grouped related codes to identify emerging themes, by simply organizing the similar codes and patterns. (4) Reviewing themes: After identifying themes, the researchers verified, modified, and refined them in relation to the grouped codes and the overall data, creating a thematic map. (5) Defining and naming themes: During this phase, the researchers finalized the themes, providing clear definitions and descriptions of how each theme relates to the research questions. (6) Writing the report: The final step involved compiling an analysis report, summarizing the findings and insights gained from the thematic analysis. This qualitative analysis led to the emergence of themes that addressed the specific research questions and objectives, allowing the researcher to develop essential inputs for localized guidelines in modernizing instructional materials. The process of thematic analysis was systematically outlined to illustrate these procedures.

## Result and Discussion

This section presents the key findings of the study, which were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns and themes across data. The ata, collected through interview and focused group discussions were carefully examined to uncover key insights related to the aim of the study.

Thus, the following outlines the findings and significant insights drawn from the data, as categorized by the identified themes:

### *Social Media in Normalization of Swardspeak*

Social media played a crucial role in the widespread acceptance and normalization of gay language, influencing how LGBTQ+ identities were expressed and understood in mainstream society. Platforms like Twitter, Instagram, Tiktok, and Youtube allowed LGBTQ+ individuals to create, share, and popularize their own language, slang and cultural differences.

These platforms are not just places for entertainment—they are powerful spaces where language trends are born, shared, and transformed (Zappavigna, 2018).

TikTok plays a huge role. With its short-form videos, users from different backgrounds are constantly exposed to snippets of Swardspeak through viral challenges, comedic skits, and influencer content. Because these terms are used in humorous and relatable contexts, audiences who are active participants in such platforms tend to absorb them quickly—even without fully understanding their cultural roots (Tagliamonte, 2016). This leads to faster linguistic diffusion, making Swardspeak more visible and acceptable across broader communities, even outside the LGBTQ+ circle.

### *Familiarization of Swardspeak*

This referred to how gay language and expressions gained mainstream visibility through social media platforms. Thus, terms that were once limited to subcultures have entered the mainstream. This was evident in the following lines of the participants to the structured question, "How does social media have made gay slang more common?"

*"... we live in a modern world po, laganap na po yung mga cellphone kaya madali silang maka-access sa social media at tsaka ... yon ... naririnig nila yung gay language"* (We live in a modern world po, cellphones are prevalent that is why they can easily access social media and … that … they can hear the gay language) - P2 (Homosexual)

"Kapag ano ginagamit yung social media, pagdating sa gay lingo, pwede itong gamitin para maturo sa mga tao." (Using social media, when it comes to gay language, you can use it to express or teach the language to a wider group of people.) - P5 (Homosexual)

"Kay Fyang." (From Fyang) - P4 (Heterosexual)

"Kay Vice Ganda." (From Vice Ganda) - P4, P2 and P3 (Heterosexual)

In line with these lines, the use of social media in making the gay language more common, created a significant impact. According to Zhang et al. (2022), social media platforms provided LGBTQ+ individuals with a space to participate in a collective linguistic culture, where the use of gay lingo fostered solidarity and

communication within the community. Additionally, influencers like Sofia "Fyang" Smith who is the winner of a reality show Pinoy Big Brother and Vice Ganda, a Filipino comedian, actor, host and television personality, who often used gay slang in their content, helping normalize these expressions and make them more widely accepted in everyday language. This trend was noticeable especially on TikTok, where short videos frequently introduce popular phrases and slang that quickly spread among millions of users (Wells, 2022). The direct mention of influencers like Vice Ganda and Sofia "Fyang" Smith by both homosexual and heterosexual participants (P2–P4) underscores how celebrity figures serve as bridges between niche linguistic cultures and the general public. Their usage of swardspeak legitimizes it as part of mainstream discourse and affirms that its usage transcends identity boundaries. These figures act as cultural agents who normalize and popularize queer expression in an accessible and entertaining way, especially through formats like short-form video, which are digestible and easily shared.

Furthermore, the responses of participants reflect how digital accessibility, particularly through mobile phones and social media, plays a crucial role in linguistic exposure. Participant P2 highlighted that the widespread use of cellphones enabled easier access to online platforms, suggesting that constant online engagement passively exposes users to gay language, whether or not they actively seek it. This incidental exposure contributes to the normalization of gay lingo across different demographics.

The responses indicate that swardspeak is no longer confined to LGBTQ+ circles but has become part of a broader sociolinguistic landscape, shaping how identity, humor, and communication are expressed across Filipino society.

### *Gay Language on Social Media*

This theme highlighted how LGBT+ individuals used gay language on social media to share their identity and connect with others. It emphasized how specific words and phrases helped create a sense of belonging, built supportive communities, and increased the

visibility of LGBTQ+ voices. Social media became a space for self-expression, mutual support, and celebration of identity. This was apparent in the following lines of the participants to the structured question, "How does hearing the gay language make you want to learn more about gay language and how it's becoming more common in everyday life?"

According to the study results, 22.06% of members never engage in financial literacy training, while 69.12% engage sometimes, 8.82% often, and 0% consistently. Grashuis (2019) highlights the positive impact of cooperative membership on various indicators of member performance but also notes challenges such as uneven benefit distribution and increased heterogeneity in member attitudes.

"Halos everyday nagagamit na namin siya …" (It's like, we use it every day…) - P3 (Homosexual)

"... na-curious kami tapos na-adopt na din namin siya kasi palagi naming naririnig ganon." (We became curiousand then we eventually adopted it because we always hear it.) - P1 (Homosexual)

"Oo kasi palagi naming naririnig talagang nagagaya na namin kahit 'di namin alam na nagagaya na pala naming (laughs)." (Yes, because we always hear it, we really end up copying it even without knowingthat we're already copying it (laughs).) - P3 (Homosexual)

"catchy kasi sila." (because they are catchy.) - P4 (Heterosexual)

To strengthen the answers of the participants, it was stated by Pascual (2016) that a regular interaction with gay lingo speakers promoted learning the language, enabling individuals to keep up with social trends and engage in inclusive communities. Thus, gay language became increasingly normalized in the mainstream across different social environments as everyday use grew significantly. Furthermore, participants' responses reveal that repeated exposure to gay language on social media platforms has not only sparked curiosity but also led to unintentional acquisition of the language. For example, P1 and P3 both pointed out that simply hearing it often was enough for them to absorb and begin using it naturally, indicating that immersion in a digital linguistic

environment is a strong factor in language adoption. This shows how language spreads not just through direct teaching but also through passive and frequent media exposure.

### LGBTQ+ Culture in social media

Social media has become one of the foundations where LGBTQ+ culture is embraced. This theme highlight show platforms like TikTok, Twitter, and Instagram have become spaces to connect and share their culture. For instance, contents such as memes and videos that frequently feature LGBTQ+ culture and expressions help to promote empathy and deeper understanding of the community. The following lines from the participants highlight their experiences in answering the structured questions, "How does using gay language on social media help you understand LGBTQ+ culture?".

"... nakilala na nila kami ngayon kasi nga nagkaroon nang social media ... lalo napo talaga sa panahon ngayon, mas nararamdaman namin na belong kami kasi naiintindihan na nila kami." (They eventually acknowledge us because of social media ... especially now in our time today, we really felt that we belonged because they can understand us.) - P3 (Homosexual)

"...naiintindihan mo sila ganon." (...you can understand them) - P3 (Heterosexual)

"Kunwari sa make up, sa pananamit ganon." (Like in makeup, in clothing) - P3 (Heterosexual)

The lines from the participants illustrate how social media has become a tool in understanding the culture of the LGBTQ+ community. Hence, social media platforms play a vital role in breaking down barriers. Furthermore, Lucero (2017) states that platforms like Instagram and TikTok empower LGBTQ+ to confidently display their unique fashion choices such as clothing and expressivemakeup styles. Makeup artists and influencers from the LGBTQ+ community have also used social media to showcase makeup as a means of personal expression, challenging traditional gender expectation, and encouraging others to feel confident in expressing themselves authentically. However, one of the participants have mentioned that:

"No, they don't ... hindi nila malalaman ang culture ng LGBTQ um community sa social media, let say example 'di ba? Using the platform, social medias, pag ka inexpress ko yung gay lingo ginamitsa isang example, hindi kasi broad, eh. It's just a language actually, lengguwahe lang naman yung nalaman nila, hindi naman yung buong... pagkakakilanlan ng buong community ng LGBT, it's just a language na let say example na, pinasok doon sa social media pero hindi nila totally nakilala, alam lang nila, yes, it's a gay lingo pero hindi talaga nila totally ... kaya dapat using the social media platforms dapat, lalo na ngayon kasi ang dami ng kabataan na gumagamit ng gadgets and may social media na rin, it's also an advantage for us LGBT na eexpress lang yung um, us the community, lalo na sa mga young people, the hindi pa sila aware." (No, they don't ... they won't fully understand the culture of the LGBTQ um community through social media. Let's say, example right? Using the platform, social media, when I express gay lingo in an example, it's not broad. It's just a language actually, they only learn the language, not the whole... identity of the LGBT community, it's just a language that let's say example, was introduced to social media but they don't fully know, they just know, yes, it'sa gay lingo but not the rest of it ... that's why using social media platforms especially now when many young people use gadgets and have access to social media, it's also an advantage for us LGBT to express ourselves um, us the community, especially to young people who might not yet be aware.) - P5 (Homosexual)

This participant's response with the findings of the study entitled, "Representation of LGBTQ Identity on Social Media: Multimodality Analysis Instagram Account" by Andika et al (2024). The study highlights that "gay language" is frequently showcased online, often presenting a commercialized portrayal of LGBTQ+ community. However, this tends to overshadow identities mwithin the LGBTQ+ spectrum, such as bisexual, transgender, and queer individuals. As a result, the representation of LGBTQ+ culture on social media can give non-LGBTQ+ individuals an incomplete view of the community, preventing deeper and more holistic understanding of its diverse realities.

## Identity through Language

Language helped individuals to communicate and connect to one another. Through this, they were able to discover and express themselves more effectively. Communication shaped individuals and pushed them to discover their identities. The gay vernacular became the mode of expression of the individuals within society allowing them to convey their thoughts and feelings in ways that resonated with their true selves. However, certain challenges arose wherein the identity of the speaker was being misunderstood or mislabeled leading to confusion and miscommunication.

### Identity Navigation

Because of the trend and widespread usage of the gay vernacular, people often misunderstand the identity of an individuals who use the language, assuming and labeling them without fully understanding their personal identities. Due to the discrimination faced by homosexuals, social divide exists that separates them from the people in the society. In relation to the use of gay vernacular in communication, homosexuals are often misunderstood, leading the society to perceive the language used by the homosexuals as offensive and insulting.

"... Nagta-talk kami ng gay language parang... For me saamin okay lang pero parang ... syempre hindi nilanaiintindihansa aminokay lang pero para sa kanila insulto ganon." (When we use gay language, because they can't understand it they think we're insulting them.) - P1 (Homosexual)

"May mga times kasinakapag bago kopalang nakikilala yung tao, kapag narinig nila ako na ginagamit ko yung gay language parang iniisip nila na bakla na rin ako kasi dahil sa pananalita ko." (There are times that even if I just met the person, if they hear me using the gay language they assume that Iam gay because of how I speak.) - P5 (Homosexual)

Heterosexual individuals often perceived the identities of those who use the gay vernacular, based on their relationship or connection to someone. If the speakers is unfamiliar to an individual, their identity may be mislabeled and judged solely on their use of vernacular.

"Kapag ano, hindi ka kilala ng mga nasa around surroundings mo. Parang 'ay ang ingay-ingay naman' ganyan pero kapag kami lang, normal lang sa aminyon ganon" (When it's like, the people that surround you don't know you, it's like 'oh, they are too loud. 'something like that. But when it's just us, it's normal for us, like that.) - P4 (Heterosexual)

A common misconception surrounds the usage of the vernacular, often influenced by the people surrounding the speaker. In some instances, individuals unfamiliar with the speaker mislabel their identity based solely on their interaction using gay language.

"... minsan kapag 'yun nga ... hindi nila ako kilala, siguro iniisip nila na bading ako" (Sometimes, when they don't know me... maybe they think I'm gay (laughs). - P1 (Heterosexual)

Due to the trend of using the gay vernacular as a form of expression, individuals regardless of their sexuality, now have the freedom to express themselves openly. This acceptance, coupled with the characteristic of gay language. Fosters a sense of belonging. As a result, distinct boundaries between cultures and identities become less defined (Vatan, 2021).

### Acceptability of LGBTQ+ Identities

The LGBTQ+ individuals express themselves freely through the use of the gay vernacular. It shows how they can confidently express themselves, which only proves that they accept themselves and their identity. They sense belongingness whenever they use the vernacular. Because of this, the people in the community have seen how individuals in the LGBTQ+ community are confident in all aspects, leading the society to be influenced by this haracteristic. Society believes that the culture of the LGBTQ+ community differs from atypical people in the society. However, with the help of the engaging media interaction, they have been able to accept these individuals and their language.

"Lalo na ngayon mas open na hindi nakatulad nung dati na sobrang higpit o sobrang hirap para tanggapin yung mga gay o yung language na ginagamit nila." (Especially now that we're more open unlike before where it was too strict and too hard for them to accept the gay, the

LGBTQ+ community and the language.) - P2 (Homosexual)

"Yung pagtanggap nila mas lumawak o mas lalong lumalawak. Kung papaano sila mag-isip about sa mga LGBTQ" (Their acceptance, it's expanding, it's becoming broader. The way each person thinks about LGBTQ by language itself.) - P5 (Homosexual)

Gaining insights into why they think the gay vernacular is being accepted and blended into the mainstream and how it is shaping individuals to take a closer look at the cultural aspect of the LGBTQ+ community. Feeling the sense of enjoyment, they enthusiastically join and connect with friends who are part of the community. Anticipating how the interaction could provide satisfaction and connection.

"Dahil siguro fun gamitin yung language, naiisip din namin na fun silang kasama." (Maybe because it's fun to use the language, we also think they're fun to be with.) - P4 (Heterosexual)

"... masaya yung ganon na, may way na 'gay language'lalo na kapag kausap yung mga friends mo na part ng LGBTQ. Hindi nalang sila basta-basta boring na conversation na 'ah, ganon-ganon'. Mas masaya." (It's more fun like that, having a 'gay language', especially when you're talkingto friends who are part of the LGBTQ. It's not just boring conversation like 'oh, this and that' it's more enjoyable.) - P7 (Heterosexual)

"Tapos naiisip ko rin na siguro ang saya kasama ng mga bading kasi kung tayo ngang mga straight e ang saya-saya kapag naririnig ang gay language paano pa kaya kung sa bading mangagaling to kasi diba may mga tono rin sila (laughs)." (Then I also think, maybe it's really fun to be with gay people because if us straight people enjoy hearing the gay language, how much more if it comes from the gay people themselves, right? Because they have their own tone too.) - P5 (Heterosexual)

The participants express how they are craving positive interaction with people in the LGBTQ+ community, normalizing the acceptance of the individuals who have different identities compared to others. The positive characteristics of how homosexuals express themselves through the language they are comfortable with are becoming more appreciated. More people are becoming open to using such language because they can feel the joy it brings to the individuals. Catacutan (2015) mentions that the gay community provides a sign of assertion to individuals who use the gay vernacular in socializing and interacting with others even if they are not part of the community.

### Emotional Expression

It is common for the generation today to cope with the trends especially online. The advancement of technology has helped in expressing oneself. Language is one of the important factors to consider when expressing emotions. The gay vernacular has become one of the ways to connect with other people. It became their safe space to talk about matters they are comfortable with. The innovative way of communicating without the concern being of misunderstood and criticized by those who do not understand them. The following are the responses of the participants to the question: In what way can the gay language make your expression of feelings or thoughts easier?

"Kapag nakikipagchismisan. Kapag may ibang tao    kaming gustong pagusapan gagamitin namin yung gay language para hindi nila kami maintindihan." (When gossiping. When we want to talk about someone else, we will use gay language for them not to understand.) - P1 (Homosexual)

"Kapag ginagamit yung gay language mas napapabilis at napapadali ang mga bagay- bagay, pero dapat balance lang." (Using gay language, it makes things easier, it speeds things up. It just needs to be balanced.) - P5 (Homosexual)

"... mas nakakapag-connect kami sa kausap namin." (We can connect better with the person we're talking to.) - P3 (Heterosexual)

Moral (2022) concluded that the gay vernacular is frequently used to express the cheerfulness of gays, as well as aphrodisiac. It is a unique language that truly identifies the culture of gay people. A culture that emits a colorful and meaningful life together with their peers. This shows that the positive attitude of gay individuals in communicating and expressing themselves influences society

fostering a positive environment when interacting with others, without the means of discriminating against them.

The emotional and social functions of gay lingo, as demonstrated in the participants' statements, reinforce its role as a powerful medium for fostering inclusivity, connection, and emotional safety. It acts not only as a shield from judgment but also as a bridge that enables authentic, joyful, and effective communication across diverse social groups.

## Transformation of Gay Vernacular

The transformation of gay vernacular through mainstreaming reflects broader societal changes, concerning not only the LGBTQ+ acceptance and visibility but also the visibility shift among non-LGBTQ+ people. While it has led to increased representation and empowerment for the LGBTQ+ community, it also raises questions about cultural appropriation, the dilution of meaning, and the commercialization of queer identity.

### Context-dependent Meaning

The transformation of gay vernacular through its increasing mainstream presence was emblematic of broader societal shifts, particularly around LGBTQ+ acceptance and visibility. Over the years, as language once considered exclusive to the LGBTQ+ community became more commonly used by the general public, there were notable changes. This transformation reflected the increasing visibility of LGBTQ+ individuals and their language within popular culture, media, and everyday conversation. At the sametime, it also highlighted a growing shift in the way non- LGBTQ+ individuals engaged with and adopted these expressions, sometimes without fully understanding or appreciating their origins or nuances.

"... actually  nung una medyo  iba siya, kasi kapag galingsa bakla yung word... may mga ganun talagang instances na kapag galing sa bakla yung word or sentence iba pagka intindi at iba rin kapag sa straight nanggaling, kahit pareho langsilang sinabi na word" (Actually at first it is  slightly different if the expression or word came from a gay, but there are some instances that when the word or sentence came from a gay the comprehension is different and it is also different if the word or sentence came from a straight (heterosexual), even if they stated the same word) - P1 (Homosexual)

"'yon yung sinasabi nilang mga kaklase ko ang akala nila yung muyak mabango kasi parang Maganda pakinggan pero sa'min ang ibig sabihin nun mabaho, kaya kapag galing sa kanila iniintindi nalang namin na yung muyak is mabango kahit sinabi na namin na ang muyak ay mabaho." (That is what my classmates are talking about. They think that "muyak" is fragrance because it was nice to hear or pleasant to hear but for us that means stinky, that is why when the word came from them we comprehend the word "muyak" as fragrance even if we already told them that "muyak" is stinky.) - P1 (Homosexual)

"Tapos 'di ba minsan... gagamitin nila yung word sa ibang context tapos bigla yung meaning nung word mag-iiba na, hindi naman talaga ganon sa gay language pero sa kanila ganon ibig sabihin". (Then, isn't it sometimes... they use the word in a different context, and then suddenly the meaning of the word changes. It's not really like that in gay language, but for them, that's what it means.) - P4 (Homosexual)

"Ano 'diba yung mga ... slay ... bombana ... 'di basa drag race ginagamit nila yung bombana para pampalit donsa "let's go", "go", "tara" parang ganun sila sa'min pero pag sinabi mo 'yon sa mainstream baka magsitakbuhan sila niyan kasi iba yung meaning (laughs all together)" ("Isn't it like... "slay" ... "bomba na" ..." in Drag Race, they use "bombana" as a replacement for "let's go," "go," or "tara"— something like that for us. But if you say it in mainstream, they might runaway because it has a different meaning) - P3 (Homosexual)

To further understand these shifting meanings, Dr. Knoeferle's (2021) study on language comprehension provided valuable insights. The study emphasized that language comprehension is not a fixed or static process. Instead,it is highly influenced by the context in which words are used. Our understanding of a word or phrase could change depending on various factors such as the setting, the individuals involved, and their social or cultural backgrounds. This fluidity of meaning was especially important in the case of gay vernacular.

The way words were used in the LGBTQ+ community differed significantly from how they are understood in mainstream society, and this variance is crucial in understanding the challenges posed by the mainstreaming of these terms. As the language transitions into mainstream use, it becomes difficult for those outside the community to fully grasp the depth of these meanings. For example, as one participant reflects, certain words or phrases that come from the LGBTQ+ community, when used by non-LGBTQ+ people, took on entirely different connotations. One participant shares an example of the word "muyak", which in their community referred to something unpleasant or smelly, but outside the community, it is often interpreted as something pleasant or fragrant. This shift in understanding occurred because, as participants explained, the same word could have vastly different meanings depending on whether it's coming from an LGBTQ+ or a mainstream context. Another example can be found in how words like "slay" or "bomba" are used in the context of LGBTQ+ culture, especially in drag culture. The word "bomba" was a celebratory term, saying "let's go" or "let's do this!" However, the same word, when heard in a mainstream context, could be understood completely differently or even confuse those unfamiliar with its LGBTQ+ roots. For the LGBTQ+ community, as illustrated by the participants' experiences, the meaning of a word or phrase can shift dramatically based on the context. In an LGBTQ+ setting, the same term might carry significant emotional weight or historical relevance, but when adopted by mainstream society, it could lose its original meaning or intent. These dynamic shifts highlighted the complexities of language and how it evolved, not only across different cultures but also within subcultures like the LGBTQ+ community itself.

### Normalization of Gay Vernacular

A language that was once a "secret code" has now become a language that is widely used everyday. Through the adoption of mainstream society, gay language is now being accepted and integrated as something normal. This shift highlights broad societal changes and increased visibility of the LGBTQ+ community and the language they use.

"Tapos syempre dahil ginagamit nila mas nakikilala din yung gay language." (Then of course, because they use it gay language becomes more recognized.) - P1 (Homosexual)

According to Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (2013), as more people adopt a particular language or vernacular, it becomes increasingly recognized and accepted within the broader societal context, reflecting changes in social attitudes and identities. Meaning that as more people adopted the language, it became more recognized and accepted.

" … syempre dahil nga sila yung mainstream nung ginamit nila yung gay language parang mas naging tunog normal na siya kasi sila yung kino-consider na normal … Kaya din siguro mas naging normal yung gay language, or normal pakingnan." (Also... of course, because they are the mainstream, when they used gay language, it started to sound more normal because they are considered the 'normal' ones) - P3 (Homosexual)

"Siguro ano mas naging laganap siya ganon … laganap?! (laughs)" (Maybe it became more widespread... widespread?!) - P5 (Homosexual)

A third participant humorously noted, acknowledging that the language had spread more widely, even if they struggled to find the right words to describe it. The playful tone underscored how the language had become ingrained in everyday speech, even among those who may not have identified with the LGBTQ+ community.

In the past, gay language was often seen as an insider's language—something understood only by those within the LGBTQ+ community. It was a way for individuals to communicate in a world that often excluded or marginalized them. However, over time, the language has gradually moved from the margins to the mainstream. As more people, both gay and non-gay, began adopting these expressions, they became more familiar and accessible to a wider audience. To support the statements of the participants, a study stated that gay language had gained broader acceptance in the Philippines, with both LGBTQ+ and non-LGBTQ+ people now incorporating these expressions into their everyday speech (Casabal, 2008). This shift in perception highlighted how language can be

shaped by societal views on who or what is considered "normal." As LGBTQ+ individuals and their language became more visible, the language itself started to lose its outsider status, gradually being embraced as just another form of communication.

### *Transformation of English*

Gay language had the ability to change how people used English by giving familiar words new meanings and expressions. This transformation created a unique way of speaking that reflected the experiences and identity of the LGBTQ+ community.

"Halimbawa yung ano, yung mother ginagawa niya lang na ano" (Example is the, the word "mother" they are doing it like) - P4 (Heterosexual)

"mudji"... (gay word) (Mother...) - P2, P3 and P4 Heterosexual

According to Espeño-Rosales & Careterro,(2019) an intriguing feature of queer language was how queer individuals used everyday language while creating a distinct queer discourse by modifying the structure of English. For example, as one participant shared, "Halimbawa yung ano, yung mother ginagawa niya lang na ano..." (Example is the, the word "mother" they are doing it like), and the others responded with "mudji." This shows how certain words like "mother" were redefined in gay vernacular, acquiring new, often empowering connotations. "Mudji," as they explained, was a playful, affectionate twist on the common term, used in a context that carries a deeper, often humorous meaning within the LGBTQ+ community.

## Gay Language on Communication

Gay language, particularly Swardspeak, functions as a powerful tool of communication within and beyond the LGBTQ+ community. Rather than being a simple slang, gay language conveys identity, solidarity, and emotion. It creates a shared space for expression where humor, creativity, and subtle cultural commentary can flourish (Bucholtz & Hall, 2004).

Gay language could create a gap in communication between members of the LGBTQ+ community and those who were not part of it, especially when words were used outside of their intended context. This could lead to misunderstandings and misinterpretations of the intended meaning. The impact of gay language on communication had both positive and negative aspects. It helped foster a sense of belonging and identity among LGBTQ+ members. When gay language was used outside the LGBTQ+ community, it can create barriers or lead to miscommunication.

In many cases, gay language helps speakers connect and build rapport, even without stating things directly. For example, certain phrases or tones in Swardspeak can express sarcasm, affection, or criticism in a playful but effective way. This kind of indirectness and wit strengthens interpersonal communication and makes everyday conversations more layered and meaningful (Hall, 1997).

Moreover, Swardspeak acts as a sociolect--it sets the community apart while also inviting others in. It signals belonging, and for many, it is a means of resisting heteronormative norms by reshaping language in creative ways (David, 2014).

### *Communication Barriers*

Communication barriers in gay lingo refer to the challenges and obstacles that occur when a person who does not belong to the LGBTQ+ community uses, hears, or attempts to use the language in different contexts. These barriers can lead to misunderstanding and misinterpretation, primarily due to a lack of shared sociolinguistic knowledge and competence. Gay lingo is not just a set of alternative words—it is a sociolect rooted in shared experiences, identities, and cultural practices of the LGBTQ+ community. As such, it evolves rapidly, and its meanings shift depending on context, in-group familiarity, and evolving trends.

"Kasi may ginagawa kami non tapos siya (points to P2) tinawag niya na 'mudji' yung teacher namin tapos (laughs) yung teacher namin (laughs) sabi niya (laughs) 'tinatarantado mo ba ako, 'nak?' (LAUGHS) nagalit siya." ("We were doing something and then she (points to P2) called our teacher 'mudji' and then (laughs) our teacher (laughs) said (laughs) 'Are you fooling me, child?' (LAUGHS) She got mad.") – P5 (Heterosexual)

"Nung first time hindi ako makaintindi nung language ni ano, 'teh minumura mo ba ako?' Sabe ko sa kanya (laughs)" ("It was the first time I couldn't understand the language of —, 'Sis, are you cussing me?' I said (laughs).") – P4 (Heterosexual)

These excerpts illustrate how miscommunication arises when individuals outside the LGBTQ+ community interpret words literally or lack familiarity with their in-group connotations. According to sociolinguistic theory, particularly the concept of speech communities and communicative competence (Hymes, 1972), understanding a language variety requires more than vocabulary—it involves knowing how, when, and why to say things appropriately within specific cultural and social contexts. Moreover, this phenomenon is not exclusive to heterosexual or non-LGBTQ+ individuals. Even LGBTQ+ members themselves reported communication breakdowns when interacting with those unfamiliar with their linguistic norms:

"Kung anong sinasabi namin, tapos baka ibig sabihin iniinsulto namin sila yun yung nakakaapekto sa amin." ("What we were saying, then they might think that we are insulting them and that is what is affecting us.") – P1 (Homosexual)

"Oo minsan akala nila pinag-uusapan sila kahit hindi naman." (Yes, sometimes they tend to think that we are talking about them even though we don't.") – P1 (Homosexual)

These responses emphasize the importance of shared background knowledge and mutual linguistic expectations in effective communication—another key aspect in sociolinguistics.

To further support this, Ye (2024) explained that lexical gaps—the absence of direct equivalents for certain terms—create significant challenges in communication and translation. Gay lingo, with its culturally nuanced and context-dependent terms, exemplifies how meanings can shift or be lost entirely when used outside the community. This aligns with sociolinguistic understandings of how language reflects social identity and how interpretation can vary across groups, especially when lexical or pragmatic norms are not shared.

## Cultural Sensitivity

Cultural sensitivity and understanding the context were important when using gay language. It was essential to recognize that gay language reflected the culture and experiences of the LGBTQ+ people. Gay language, as part of the LGBTQ+ community's culture, has specific meanings that people outside the community might not easily understand.

The researchers inquired about the importance of learning gay language before using it. The participants responded:

"Need mo muna siyang pag-aralan kase baka mali napala yung sinasabi mo. Like baka for you it's for fun tapos,for them it's offensive na. "(You need to study it first because you might be saying something wrong. Like, maybe for you it's for fun, but for them, it could already be offensive.) - P4 (Heterosexual)

"It's very important kasi yung iba mga bad words din." (It's very important because some are bad words too.) - P2 (Homosexual)

"Para, baka may ma-adopt sila na sabihin namin na hindi tama, iba pala yung ibig sabihin ganun kaya dapat mag aral muna, kase … "(Because, they might adopt something we say that isn't right, they might misunderstand the meaning, that's why they should study it first, because…) - P1 (Homosexual)

The participants emphasized that it is crucial for users of gay language, whether from the LGBTQ+ community or non-LGBTQ+ individuals, to learn the language before using it. They noted that misuse could lead to misinterpretations and misunderstandings. Understanding how the language evolved and learning the meanings behind it helped promote cultural sensitivity and enhance the contextual understanding of its users.

Based on the findings of this research, a framework was proposed to understand how gay language developed from being a secret code to mainstream language. The framework developed in this study, ACCLA Framework, offered a comprehensive approach to understanding how gay language was adopted by heterosexual individuals and how it affected the use of gay language. It highlighted four (4) key phases on how gay language can eventually be adopted by mainstream community, (1) Interaction, (2) Familiarization, (3) Adoption, (4)

Modification. On the first phase, interaction, in the early stages, gay language began as a form of interaction within the LGBTQ+ community. It served as a tool for bonding and creating a sense of belonging. This phase involved the development of slang, expressions, and codes that were understood primarily by those within LGBTQ+ individuals. Eventually, when people engaged with language or terms through communication with people who were commonly associated with the LGBTQ+ community and social media representation, it triggered their curiosity and natural instinct to learn and be familiarized with the language. Then comes, familiarization, as the LGBTQ+ community gained visibility and acceptance, gay language begins to spread beyond its limits. This phase involved gradual familiarization of heterosexual individuals with certain terms or phrases. It might have started to appear more often in mainstream media, and social interaction, though often still within limited or specific contexts. But over time, certain elements of gay language were adopted by the wider population. Words or phrases originally used within the LGBTQ+ community became a part of the

mainstream expression, with more people using them without necessarily understanding its origins. This adoption signified shift where gay language is no longer restricted to the gay community. As gay language became integrated into mainstream culture, some modifications occurred. This is where some words or phrases evolved as they were used in broader social contexts. Over time, the original meanings of some terms shifted, and new variations may emerge because of the cultural difference of the users. These phases highlighted the process by which gay language shifted from being a secret code to becoming accepted as part of mainstream culture. The researchers also used a cycle to show that gay language was still developing and utilized the first four colors of the rainbow which are red, orange, yellow and green, to represent the LGBTQ+ community and the colorful meanings and terms, gay language can offer. The term ACCLA came from the gay language which meant gay. This word served as a term of endearment between the researchers which made it not only relevant to the study but also holds sentimental value to the researchers and served as evidence of the development of gay vernacular.
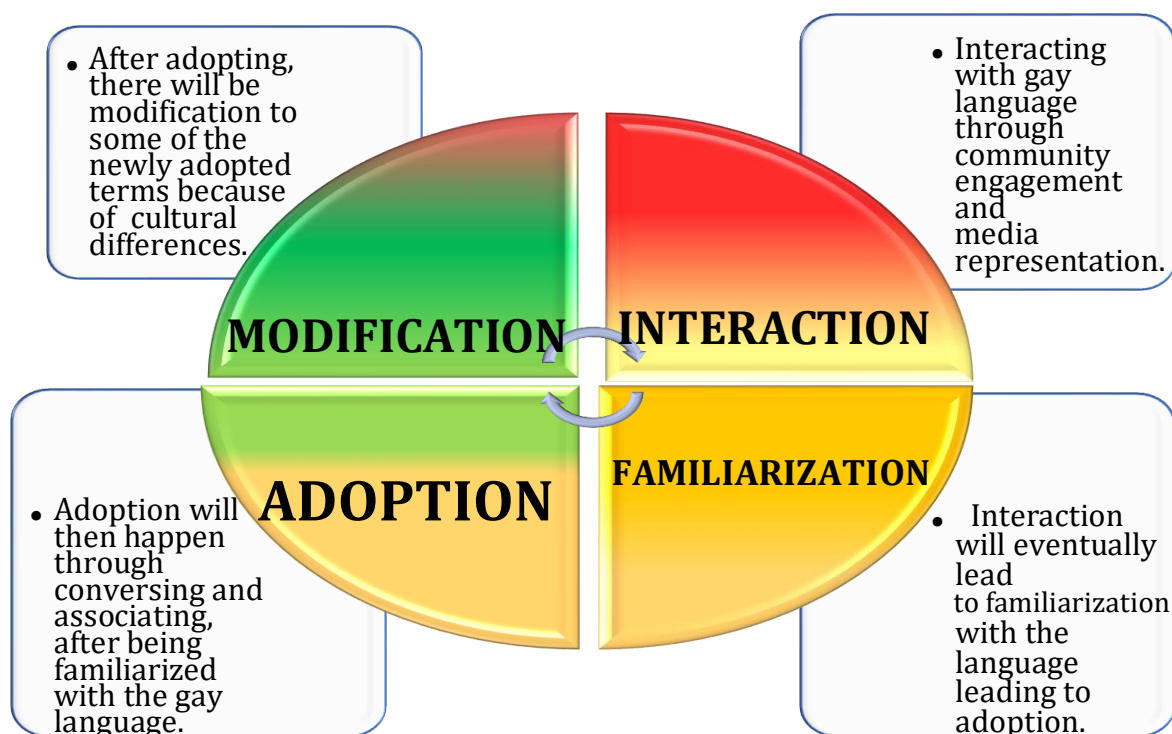


*Figure 1. ACCLA Framework: Language Community-Based Framework*

## Conclusion

The integration of gay vernacular into mainstream language highlighted its evolving role in shaping identity, culture, and communication. As this language transitioned from being a "secret code" of the LGBTQ+ community to a widely recognized form of expression, it reflected societal shifts toward inclusivity and acceptance. However, despite these positive developments, challenges remain.

Misunderstandings often arose, not just between LGBTQ+ and non-LGBTQ+ individuals, but even within the community itself. The nature of gay vernacular, with its fluid meanings and rapid evolution, complicated its interpretation, especially when used outside its original context. The mainstreaming of gay vernacular has also sparked issues of cultural appropriation and the dilution of meaning. For LGBTQ+ individuals, this language served as a powerful tool for self- expression, solidarity, and cultural preservation. When adopted by mainstream society without an understanding of its origins and significance, the language risked losing its authenticity, potentially reducing it to a mere trend or form of entertainment. Although gay language became more normalized, it was important to recognize that even universally spoken languages like English can create communication barriers. Gay vernacular, which emerged from the need for a safe and coded form of communication, carries cultural and historical significance that should have been respected. Misinterpretations can often have been avoided by fostering an open mind and understanding the deeper meanings and contexts behind these expressions.

Ultimately, the acceptance and integration of gay vernacular into mainstream society offered an opportunity for greater inclusivity. However, it also demanded a conscious effort to preserve its cultural essence, ensuring it continued to serve as a symbol of identity and empowerment for the LGBTQ+ community. This underscored the need for education, sensitivity, and mutual respect in navigating the evolving dynamics of language and culture.

## Limitations

This research ultimately employed only focus group discussion instead of the initially planned with individual interviews, which represented a notable limitation. While focus group discussions offered rich collective insights, they inherently differed from interviews in their ability to explore individual perspectives in depth. Additionally, the researchers intended to interview representatives from a well-known organization within the gay community to gain insights and perspectives. Unfortunately, this objective was not fulfilled, as the founder of the organization declined to participate for personal reasons.

However, to address this potential limitation, the researchers implemented several strategies to minimize gaps in the data. Efforts were made to create a supportive and inclusive environment during the discussions, ensuring participants felt comfortable and respected. Additionally, the moderators encouraged equal participation by inviting quiet members to contribute while managing dominant voices to prevent any single perspective from overshadowing others. These measures were designed to maximize the richness and diversity of the insights gathered.

## Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, several key recommendations were made to address the issues identified and to further understand the development of gay language. These suggestions aimed to provide actionable insights for practitioners, policymakers, and researchers seeking to implement improvements or advance the understanding of the society and the different communities that live within it. The recommendations took into account the limitations of the current research and offered pathways for future exploration, ensuring that the conclusions were both practical and adaptable to varying contexts. To strengthen the impact of the research, the following recommendations were proposed:

### *Geographic Variations*

Exploring regional variations in gay language was suggested to reveal the influence of geographic location and cultural context on language use. These could have involved comparing data from different cities, regions, or

even countries to provide broader understanding of nuances in language development.

### Generational Differences

A comparative study examining generational differences in the use and understanding of gay language was recommended to shed light on how language use changes across age cohorts. Such an approach would have provided insights into how younger generations incorporated or adopted existing linguistic forms while maintaining connections to cultural heritage.

### Informal Setting

Understanding the perspectives of individuals in informal setting was identified as a valuable opportunity to explore how diverse experiences and environments influenced the use of gay language. This approach could have enriched the research by gathering data that reflected authentic, everyday interactions outside structured environments.

By examining variations across regions, generations, and informal settings, the research highlighted the potential for uncovering fascinating insights into how gay language evolves and adapts. For instance, regional studies were suggested to investigate how geographic and cultural factors shaped the language use, while generational differences offered a lens into the ongoing reinterpretation of linguistic expressions. Additionally, informal settings provided a layer of context for understanding social dynamics and personal experiences in casual interactions. Collectively, these recommendations aimed to build a fuller and richer understanding of gay language.

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