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**NARRATING QUEER IDENTITIES IN CHILDREN-ORIENTED
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INTRODUCTION

With the ongoing process of embracing the diversity and normalizing all forms of social identities, be that gender, racial or sexual ones, it is only natural and fitting that this trend would be reflected in the media. Lifting of the restrictions posed on the cinema and ever increasing visibility for the LGBT community has led to the emergence of organizations like GLAAD, vouching for the accurate queer representation; still, the children-oriented media was lacking behind, due to a number of malignant misconceptions and cultural ambivalence, with some of them being that portrayals of queer gender or sexual identities can be detrimental to the children's morality, or that queer sexual identities can be represented exclusively through the sexual context, which is not appropriate for children to see on screen. Fortunately, modern-era media acknowledges the importance of including LGBT characters and LGBT topics into the content meant for younger generations, broadening the scope of queer representation, which in its turn, creates more research opportunities for the field of language, gender and sexuality, seeing as the scholars recognize a close interrelatedness between these social categories.

Of incredible use for the studies that look into the interrelationships between language and social categories is also queer theory, which deals with, among other things, the notion of heteronormativity, and the ways in which it is constructed and perseveres in the society. What emerged at the intersection of queer theory and linguistic anthropology was a field of queer linguistics, which views social identity as actively constructed in and reflected through linguistic practices.

Linguistic mechanisms of narrating gender and sexual identities were extensively studied at different levels of the structure of language, in the everyday conversation, in drag queen performances, and in the media. However, a comprehensive analysis of the ways the queer identity can be narrated in the scripted dialogues in the children-oriented animated TV shows was left out of the attention of linguists.

The **topicality** of the research is determined by its relevance to the requirements of modern linguistics, focused on studying the communicative-functional aspect of the language, by the overall increased tolerance to and acceptance of the queer community and the need for a detailed analysis of how the positive queer representation can be achieved under the restrictive condition, which is the fact that the children are the main target audience of the media content.

The **objective** of the research is to identify and analyze the ways queer identities are narrated in the discourse of children-oriented animated TV shows.

To achieve this goal the following tasks require solving:

- outlining the theoretical basis for the study of language, gender and sexuality, as well as the developments of queer theory;
- identifying the issues in the field of language, gender and sexuality and in the queer representation in the media and in the children-oriented content in particular;
- characterizing the means of narrating queer identities in the chosen discourse;
- studying the attitudinal reaction of other characters towards the queer characters;
- analyzing the attitudinal reaction of the queer characters towards themselves.

The **object** of the study is the linguistic means of narrating queer identities in the discourse of children-oriented animated TV shows. The **subject** of research is attitudinal peculiarities of the utterances in the English language.

The descriptive-analytical **method** was used in this research to identify and describe the attitudinal reactions towards the queer characters. By utilizing the continuous sampling method the material necessary for research was identified. The method of generalization made it possible to systematize the linguistic means of narrating queer identities and analyze their attitudinal peculiarities. Last but not least, to determine the number of utterances and to determine their correlation the method of quantitative

calculations was used.

The **material** of the research was compiled from the children-oriented animated TV shows with queer characters, namely, ‘She-Ra and the Princesses of Power’ and ‘The Owl House’. The corpus of 305 utterances from 22 characters (both queer and straight, talking about the queer) was compiled from the source information, and analyzed in accordance with the defined criteria.

Structurally, the thesis consists of an introduction, two sections, conclusions, a list of references, and a list of sources of illustrative material. The **introduction** explains the choice of the subject of the research, its relevance, formulates the main purpose, subject, material and methods of analysis. The **first chapter** provides various perspectives on the study of language, gender and sexuality, outlines the issues and debates within the field, analyses the contribution of the queer theory and the notion of queer linguistics and examines the phenomenon of queer representation in media in general and defines the specificity of including queer characters and queer topics in the children-oriented context in particular. The **second chapter** is devoted to defining the ways characters narrate their queer sexual and gender identities in the TV show *She-Ra and the Princesses of Power*. The **third chapter** explores the way queer sexual identities are narrated in the TV show *The Owl House*. The **conclusions** summarize the main results and observations. List of references consists of 156 items, list of sources of illustrative material – of 71 items.

CHAPTER 1. QUEER IN LANGUAGE AND IN MEDIA

1.1. Language, gender and sexuality

Over the recent decades, scholars have conducted an exceptional number of studies on the correlations between language, gender, and sexuality. Being a topic of interest for sociocultural linguistics, these relationships have been looked at through the lenses of conversation analysis, critical discourse analysis, discursive psychology, linguistic anthropology, sociophonetics, and variationist sociolinguistics [3, 7, 11, 26, 33, 48, 50, 62, 71, 91, 101, 106, 134, 150, 155, etc.].

In the beginning of 20th century, when the “difference feminism” was particularly influential, researchers in the field of descriptive linguistics were studying non-European languages, paying particular attention to the binary differences in lexicons of men and women, as well as to the differences in their patterns of speaking. Studies by researchers like Chamberlain [35] and Jespersen [83] put forward a number of colonialist explanations for differences in speech of the male and female speakers of “primitive” languages. It was then when the notion of gender was first assumed as being relevant to linguistic analysis.

However, language and gender would not be seen as a self-sufficient field of study until second-wave feminism in the 1970s and 1980s. In 1975 Robin Lakoff published her study *Language and Woman's Place* [89], originally included in a 1973 issue of *Language in Society*, in which she ascribed the differences between the way men and women speak to the patriarchal system present in the English-speaking society. According to Lakoff, “women’s speech” is a demonstration of the subordinate – in regard to men – status bestowed upon women by this system. In her analysis of introspective data, much of which was sourced from popular US media, “women’s speech”, with hedges, tag questions, and rising intonation on declaratives being among its typical traits, exhibits incertitude, and consequently, powerlessness. The dominant position of men therefore imposes a linguistic double bind onto women: if

women adhere to the norms of women's speech, they "are systematically denied access to power" [89, p.7], but if they utilize the features that are traditionally considered attributive of men's language, they are marginalized as unfeminine, non-conforming, and socially inappropriate.

The research that came after shifted the attention to the common micro-discourse practices of women and men and observed them as instances of hierarchical power relations, with such phenomena as turn-taking, topic uptake, and interruptions being analyzed.

Another approach to language and gender emerged 15 years later, lead by a student of Lakoff, Deborah Tannen, and her work titled *You Just Don't Understand: Men and Women in Conversation* [146]. Taking inspiration from Gumperz's [66] research on interethnic communication, Tannen put forward the idea that misunderstandings between women and men are rooted in the differences in socializing boys and girls into their respective gendered subcultures, with the former being oriented towards competition and the latter towards cooperation. This so-called "two-cultures" approach to language and gender viewed the source of linguistic gender differentiation not in the patriarchal nature of society, as Lakoff suggested, but rather in the language aspect of social upbringing that takes place in same-sex peer groups.

So, while Lakoff saw the differences in male and female speech as rooted in the unevenness of power distribution between men and women, defining women as subordinate to men, Tannen viewed the differences between the language of men and women as equal, thus rendering her theory devoid of the structural power. Together, these two models – which would be later called the "dominance" and "difference" models, respectively – became the base for all the further research on language and gender. Nevertheless, it is evident that both models propose a strictly binary view of men and women, putting them into different social and symbolic spheres [20].

Among the further empirical research in the field of language and gender, which were conducted complying with the ideas of either Lakoff or Tannen, and paying close attention to gender distinctions in linguistic practice, one would have to mention such landmark texts as those of West and Zimmerman [153], McConnell-Ginet, Borker, and Furman [112], and Coates and Cameron [39]. Another valuable contribution to the methodology of analyzing power and solidarity in interaction as manifested in the language in the form of interruptions, indirectness, and topic raising came from later, and thus more academic publications by Tannen [147]. Nevertheless, Cameron [31] argues that the common features of the research accumulated during this period induced future scholars to adopt new approaches to study language and gender. Those common features include:

- 1) viewing women and men as constituting binary opposition, but each of them being an internally homogenous group;
- 2) attributing linguistic differences to early socialization in the vast majority of cases;
- 3) conducting research (and subsequently making universal claims about language and gender) on the linguistic material obtained from predominantly white, heterosexual, cisgender, middle-class English speakers;
- 4) lack of agentive accounts of language as a resource for expressions of identity and power as a result of prevalent disregard for the symbolic dimension behind the use of particular linguistic features [58, 60].

Later, in the middle of the 1990s, the studies in the aforementioned field took a new turn, following what is often referenced as the “discursive turn” in social theory. Previously viewed as predetermined by biological sex, the phenomenon of gender was now seen as produced in discourse. This stance was theorized in poststructuralist and multicultural feminism, encouraging a new wave of interdisciplinary research of language and gender, drawing data and analytical frameworks from fields such as anthropology, psychology, sociology, and women’s studies. Due to such close

analysis of gender “in action”, it became evident that it was inextricably linked to other social categories, with social class, ethnicity, age, and sexuality being among those [75].

The theoretical framework built around the notion of intersectionality of social identities [99] stood at the origins of several research traditions that are still being elaborated on in the new millennium, especially with regard to the founding of the International Gender and Language Association (IGALA), which contributed to the process of broadening the scope of research and crossing Western-oriented geopolitical, epistemological, and methodological boundaries in order to investigate gender and sexual identities beyond the United States from a more “undisciplined” set of vantage points [119, 121].

Unlike language and gender, language and sexuality has its roots not in the field of sociolinguistics, but in the medical venues, with early studies on queer language containing explicit warnings that the content is intended solely for professionals working in the medical field. Confusing nowadays, this censure was perfectly in line with its era of publication, seeing as homosexuality was considered a medical condition up until 1973, when it was removed from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) [82] by the American Psychiatric Association (an initiative later followed by the American Psychiatric Association, and the National Association of Social Workers, as well as the World Health Organization) in recognition of the scientific evidence. This also explains why the gay language was majorly theorized as pathologic and gay speakers were stigmatized as ‘odd’, ‘queer’, and ‘deviant’, as opposed to ‘normal’ and ‘conforming’ straight speakers [27]. This early period of language and sexuality is characterized by lexicon of gay men being its main subject of research, with scholars compiling slang vocabularies and cataloguing the argot of gay communities, though largely not having a theoretical framework to work with.

It was the 1950s and 1960s when the academic community first considered the idea that there might be expediency of social nature to some of the lexical units, which can be found in the gay slang. The speculation went as follows: the gay speakers came up with the new positively or neutrally connotated terms to refer to themselves as a countermeasure to the pejorative terminology used at that time; a prime example is the word “homosexual” (with medical and pathologizing connotation) being eventually superseded by the word “gay” (appeared in the beginning of the 1950s) as a term for the men who are sexually attracted to men.

Not only that, but the scholars also assumed that in-group terms served to create an isolated and covert subculture away from the greater society; their successors, on the other hand, stood by the belief that gay slang promoted in-group solidarity, and was a kind of survival strategy in response to the greater society's hostility toward individuals who identified as gay and lesbians [27]. The early 1980s brought about a new perspective on a shared lexical code – it was now considered a linguistically manifested form a social protest: the scholars argued that gay and lesbian speakers were reclaiming once pejorative terms, charging them with positive connotation, using, for instance, the word “queen” to refer to an effeminate man. Nonetheless, as Anna Livia and Kira Hall have righteously mentioned in their volume *Queerly Phrased* [103], the field of language and sexuality was still grossly understudied as compared to the volumes of research conducted on language and gender.

Despite such a disparity, the two were still seen as closely interconnected, so the “discursive turn” that happened in critical theory and social sciences also affected the studies of language and sexuality, albeit somewhat differently. Instead of bringing a new analytical paradigm, as it did for the language and gender, the “discursive turn” brought the language and sexuality into the paradigm of linguistics. Considering the marginal status of the individuals who constituted the LGBT community, the antecedent sociolinguistic research, primarily preoccupied with formulating broad-scale over-simplified assumptions on the correlations between language, gender and

sexuality, would be more interested in speech patterns of heterosexual speakers, seeing as it was a much larger demographic group, tossing the queer speakers to the footnotes – or altogether out – of the academic literature. The discursive turn, together with a more global movement of post-structural feminism, encouraged the scholars to turn away from large-scale non-inclusive generalizations and instead to look into how the gender and sexual identities manifest themselves in the social contexts.

A huge contribution to the prevailing of this perspective over the two-cultures model – particularly in the field of language, gender, and sexuality – was made by Judith Butler by introducing the notion of gender performativity in her study titled *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* [24]. The scholar challenged the very existence of prediscursive gender and sexual identities (be that straight, gay, male, female, or any in between), arguing that discourse interactions do not merely represent those identities; rather, they emerge and are evinced in the discourse, in interaction with other social categories. This perspective also implies that the understanding of heterosexuality as normative and queerness as non-normative is erroneous, since straightness is also constructed and maintained through performances of masculinity and femininity that serve to both construct and challenge social norms dictating which gender and sexual identities are appropriate and legitimate [27].

Following Butler's performativity theory, a number of scholars, previously more interested in sociolinguistics and cultural anthropology (as seen in the early compilations by Leap [96], Livia and Hall [103], Leap and Boellstorff [95]), were now engaged in the linguistic anthropology, and researching queer speakers in their pursuit of the understanding how the sexual identity, being interconnected with gender identity is generated, manifested, and disputed in particular social contexts. Their studies greatly contributed to the expansion of the linguistic anthropological canon, with the language practices of queer – in terms of sexuality and gender –

speakers in various cultures being their primary subject of research. The scholars have examined the communities of ‘yan daudu in Nigeria [62], hijras and kotis in India [71, 72], and fakaleiti in Tonga [11, 12], putting Butler’s mostly theoretical framework to test and reinforcing it with empirical data.

Furthermore, Leap’s study of “gay men’s English” [97] was one of the factors instigating the emergence of queer linguistics, a field committed to, among other things, the shifting indexical processes that constitute heteronormativity as well as its exclusions [73]. Later studies that were conducted in line with this approach include Barrett’s monograph on diverse US gay male subcultures, such as drag queens, radical faeries, and bears, in which the scholar illustrates how the speakers can, through the use of language, either conform to or break regulatory frames that “render members of these subcultures culturally unintelligible” [7]). Complying with the intersectionality model, Cashman [33] explains how the ethnicity, sexuality, and bilingualism construct the identities of queer Latinxs in the southwestern United States, noting that, when manifesting their ethnic and sexual identities, these speakers do not adhere to the common concept of intergenerational language shift, since its prevalent model in the field of sociolinguistics is still based off of a heterosexual family. Levon’s [100] ethnography of lesbian and gay activists in Israel is also worth mentioning, seeing as he looks into the diverse ways mainstream and radical LGBT activists employ the linguistic features of Hebrew language that are ideologically associated with either femininity or masculinity (mean pitch, creaky voice, and certain prosodic characteristics, elements of syntax and morphology) to constitute and perform a plurality of transient sexual subjectivities within the contexts of their nationality, gender identity, and religious system.

Ethnographies like these amply illustrate the multifaceted nature of the process of composing queer gender and sexual identities through and with the help of language against the backdrop of the “normativity” that disenfranchises these very identities [42, 69].

One of the issues in the field that arose with the new millennium, and started a new dispute in the academic community, was the role of identity for the language and sexuality being questioned by scholars like Don Kulick. He criticized the excessive concentration on the notion of identity [85], saying that by affiliating “gay and lesbian language” exclusively with those who identify as gay and lesbian, the researchers tend to overlook the instances of the ideologically “queer” linguistic units being used by other speakers and thus fail to account for the scope and diversity of the ways language is applied to express eroticism and desire.

So, together with Deborah Cameron [29], he suggested a new perspective, a so-called “language and desire” approach, seeing as, unlike identity, desire is a “transitive and relational phenomenon that considers the relationship between a subject and object (i.e. the subject desires the object)” [29], enabling the study of the reciprocity of the speech acts.

On the other hand, those who vouched for the significance of the identity for the language and sexuality emphasized that altogether expelling the notion of identity from the research on the field might jeopardize the findings and the results, as the social context of the discourse – specifically, social positioning of marginalized individuals – would be at risk of being missed out. Moreover, it has been argued by a number of scholars that the language and desire approach raises several theoretical and methodological concerns. The main problem, as Mary Bucholtz and Kira Hall [17] saw it, is that the psychoanalytic theories underpinning Cameron and Kulick’s framework are severely lacking in terms of providing methodological apparatus; arguing that in order to research the ways desire is conducted through language, it would “require sociolinguists, linguistic anthropologists, and discourse analysts to reinvent themselves as field psychoanalysts, ascribing repressed desires to those they study” [17, p.480]. However, the scholars do not try to cancel the notion of desire altogether; rather, they believe that “desire is always mediated in some way by identity; that is, longing is always articulated through and against standpoints of

belonging” [17, p.507]. This “desire vs. identity” polemic would be later described by Coupland as “based on false premises” [40, p.135], or, in other words, these notions are not mutually exclusive, so if the focus of the study lies in the desire, it is not requisite to renounce the identity altogether, and vice versa.

Another contribution of the 2000s to the sociolinguistic studies was the state of art technology that provided the necessary tools for sociophonetics to dive into the peculiarities of phonetic variation of queer speakers. Of particular interest was the phenomenon of “gay sounding voice,” so there were attempts to define the set of specific acoustic and auditory features that contributed to the perception of a voice as that of a queer speaker. Striving to give scientific commentary on the popular stereotypes like the “gay lisp” and the high-pitched gay voice , the scholars looked into the fundamental frequency (pitch) and the pronunciation of the /s/ sound by queer speakers [27]. The stereotype that the individuals who identify as gay speak in a higher-pitched voice than the heterosexual speakers could not be proven empirically, seeing as the findings of the studies on the pitch of voice among gay and lesbian speakers were inconsistent and discordant, with numerous recorded instances of the voices of queer and straight speakers having the same pitch.

More recent research was able to provide a probable explanation as to why there is such inconsistency in the fundamental frequency: seeing as the queer speakers alternate between different pitch patterns to communicate their identity in different social contexts. The phenomenon known as code-switching has been observed among lesbian speakers, who would manifest their sexual identity in some environments, but not in others (for example, by Morrish and Saunton [123] and Levon [101]), and gay speakers, as explained by Podesva et al. [132] in the case with a gay lawyer, who modulates his speech to satisfy both the need to sound recognizably gay and the need to sound recognizably educated, seeing as “gay speech” can sometimes be associated with frivolousness and poor education. Queer speakers may also use code-switching as a means of social commentary or entertainment, for example, African American

drag queens would use the “Standard” English phonology typically associated with “white woman style” in their performance to challenge society's stereotypical beliefs about gender and race; not only that, but they would also use their speech to create further contradiction, for example, by incorporating obscenities into otherwise proper language, to intentionally undermine cultural and linguistic norms firmly entrenched in the society [4].

On the other hand, the results of the studies on the speech production and perception provided empirical evidence of the correlation between pronunciation of the /s/ sound and gender and sexual identities. Calder [27] notes that the hyper-articulated /s/, which results in a higher acoustic frequency, was substantially proven (by Van Borsel et al. [151], McKinstry [115], Munson et al. [127], and Mack and Munson [106], to name a few) to be more common among women, gay men, and queer women as opposed to men, straight men and straight women respectively.

Seeing as the field of sociophonetics has a lot to offer to the language, gender and sexuality, the scholars are now looking for new ways to incorporate its methodological framework to further study phonetic features in particular linguistic and semiotic contexts, and how they contribute to the establishment of different identities in the social context.

The increased attention to transgender speakers can also be seen as one of the recent trends in the field of language and gender. With the previous research being predominantly focused on the cisgender queer speakers, the scholars have started to look into the transgender coming out narratives, the use of pronouns, and phonetic features in the construction of transgender identity [25]. Worth mentioning here is Lal Zimman's longitudinal ethnographic study of transgender men in San Francisco [156], where he discusses the significance of phonetic variation for the trans-masculinity and how the testosterone therapy impacts the voices of trans men.

Studies like this one help to ideologically dissociate the concepts of femininity and masculinity from the stereotypical images of male and female bodies, and at the same time to highlight the fact that these concepts are constructed and sustained by the society. The concept of practices existing separately from bodies brought about the problem of binaries in language, gender and sexuality. The researchers like Zimman, Davis, and Raclaw [42] point out the ubiquity of binary oppositions (male vs. female, gay vs. straight, cis vs. trans) in the field's research, even in the studies that supposedly do not adhere to the binary ideology.

The latest research of the non-binary people has also made its contribution to the critical rethinking of the binary system, seeing as these individuals reject the mutually exclusive nature of gender, perceiving it as a spectrum, rather than a bipartition. Calder and Steele [26] suggest that looking into the non-binary speakers who identify as both masculine and feminine or neither masculine nor feminine offers a new standpoint, the one that sees the concepts of masculinity and femininity as independent continua. The scholars also note that this framework could also spur new opportunities for the researchers to examine the various ways in which linguistic patterns shape and reflect these complex and multifaceted dimensions of the concepts of gender and sexuality.

1.1.1. The understanding of normativity and deviance in the field of language and gender

Within the field of language and gender there always has been a specific understanding of what can be considered normative gender identity and what falls under the category of non-normative gender identity. It is worth mentioning that with each pivotal shift of the language-gender paradigm (three of which were briefly outlined above) the understanding changed as well.

These shifts can be easily detected by studying the theories that the researchers came up with referencing the speech patterns of somebody who does not adhere to the norms of how men and women are expected to speak, or, in other words, “the linguistic deviant”. After browsing through the relevant literature it becomes evident that with each new theory in the field comes a new form of linguistic deviancy. As early as in the 1900s (e.g. Jespersen [83]) a female was believed to be a linguistic deviant, since the women’s speaking patterns were distinctly different from the language used by men, which was considered normative as of that time of research. If the forms of the language used by women were considered original or older, they were marked as archaic or conservative as opposed to the more innovative and advanced forms used by men. If, on the other hand, female speech patterns were found to be derived or newer, they were registered as psychologically deviant or otherwise abnormal [70]. Ultimately, the men’s language was considered *the* language and women's speech became an oddity of sorts.

This perspective was further upheld by the research into the history of women's and men's languages, which in its overwhelming majority saw former as a derivational form of the latter. For instance, Gatschet [61, pp. 79-81], while studying an “ancient female dialect” in Hitchiti, still spoken by women and elders in the community, claimed it to be “uncommon”, as opposed to a newer, more appropriate “male language”, despite acknowledging the fact that women's variety was once spoken by both genders, and is therefore older and apparently basic form of language. In a similar fashion, in his research of Yana, Edward Sapir [141] defines female derivation forms as merely reductive forms of male ones. With male forms fundamental in some cases and female forms in others, in his conclusion he nevertheless states that “the reduced female forms constitute a conventionalized symbolism of the less considered or ceremonious status of women in the community. Men, in dealing with men, speak fully and deliberately; where women are concerned, one prefers a clipped style of utterance” [141, p. 212].

In the later research, which was conducted in line with the dominance model of language and gender, the focus has shifted on the issues of trivialization of women's speech patterns in male-dominant societies. What is essential to notice here is the fact that now the women were not the only ones to be in some way excluded from institutionalized male power. As Robin Lakoff [89] discussed in her research, an effeminate homosexual, an anticapitalist hippie, and an asocial college professor would have a lot in common with women, seeing as they also constitute marginalized groups. Following the agenda of popular at that time radical feminist movement, which considered women as a separate caste [45] or a fourth world [22], Lakoff also puts them into the power-deprived category of “female class”, the language patterns of which (“women's language”) are deemed “uninvolved” or “out of power”. She makes it clear, however, that the crucial factor “is less purely gender than power in the real world” [89, p. 57]. Therefore hippies, who “are separated from the activities of the real world just as women are” [89, p. 13], academic men, whose work “doesn't really count in the real world” [89, p. 14], and homosexuals, who “reject the American masculine image” [89, p. 10] can also be observed using “women's language”. The notion of linguistic deviant is subsequently broadened to encompass the aforementioned speakers, who together with women are excluded from institutionalized male power.

However, in the further discussions – and, in particular, critique – of her research the other users of “women's language” seem to be grossly disregarded; for instance, trying to refute her theory, Dubois and Crouch [44] studied the use of tag questions by men in the discourse of academic conference, overlooking the fact that Lakoff labeled male academics as linguistically divergent speakers.

The persistence of Lakoff's critics (Crosby and Nyquist [41]; O'Barr and Atkins [131], to name a couple) to differentiate female register from the female speaker is one of the factors that subsequently contributed to the emergence of queer linguistics as a branch of linguistics that, among other things, occupies itself with the task of

challenging the prevalent assumption that the phenomenon of gendered speech patterns is resulting from the sex of the speaker.

A change of language-gender paradigm occurred during the following 1980s, with a new framework for analyzing the use of language by men and women, put forward by Daniel Maltz and Ruth Borker [107]. Known as a two-cultures or difference model of language and gender, this approach assumes that the differences in speech patterns result from the way boys and girls are socialized into their respective gender subcultures, being oriented either towards competition or cooperation. Previously singular norm of studies becomes dual in this model, with male and female speakers both placed into the category of normativity, though oftentimes found at the polar sides of it.

In their study Maltz and Borker mention “tomboys”, as well as “lesbians and gay men” as one of “a number of specific problems that appear to be highly promising for future research” [107, p. 94]. The logic behind this statement is fairly clear: with the whole framework based on the assumption that boys and girls are socialized into their gender subcultures – which come with their specific norms of interactions – in their single-sex playgroups, those children who defy this socialization, becoming exceptions to a two-cultures rule, are referred to as “potential research problems” by Maltz and Borker [107].

Another work has to be mentioned here, *The Two Sexes: Growing Up Apart, Coming Together* by Eleanor Maccoby [105], a comprehensive review of the previous research that has been done in the field of language and gender by the scholars abiding by the two-cultures model. Maccoby’s primary interest lies within what she calls gender’s “explanatory web”, and the synergy of biological, social, and cognitive forces involved in the generation of deviant behavioral patterns. While most of the scholars working with the difference model were determined to study the existing differences between “what boys do” and “what girls do”, providing linguistic

evidence to uphold their claims (for example, that the interactions in boys groups are more “hierarchical”, as opposed to the interactions in girls groups, which are seen as more “collaborative”), Maccoby was more interested in the origins of such differences. Making gender conformity – and not gender dissension – in same-sex childhood playgroups the main object of her research, she saw tomboys and sissies not as “potential research problems”, but rather as exceptions that prove the more normative rule. Her explanation as to why these divergent gender identities exist in the first place is directly linked to her claim that the forces binding the boys playgroups together exhibit “greater strength, as opposed to those binding girls together” [105, p. 41], thus making acceptance and recognition from the other members much more important for the boys groups, encouraging the status-oriented discursive behavior that has been distinguished by scholars in the field of linguistics.

Maccoby claimed that girls groups are more forgiving and less gender-exclusionary, a statement exemplified by the fact that in a girls group tomboy behavior is not condemned the way sissy behavior in a boys group is: “Clearly, an essential element in becoming masculine is becoming not-feminine, while girls can be feminine without having to prove that they are not masculine” [105, p. 52]. This also illustrates how Maccoby's understanding of a tomboy differs from Lakoff's [89]; while the former sees a “little girl [who] talks rough like a boy” as exhibiting strength in the female socialization, the latter claims that tomboys are “ostracized, scolded, or made fun of” by parents and friends in an attempt to “keep her in line, in her place” [89, p. 5] by society.

The one thing that Maccoby failed to take into account when theorizing upon the acceptance of gender deviance in the same-sex peer groups is the factor of age. As can be observed in Penelope Eckert's research on adolescent girls' management of the “heterosexual marketplace” [47], for a girl to stick to her tomboy behavior after childhood and into her teen years would entail a considerable detrimental effect on her socialization.

Another perspective, allowed largely by the scarcity of ethnographic – let alone linguistic – research on so-called “deviant” gender identities in either childhood or adolescence, is voiced in Barrie Thorne’s [149] study of gender in American elementary schools: in her research, she holds up the linguistic behavior of tomboys and sissies as part of her critique of the very two-cultures approach adopted by scholars like Maccoby. Thorne believes that the variation that can be observed within genders goes in its nature beyond the differences found between boys and girls when studied as separate groups. In her opinion, a tomboy is just one aspect of a “complicated continuum of crossing” [149, p. 112], which oftentimes gets obscured in the research that is conducted on the assumption of gender as a difference.

Incorporating the biological factor into her theory of gendered behavior makes Maccoby’s claims about the ways gender operates particularly tenable and furthermore allows her to speak of its universality and cross-cultural applicability. She also suggests that the phenomenon of early gender deviancy might have an additional evolutionary purpose, citing the study of boys and girls in southern China by Arthur Wolf [154]. The anthropologist discovered that the children, who lived together in the same household for several years because of the engagement arranged by their parents, grow up to lack sexual interest in each other, backed up by the recorded exceptionally low rates of fertility in the following marriage. Maccoby uses her biological-social theory to explain why same-sex segregation might be occurring: “Children's spontaneous avoidance of cross-sex others who are not kin serves the biological function of keeping these others within the pool of potential mates” [149, p. 94].

Such a claim, however, brings forward the correlation between gender identity and sexual orientation. As Wolf’s theory suggests, tomboys and sissies, who spent most of their childhood surrounded by the opposite sex instead of their own, would not experience heterosexual attraction in their adulthood, therefore labeled as lesbians and gay men respectively. Maltz and Borker's [107] research also supports the

existence of interrelation between early deviant gender identities and the sexual orientation of adults, further adding up to the idea of intersectionality of the social categories of gender and sexuality in the field of language and gender.

With all the attention directed towards gays and lesbians in the research of that time, the two-cultures model would not consider them as the subjects of the study, but rather toss them aside as “exceptions” to the otherwise incontestable dichotomous theory of gendered behavior. This kind of attitude can be clearly seen in Tannen’s later work titled *You Just Don’t Understand* [146], where she uses the case of lesbians to further illustrate her claim that men tend to be initiators and women tend to act as respondents. She mentions that “among lesbians, they found, often neither feels comfortable taking the role of initiator, because neither wants to be perceived as making demands” [146, pp. 147-148], therefore using them as a test-case for her theory, as “an archetypal female-female example of the behaviors she identifies for women speakers more generally” [70]. Looking at this hesitant behavior among lesbian couples as one of the gendered features of interaction, Tannen makes more general claims on women's indisposition to self-assertive behavior. On several occasions, she also compares lesbians and gay men, however, not as a part of the discussion of sexual identity, but merely as paradigmatic illustrative material to exemplify the differences between women and men.

Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning that while not raising the issue of sexual identity in her research, Tannen also does not treat the interactions between lesbians and gay men as something exceptional or deviant; rather, she considers them to be completely in line with the interactive behaviors of heterosexual women and men. Therefore, it is not at all surprising that her views would be considered progressive for her time, especially taking into account that the former generations of researchers were pretty consistent in their portrayal of sexual minorities as linguistically deviant.

One might even say that Tannen's study marks a transitional point in how the sexual identity is treated by the scholars, which brought the identities previously regarded as deviant or non-normative into the spotlight of academic research. Hall (2003) insists that there were three theoretical advances in the field of language and gender that enabled this shift in the subject of studies to follow. The first one is the notion of *communities of practice* [46] imported into the arsenal of concepts used by language and gender. The second one is a further elaboration of ideological approaches to the study of language and gender, with prominent contributors being Bucholtz and Hall [16]; Zimman and Hall [155]; Bucholtz, Liang, and Sutton [18]; and Gal [59]. And finally, the third one is the emergence of *queer linguistics* (Livia and Hall [103]), a field that initiated – albeit through the lens of critique – the discussion of the philosophical notion of *performativity*.

Naturally, each of these advances did not happen exclusively in and for the field of language and gender; they were a part of larger theoretical moves that took place in the academic community at that time. Among many factors of post-modernism that set these moves in motion, multicultural feminism was the one that contributed the most, encouraging the diversification of the theoretical framework canon. In the field of linguistics, this diversification took form of the studies of more localized organizations of language, gender, and sexuality and the adoption of a brand new paradigm that reframed the normative as ideologically produced within specific practice-based communities [70], which replaced the outdated two-norm approach of the antecedent research. The norms of men's and women's speech, previously constrained and influenced by dominant ideologies in the field of language and gender, are henceforth regarded as potentially infinite in local articulation, especially seeing as gendered ideologies manifest themselves only in interaction with localized comprehension of the categories of race, class, sexuality, and age.

Developed within the theoretical framework in queer linguistics – and in sociolinguistics in general, – the concept of gender performativity is seen by Anna

Livia and Kira Hall in their introduction to *Queerly Phrased* [102] as a tool to break the circular research paradigm that came with the social constructionism. Working within the theoretical cage of the assumption that the social maps onto the biological (a “coat-rack model” of sex and gender, heavily criticized by Nicholson [130]), the scholars marked the subjects of their research with “male” and “female” tags, and then identified the conversational strategies that were different for these two groups [114], thus leaving sexual identity largely unspoken about, since it cannot be identified from the biological features of the subjects.

The performativity model of gender, as formulated by Judith Butler [24] through a Derridean reworking of J. L. Austin’s [1] notion of the “performative utterance” however, refute the existence of prediscursive gender identity, taking into consideration the fact that even the way we comprehend biological sex is established on the basis of the cultural understandings of social gender. Within such ideology, the speech act becomes more valuable as research data because now the scholars look into how the speakers operate the notions of feminine and masculine language, while continuously producing their own gendered identities through their speech.

However innovative, Butler's theory did not come without the limits for ethnographic sociolinguistic research, such as the restricted agency of the subject and undertheorization of the local in favor of the universal. Linguistic anthropologists such as Dell Hymes [79], Charles Briggs, and Richard Bauman [8] circumvent these limitations by focusing not only on the “conventional procedures” that make a performative utterance felicitous (like Butler [24] does), but also on the emergent properties of specific speech acts, leading the scholarly community away from the analysis of ritual as a mere reiteration.

In a similar fashion, Rusty Barrett’s [5] linguistic research on the “polyphonous identity” on the speech material collected from African American drag queens in a Texas gay bar is a prime illustration of how restricted Butler’s [24] theoretical

framework can be improved upon by moving creative aspects that govern any speech event into the spotlight of the study. As it is with the case of the drag queen performance, what Butler would assume as no more than an appropriation of a dominant ideology of femininity, Barrett [5] sees as the use of linguistic variables with indexical associations to a variety of sometimes conflicting social categories (race, class, sexuality, and gender among them), with the aim of forming a drag queen identity. He successfully demonstrates that drag queens are not acting like women; they are acting like drag queens, appropriating African American Vernacular English, the “Standard” English phonology associated with “white woman style”, and lexical items indexical of gay male speech to articulate their gender identity [5]. The scholar also argues that because it is a multivocal phenomenon, it would be detrimental from the point of view of ethnographical linguistics to devalue their performances to mere subversion of nonlocalizable “femininity”.

With careful regard to the issues discussed above, Kira Hall [70] calls for a new focus for the field of language, gender, and sexuality, the one that, in her opinion, would allow for the previously “non-normative” identities to become the main subject of sociolinguistic research – namely, she argues for the localization of what constitutes performances of gender and sexual identity within the language ideologies circulating in specific communities of practice [70].

This is what she believes queer linguistics to be perfectly suitable for, as it encourages the scholars to examine the conversational practices of all sexual identities on a more localized level. Moreover, alongside multitudinous research on the speech acts of understudied sexual identities, the subject of this field is broad enough to encompass ethnographic works of such scholars as Penelope Eckert [47], who studied “the heterosexual marketplace”, exploring how the notion of heterosexual identity constructs the adolescent social order in an American elementary school.

Similar to the queer theory, queer linguistics sees one of its obligatory objectives in examining how heterosexual normativity is produced, perpetuated, and resisted within society, but apart from that it also seeks to localize these productions within narrower specific communities of practice. The beginning of the new millennia, however, has brought the critique of the field of queer linguistics from Don Kulick [85], whose point is that the language practices of gays and lesbians have to be “unique to gays and lesbians” [85, p. 259] in order to become the subject of sociolinguistic research. Kulick claims that since linguistic differences across sexual identities have not been sufficiently demonstrated – which in his opinion is required for the language and sexuality to be acknowledged in the scholarly community – the field is not viable. Hall [70] parries this allegation by saying that insistence on difference not only requires linguistic deviance as a prerequisite for sociolinguistic research; it also brings back the difference model of language and gender, heavily criticized for its inclination towards paying too much attention to differences between the use of language by different genders.

Alternatively, she suggests adhering to the practice-based and ideological models of language and gender – largely adopted by the scholars in the field of queer linguistics, – the primary objective of which is not to describe the differences between the language of men and women, or heterosexuals and homosexuals, like the previous model would, but to “document the diverse range of women’s and men’s linguistic repertoires as developed within particular contexts” [70], as gender is perceived as manifesting itself only in synergy with other sociological factors – historical, national, ethnic, racial, age-related, and sexual ones.

1.1.2. The problem of binaries in language, gender and sexuality

Although the very concept of binary was what enabled the nascence of language and gender as a field of research, it has also been recognized as one of the paramount tokens of marginalization and stigmatization of non-normative subjects and practices.

This is not to say that this concept is a problematic analytic device by its very nature – after all, a gender binary was useful as a strategic tool [113] for the studies on the gendered speech in the era of second-wave feminism, getting the academic community to acknowledge the women’s speech as the other side of the female/male dichotomy, as opposed to the deviancy from the normative men’s speech. The tenacious adherence to the binary system, however, significantly circumscribed the research of that time, largely reifying the female/male binary as a basal macrocategory that governed access – or absence of such – to institutionalized power, seen as constructed and sustained linguistically by society [42].

It can also be said that the same binary system indirectly instigated the field of language and sexuality, seeing as the scholars, having recognized the bias of heteronormativity that put femininity, femaleness, and attraction to men into one category, and masculinity, maleness, and attraction to women into the other, contraposing the two in the language and gender research, shifted the focus of their academic interest to the sexually marginalized groups. Standing at the origins of the language and sexuality, the initial studies in the field were nevertheless obstinate in adhering to the binary system, seeing as the scholars were preoccupied with describing the language of gays and lesbians in how it was different from one used by heterosexuals.

On the wave of poststructuralism the field of sociolinguistics (and subsequently, the field of language, gender and sexuality) embraced new theoretical frameworks that challenged the previously undisputed assumptions about the social categories of gender and sexuality. These new models were brought about by a multitude of factors, including but not limited to the particular theoretical advances.

One of them was the introduction of the notion of intersectionality to the field of language, gender, and sexuality. Scholars like Bucholtz [19], Hall [71], Mendoza-Denton [116], and Pujolar i Cos [135], to name a few, studied gender and sexuality in

synergy with other social categories, such as race, age, and class, as well as explored the diverse forms of sexual identities on a scope of communities, both in and outside of the United States [103]. Rusty Barrett's [4, 5] linguistic research on the "polyphonous identity" deserves particular recognition, as he demonstrates the way African American drag queens use language to build their performances against the backdrop of gender, sexuality, race, and class contexts.

The other was the introduction of the concept of performativity. Butler [24] brought the Austinian notion of performativity into the language, gender and sexuality studies, arguing that gender and sexual identities are not fixed prediscursive constants, merely reflected in the discourse interactions, but mutable intersubjective phenomena that are continuously constructed and exhibited in the amalgamation of social contexts. This model proved to be of exceptional benefit to the scholars studying the linguistic practices of gender crossing, such as Gaudio [62], Hall and O'Donovan [68], Jackson [80], Livia [104], Manalansan [108] and Murray [128]. It has also been adopted by the researchers who studied the non-queer gender and sexual identities, for instance Cameron [30] and Kiesling [84], who analyzed the ways in which the heterosexual masculinity is constructed, displayed, and maintained in discourse, illustrating the applicability of the performativity concept to every kind of gender and sexual identity, marginalized by society or not.

In the more recent studies the scholars working in the field of language, gender and sexuality have successfully incorporated the analytic tools used in ethnographic research in order to examine the binaries on a scale of communities, including the deployment of phonetic styles, morphological gender markers, community-specific speech acts, and the resignification of lexical items [42]

1.2. Queer theory and queer linguistics

With its origins up for a discussion, the term “queer” had been operated to stand for womanlike men or homosexual practices, both of which were stigmatized as being a violation of physiological, moral, and social norms and signaled offensive identification. It served the sign of “accusation, pathologisation, insult” [23, p. 226]. Besides, the notion “queer” was used, synonymous with “LGBT”, as an umbrella term for the community of people who did not identify as heterosexual or cisgender. As M. Escudero-Alias [49] states, “queer” stood for “resistance to binary oppositions, such as male/female, masculinity/femininity, heterosexuality/homosexuality” [49, p. 3].

During the 1980-90s in the United States, the term was subjected to a three-stage process of re-signification, reappropriation, and politicization, which was a part of the “gay liberation” movement. It is important to note though, that at its early stage, it was an excluding political movement characterized by a racialized (= white), gendered (= male), and social class (= middle-class) bias, which ultimately policed and neglected other forms of sexual identification [118].

It was at this time that queer entered the academic space, joined to the more “respectable” word “theory” [87] to form “queer theory” as a field of critical theory emerging out of gay and lesbian and women’s studies [37]. Generally focused on studying the non-heterosexual and non-cisgender practices and challenging the heteronormativity, queer theory, just like most of the theoretical frameworks elaborated in the wave of postmodernism and poststructuralism, is not a consistent, coherent, and all-encompassing system with a well-defined scope and subjects of research; rather, queer theory is an accumulated plurality of diverse approaches, which contradict the prevalent, more “normative” frameworks, and occasionally each other.

This definition is in line with E. K. Sedgwick's theoretically grounded understanding of the idea of "queer", seeing as the scholar highlights its transcending spirit: "Queer is a continuing moment, movement, motive – recurrent, eddying, troublant. The word "queer" itself means *across* – it comes from the Indo-European root *twerkw*, which also yields the German *quer* (transverse), Latin *torquere* (to twist), English *athwart*... *queer* ... is multiply transitive" [144, p. xii]. The very concept of queer rejects stability, routine, fixedness, and welcomes change, unexpectedness, diffusion, blur. According to Halperin [74, pp. 61–62], "queer is by definition whatever is at odds with the normal, the legitimate, the dominant. There is nothing in particular to which it necessarily refers. It is an identity without essence."

That being so, coming up with a single definition on queer theory could potentially curb its explorative capacity; however it is possible to define a basal quality that is intrinsic to every initiative within queer theory, and that is a critical attitude that problematizes "normative consolidations of sex, gender and sexuality" – and hence challenges "all those versions of identity, community and politics that are believed to evolve 'naturally' from such consolidations" [81, p. 99]. According to J. Tilsen and D. Nuland, its objectives lie in rebutting "biological theories of sexual identity" and challenging the "so-called 'natural' sexuality" [150, p. 66].

Queer theory accentuates the socially rooted correlations between sex, gender, and sexuality, claiming that they have developed a "unique relationship" [142, p. 274] with each other, while simultaneously acknowledging that these are separate categories. It also seeks to reveal the ways in which some of these correlations are coded in the society as "normal" and "desirable" – which are, as a general rule, cisgender (corresponding sex and gender) and heterosexual (attraction to opposite sex/gender) – and others are marked as "deviant" and "unwanted" (transgender and attraction to the same sex/gender; or, broadly speaking, anything other than cisgender and heterosexual).

As the feminist theory explained it, heteronormativity is an instrument used by the ruling authorities to maintain the power imbalance, empowering white heterosexual men at the expense of women, gays and people of color. To quote Butler, “the binary relation between culture and nature promotes a relationship of hierarchy in which culture freely “imposes” meaning on nature, and, hence, renders it into an “Other” to be appropriated to its own limitless uses, safeguarding the ideality of the signifier and the structure of signification on the model of domination” [24, p. 37].

Queer theory stresses, however, that merely revealing “those structures, institutions, relations and actions that promote and produce heterosexuality as natural, self-evident, desirable, privileged and necessary” [29, p. 55] would not be enough to understand how heteronormativity is maintained and empowered in the social contexts; rather, it encourages the scholars to consider “queer” a more reactionist version of “dissident” that “rejects a minoritizing logic of toleration or simple political interest-representation in favor of a more thorough resistance to regimes of the normal” [152, p. xxvi]. This standpoint also enables queer theory to explore the possible means of normalizing and legitimizing certain forms of same-sex attraction – for example, monogamous, committed homosexual relationships. Unimaginable some thirty years ago, this goal seems to be achievable in the current era, seeing as homophobia is being slowly but steady replaced by homonormativity vouched for by “a more cautious, assimilationist approach” [150, p. 67].

It is also important to mention, that, because of the immanent skeptical attitude, queer theory is not coextensive with LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) studies, although obviously there are synergies and areas of intersection between the two [118]. Queer approaches would on equal terms question both heterosexuality and homosexuality, and explore the sophisticated interrelations between them [29, p. 149]. Naturally, such stance would not be approved by liberal LGBT politics supporters, who claim that queer theory is supposedly an elitist syndicate governed by a cohort of privileged academics who, having been granted their rights by identity

politics, are now free to alienate the issue, belittling or altogether disclaim the importance of sexual identities for people in the “real” world. Therefore, it is argued that not only does queer theory contribute nothing to the ongoing battle for equal rights for the LGBTQ+ community, but even hinders the process.

Milani [118] invalidate this argument by saying that “queer theorists do not deny that ‘homosexuals’ exist; just as there is no doubt that women ‘really’ exist, or that men do” [118, p. 262], what they do, instead, is issuing a word of caution against depending too much on the notion of sexual identity in the process of instigating changes in the society, seeing as such politics can only be of so much service as to bring about impermanent realignment of power imbalance, but in the long run would be futile in challenging or undermining the homosexual/heterosexual binary. Queer theory, on the other hand, calls for disputing the very concept of allegedly “normative” and long established division between queer and straight. Furthermore, it is important to remember that “a (queer or otherwise) analysis of the construction of a sexual [and gender] identity should not a priori assume the emancipatory goals of legitimisation or legalisation...Indeed, a central tenet of queer theory is that identity categories are socially constructed, which is a very different goal from seeking acceptance”. [3, p. 222].

However influential in a range of disciplines, queer theory did not manage to instantly get along with sociolinguistics and anthropolinguistics. It was Livia and Hall [103], who called for “bringing performativity back to linguistics” in *Queerly Phrased*, inspiring the researchers to revisit Judith Butler’s theory on gender performativity. With that, queer theory gained staggering popularity within the academic community involved with the language and sexuality, resulting in the emergence of queer linguistics, a field that “puts at the forefront of linguistic analysis the regulation of sexuality by hegemonic heterosexuality and the ways in which non-normative sexualities are negotiated in relation to these regulatory structures” [17, p. 471].

In 2002, in their publication on language and sexuality, Campbell-Kibler et al. [32] outlined the ardent ongoing debate on the prospects of “queer linguistics” in the academic community, with opinions of its prominent scholars – such as Barrett [6]; Eckert [47]; Kiesling [84], Kulick [86]; Leap [94]; McElhinny [114]; and Queen [136] – ranging from vouching for the importance of queer theory to the field of sociolinguistics to skepticizing queer theory as it is.

The publication also points out the discordance among the scholars on the subject of the definition of “queer”. As Queen [136] notes it, “most of the work that gets placed under the label ‘queer linguistics’ is not specifically queer theoretical but rather based on data from queer subjects” [136, p. 70], where by “queer (subjects)” she means LGBT individuals. Barrett [6] argues against such narrowing interpretation of the term “queer”, claiming that “queer linguistics [...] cannot be limited by application to a particular identity category” [6, p. 26], joined in this standpoint by Kulick [86], who suggests that queer linguistics should “move beyond the study of the linguistic behavior of people we know to be, or suspect might be, gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgendered” [86, p. 68].

Kulick’s point anticipated a broader doctrine that he would develop in collaboration with Deborah Cameron and lay out in their somewhat tendentious work titled *Language and Sexuality* [29]. In it, the scholars claim that queer theoretical framework can lend itself to the researchers working in the field of language and sexuality in their endeavors of (1) going beyond the study of “queer peers” [114, pp. 116–117], and (2) bringing the discursive construction of the boundaries between “normative” and “deviant” into the focus of their studies [118].

Gradually abandoning the dogmas of essentialism and integrating frameworks from social constructionism and drawing upon the notion of performativity, the studies on queer language broadened the scope of research to include not only lexical units of “gay speech”, but also phonological characteristics, sentence structure and

conversational markers. Speaking about “gay speech”, queer linguistics also diversified the research canon by looking into other queer speakers, such as gender-queer individuals and those who fall beyond the heterosexual/homosexual dichotomy; as well as probing the languages other than English and locations other than the United States, with the analytical apparatus of queer linguistics and ethnography. Branched into the world, the field accumulated a number of comprehensive works, such as analyses of linguistic practices of hijras and kotis in India [71, 72], leitis in Tonga [11, 12], and ‘yan daudu in Nigeria [62]. These and later studies again and again proved the need to look into the ways queerness is constructed and manifested in the discursive practices within coalescence of the distinctive sociohistorical and geographical contexts, disentangling the understanding of “gayness” from the rigid and non-inclusive Western stereotypes. Apart from that, they also “aimed to relate queer language to greater hegemonic gender norms, exploring both how queer speakers challenge, and are constrained by, these norms” [27], or, speaking more broadly, examined the ways language is employed to constitute all kinds of social identities.

Of course, it is impossible to overlook the impact of the performativity as a framework for the field of queer linguistics, with scholars like Leap [97] setting in motion the process of undermining the ideological correlation between (1) femininity, female bodies, and desire for men, and (2) masculinity, male bodies, and desire for women. Since then the concept of heteronormativity has been brought up for a discussion within the academic community in the field of queer linguistics on multiple occasions, as seen in Motschenbacher [125], and in numerous entries to the special issue on queer linguistics for *Discourse & Society* [124]. This concept has also been examined through the lens of conversation analysis, for example, by Land and Kitzinger [90], who revealed a number of heteronormative presuppositions that implicitly govern everyday conversation.

Having much wider scope of research than just the linguistic practices of gays and lesbians, queer linguistics challenges every gender/sexuality binary, underlining the agitational capacity of both erotic and gender-crossing practices. This stance can be seen demonstrated in Livia's [104] examination of grammatical gender as a resource for building up an identity in French and English written discourses; Gaudio's (2009) discussion of linguistic indirectness and other subversive strategies used by Nigerian 'yan daudu; Hall's [71] interpretation of class and gender liminality in "hijra-acting" performances of transgender kotis in a New Delhi NGO; Besnier's [12] survey of *leitis* – transgender Tongans. The best empirical illustration of the performative and polyphonous nature of gender can be found in Barrett's [5] work on African American drag queens' performances, during which a multifaceted identity is emerged from the amalgamation of race, class, gender, and sexuality contexts.

Motschenbacher and Stegu [124] also pointed out that queer linguistics successfully employs a range of linguistic analytical frameworks, or, in another words, relies on methodological pluralism in order to deliver complementary qualifying perspectives. Leap [93, p. 10] shares this opinion, stating that this kind of "scavenger methodology" time times and again proved itself to be of exceptional use in many queer inquiries across a range of disciplines.

It is crucial to understand, however, that as any other field of linguistics, queer linguistics has its own issues. For instance, a great number of studies illustrated the non-exclusive nature of linguistic styles of those speakers who identify as straight on one hand, and of those who constitute the queer community on the other. To prove this statement empirically, Munson et al. [127] set up a linguistic experiment involving 40 listeners, who were asked to rate sexual orientation of 44speakers (with 22 of them being heterosexual, and 22 queer) on a five-point equally appearing interval scale. The findings of the study evidenced the gradient nature of perceived sexual orientation, with numerous cases of overlap between queer and straight people. For example, out of the two male speakers with the most-gay average ratings

only one identified as gay, with other being self-identified straight man. Overlaps like this one demonstrate the dangers of overgeneralizing conclusions for the field of queer linguistics, as well as the need to rethink the assumption that differences in speech are invariantly predetermined by sexual orientation of the speaker [126].

Another issue arises from the phenomenon of multiplicity of social identity. Seeing as the social identities are not fixed and tend to change throughout the life of every given individual upon entering (or leaving) new communities of practice, speech styles are actively subject to change accordingly. Not only that, but speakers may also perform several social identities concurrently, or bring forth some social identities (or some of their features), while concealing others depending on the context of every given interaction; a practice comprehensively incased into the notion of polyphonousness of social identity [5]. Robert Podesva was particularly successful in his multiple attempts at substantiating this concept. For instance, in [133] he published the findings of his research, where he analyzed the phonological features of “gay language”; the material of the research being recordings of a student of a medical college by the name of Heath, who identified as gay. The scholar detected the variation in the subject’s pronunciation of the voiceless alveolar stop, /t/ – one of the typical features of “gay speech”, – depending on which group of people he was communicating with in the course of the day [133]. He also studied the California Vowel Shift (CVS) in relation to gay identity by examining intra-speaker patterns in a single individual (and not inter-speaker variation, which would be more common matter). The subject for this research was a self-identified gay Asian American by the name of Regan, who was observed to realize CVS differently depending on the context, whether it be a “boys' night out”, “dinner with a friend”, or “meeting with the supervisor” [134].

Findings of these works serve as evidence for the concept of the altering nature of language-identity correlation, seeing as an individual can change the speech styles not only across time, but also across space, based on which social identity the

individual is aiming to communicate in specific context. Therefore, over-generalizing assumptions about social identities and how they are constructed in the discourse run the risk of neglecting the phenomenon of intra-speaker variability.

1.3. Queer representation in children-oriented media content

The theoretical framework of representation was set as early as in 1969, when Cedric Clark laid down his four-stage concept of representation of ethnic minorities [39]. As he explained it, being a commercial enterprise in its essence, the television as a medium will always reflect the social structure as it is, so those at the bottom will be represented in one of four stages: non-recognition, ridicule, regulation, or respect [39, p. 18]. The first stage, non-recognition, means that the given minority group is not represented in the media [39, p. 19]. The second stage means that the minority is mentioned exclusively in the context of a joke [39, p. 19], performing two functions simultaneously; to quote Clark, “the group that is being ridiculed feels that is better, at least, than being ignored. Concurrently, by having a “ridicule group to laugh at, members of the dominant culture feel a boost to their self esteem” [39, p. 19]. As an illustration, Clark mentions Mexicans and Mexican-Americans, who were at that time depicted as lazy and dirty [39, p. 19].

The shift to the next stage of regulation occurs when the minority group reacts to its ridiculed representation in media, either incrementally, through organized protest or radically, by employing violence. The third stage means that the minority group is depicted exclusively on the “right” or normal stage of society [39, p. 21]; for example, at the time of the publication of Clark’s work, almost all the black characters on screen, who were previously stereotyped as criminals, gangsters and barbarians, were now detectives, police officers, judges, or had a job otherwise related to law and order [39, p. 20]. The fourth and final stage means that the minority group is treated with respect and is well-represented in media, though Clark doubts that this stage is achievable for the non-white minority groups [39, p. 21].

Although being developed in regard to ethnic and racial minorities – African Americans, in particular – the framework was adopted by other scholars to explore the representation of other marginalized groups [51].

With the first ever depiction of same-sex interactions in the cinema happening as early as in 1895, in a silent film *The Gay Brothers* by Edison Short [145], the topic of queer representation is a fairly recent one, seeing as the American film industry has been complying with the guidelines of the Hollywood Production Code from 1930 to 1968 and of the Code of Practices for Television Broadcasters from 1952 to 1983, both of them indirectly banning explicit representation of homosexuality on the screens [137, p. 23]. Though even before they came into force, homosexuality was barely seen on TV, and on those rare occasions when it was, the gay characters were used as a tool of comedic relief, such as Sissy Man in Stan Laurel's silent film *The Soilers* in 1923 [145].

During the 1930s–1960s, portrayals of queer individuals were heavily censored or removed altogether, as dictated by the Production Code and intensified Catholic-based morality. Those that survived the censorship have been negative, reflecting the cultural intolerance of LGBT individuals; gays were portrayed as child molesters, victims of violence, or drag queens [137, p. 23], or, alternatively, villains were implicitly written as homosexuals, to intensify their evilness and alienation, as can be seen in Alfred Hitchcock's films [145].

It was in the 1970s that the real visibility for LGBT communities in media started to evolve, for instance, in 1972 ABC aired a movie titled *That Certain Summer*, which told the story of a gay man raising his family. Although no explicit relationships between men were explicitly shown, there were no pejorative connotation attached to the main character, nor were any of the negative stereotypes played into [88]. The TV shows, on the other hand, featured gay characters in no more than a single episode [129, p. 969], making their sexual identity the problem of this very episode. Strictly

speaking, they were used as a plot device, with the storyline contextualized primarily by the impact of their homosexuality on the lives of the recurring heterosexual characters [43, p. 129].

In the 1980s the portrayal and acceptance of queer community took a sudden turn for the worse, with the AIDS epidemic and its association with the gays. The Moral Majority, the Coalition for Better Television, the American Family Association, and similar organizations boycotted sponsors of TV shows that depicted homosexuals in seemingly positive light [122].

In 1997, the TV show “Ellen” became the first broadcasted series to feature a lesbian, Ellen Morgan, played by Ellen DeGeneres, as its main character [50, p. 171]. Dow argued that “DeGeneres’s coming-out narrative, in both its ‘real’ and fictionalized forms, has had a profound effect on public discourse can hardly be questioned” [43, p. 123], and, through a case study of the coverage of Ellen’s coming-out story in the media, illustrated that “the DeGeneres/Morgan revelations were touted by mainstream media as evidence of progress: in (always presumed to be heterosexual) Americans’ tolerance for representation of homosexuals” [43, p. 128].

The success of “Ellen” made it possible for the regular and recurring gay characters, though still very stereotypical, to begin featuring in other TV shows, with “Will & Grace”, “Dawson’s Creek”, “ER”, and “Buffy the Vampire Slayer” being among them (researched by Dow [43, p. 124]; Fisher et al. [50, p. 171]; Netzley [129, p. 969]. It could thus be said, that the end of the 1990s was the starting point for meaningful queer representation, seeing as thenceforth and to the present day the depictions of queer community, issues, and concerns within mainstream media in North America has been growing in number [145].

However, the amount of queer representation on television was not the only thing that has changed drastically over the course of time; the type of representation also altered

significantly, as illustrated by content analysis studies from the beginning of the millennium. Among other criteria of fairness of queer representation, these surveys examined how frequently the comments or jokes at the expense of sexual identity of queer characters occurred and how often these characters were depicted in sexual situations on screen. For example, in their 2005 study of 22 sitcoms that aired on broadcast and cable during 2000 television season, Gregory Fouts and Rebecca Inch discovered that only 3 (2%) out of 125 main characters were homosexual men, and only one of those three gays was black [54, p. 40], which among other things illustrates how underrepresented and shy of diversity the queers are on screen. Each of these characters mentioned their sexual identity considerably more often than the other, heterosexual characters; a tendency that, as Fouts and Inch put it, “reinforces common stereotypes that emphasize differences rather than similarities between homosexual and heterosexual individuals” [54, p. 41]. At the same time, the gay characters were almost never shown having sexual encounters (implicitly or explicitly), as opposed to the heterosexual couples [54, p. 42].

Another study of queer representation by Amber Raley and Jennifer Lucas showed the complete lack of transgender and bisexual representation among 9 prime-time broadcast TV shows of the season 2001-2002 [137, p. 28] and the portrayal of gay characters in regulated roles (as deduced from the significant disproportion between displays of affection exhibited by gay (22) and by straight characters (123) [137, p. 30]. On the positive side, Raley and Lucas detected no significant difference in the ways queer and heterosexual characters interacted with children, which, they argue, “can be seen as a major advancement over past stereotypical images of gay males and lesbians as dangerous child molesters” [137, p. 31].

The queer representation has changed over the course of years, as can be seen in Netzley’s survey of the shows of 2005-2006 television season. As the article suggests, the queer characters have started to have personalities and storylines that do not revolve solely around their sexual identity [129, p. 982], for example, the TV

show *The L Word* “showed lesbians, but rather than focusing on debates about the rightness or wrongness of their lifestyle, it focused on them living their lives” [129, p. 981], marking a crucial shift away from stereotypes and toward more “realistic” portrayals of queer characters. This can be regarded as the regulation stage for the queer characters; seeing as previously they were stereotyped as threatening marriage, family, and social order, now the media started depicting them as traditional gender roles, and a part of the nuclear family.

However, while the overall queer representation on broadcast and basic and subscription cable was higher than before (5.6% of the characters were homosexual and 1.9% bisexual) [129, p. 975], the disproportion between displays of affection turned the other way, with 43.8% of gay characters having sexual encounters, as opposed to 16.8% of straight characters [129, p. 976]. And while Netzley’s stance on this is positive, with the scholar stating that “gay characters on television are being allowed to pursue sex to a degree that they were not able to in earlier television seasons” [129, p. 981], others (like Brownworth [15]; Forster [53]) see this new tendency as hypersexualizing or fetishizing queer characters.

One of the persistent issues with queer representation on TV is the phenomenon known as “queer-baiting”. Although there is no certain definition, it is generally understood as TV shows heavily using subtext to imply a queer pairing, but never conforming one in the fear of alienating their less tolerant audiences by means of explicit queer representation [14]. This phenomenon might not be homophobic per se, but what it does is reaffirming heteronormativity, and thus should be treated as the “bury your gays” trope – with raised awareness and harsh criticism.

Among other prevailing issues with the queer representation, especially in U.S. television, is the tendency for the writers to kill off or otherwise script in an unhappy ending (such as going insane) for the gay and lesbian characters much more often than for the straight ones. This phenomenon became known as “bury your gays”

trope, or, alternatively, “dead lesbian syndrome” [55]. Having studied 1,779 scripted U.S. television series from 1976 to 2016, Autostraddle found out that only 193 (11%) of them featured lesbian or bisexual female characters, with 35% of those characters having ended up dead and only 16% having a happy ending [78], Figure 1.1.

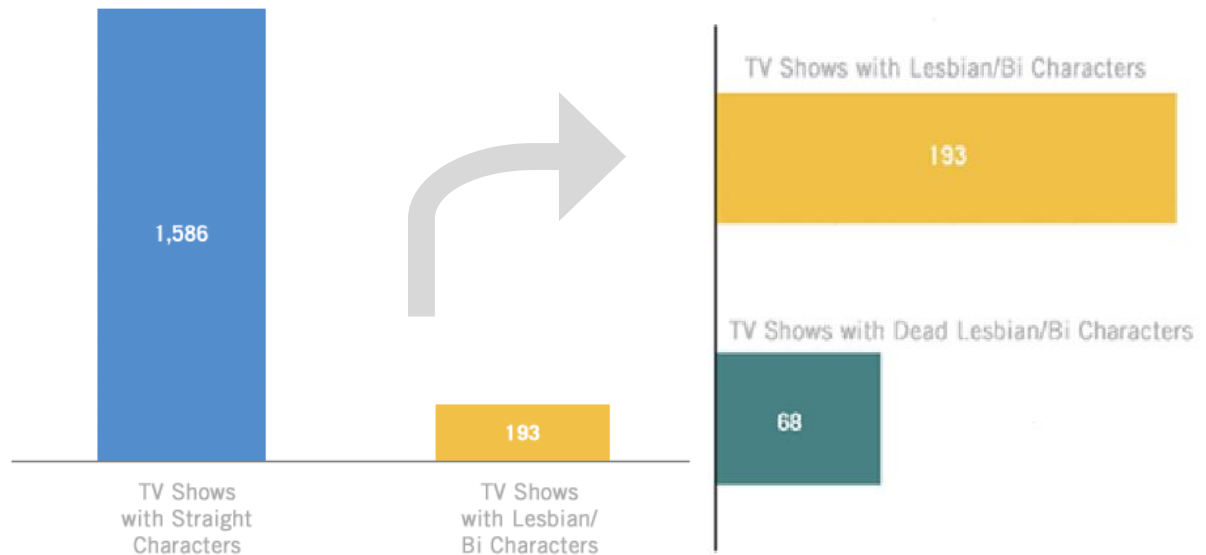


Figure 1.1. Fate of lesbian/bisexual characters from TV shows no longer on-air

In the same fashion, among all lesbian or bisexual characters in no-longer-airing TV shows, 31% ended up dead, and only 10% received a happy ending [78] Figure 1.2.

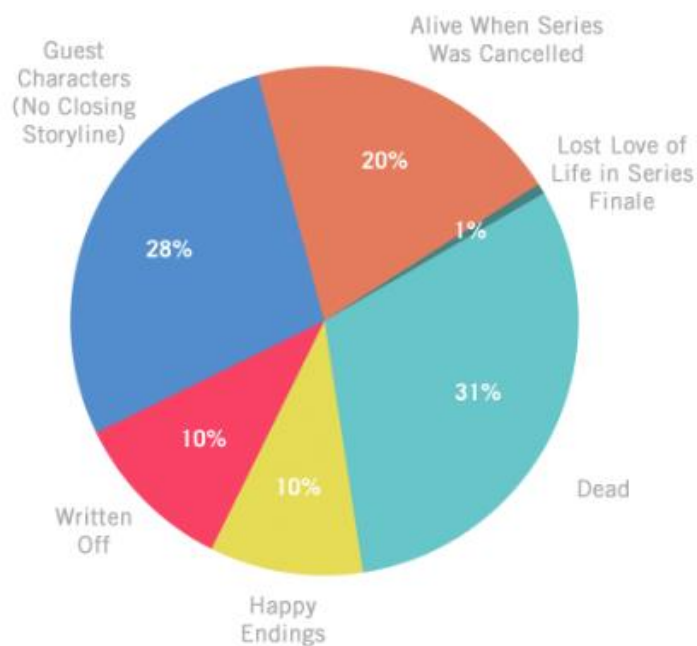


Figure 1.2. American scripted TV (1976-2016)

Having analyzed 242 character deaths of the 2015-16 season of TV shows, Vox stated that “a full 10 percent of deaths [were] queer women [56]. The tendency, clearly seen from the statistic data, has been acknowledged by Variety, insisting that it is “alive and well on TV, and fictional lesbian and bisexual women in particular have a very small chance of leading long and productive lives” [111].

The trope is not exclusive to the television, however; it has also been of frequent occurrence in other forms of fiction, such as video games, where queer characters are “largely defined by a pain that their straight counterparts do not share”; and are being put through challenges that are regarded as “an in-world analogy for anti-LGBTQ bigotry”. Thus, tragic event(s) end up constituting the main context, within which these characters are being established, depriving them of an opportunity to have their “happily ever after” [76].

Raised awareness and harsh criticism of the trope urge the writers against using it in their shows. For example, in episode 10 of season 1 of *Star Trek: Discovery*, a gay character in a committed relationship was killed. As soon as the episode aired, the actor playing the character in question and the showrunners commented on the plottwist, saying that the character's death “is not the end”, and that “the *bury your gays*” trope was something the producers were aware of”, and were not going that direction [120]. Keeping the promise, the character was returned from the dead in the following season. It is worth mentioning that the actor playing the character has been a passionate advocate for queer representation on screen, even working as a GLAAD industry liaison particularly on issues like such.

GLAAD, an American non-governmental media monitoring organization, founded as a protest against defamatory coverage of LGBT people in 1985, has been quantifiably tracking the presence of LGBTQ regular and recurring characters on television, issuing an annual “Where We Are on TV” report since 2005. The statistics provided by GLAAD demonstrate a significant upsurge of queer representation, going from 12

LGB regular characters (no transgender characters) on primetime scripted broadcast in the season of 2005-2006, to 90 LGBTQ regular characters (with additional 30 LGBTQ recurring characters), in 2019-2020, with the percentage going from 1.4% to 10.2% [63], Figure 1.3.

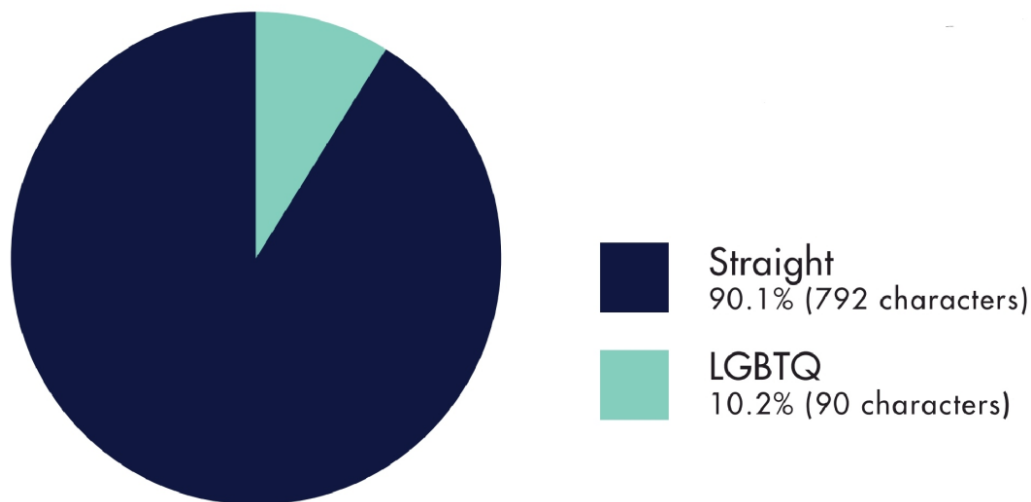


Figure 1.3. Diversity of regular characters on primetime scripted broadcast, 2019-2020 season

GLAAD also looks at the queer representation on cable TV and streaming originals (Amazon, Hulu, and Netflix), with the numbers for the 2019-20 season being 215 (121 regular and 94 additional recurring LGBTQ characters) and 153 (109 regular and 44 additional recurring LGBTQ characters) respectively [63]. Additionally, the organization’s reports specify the bisexual+, transgender, and asexual representation on broadcast television; as well as the representation of women, people of color, and people with disabilities, in the acknowledgement of the intersectionality of social identity.

GLAAD’s President & CEO Sarah Kate Ellis mentions, however, that “it is not enough just to have an LGBTQ character present to win an LGBTQ audience’s attention. There needs to be nuance and depth to their story, and the slate of characters should reflect the full diversity of our community.” [63]. In order to achieve the goal of queer representation that is truthful to the real world, GLAAD reports include “GLAAD’s recommendations” section.

1.3.1. The importance of queer representation on screen

One cannot overstate the importance of queer representation in the media. Not only are positive and non-stereotyped depictions of queer characters ameliorating the attitude of straight cisgender viewers towards the LGBT community and queer individuals, but also providing those queer individuals the characters on the screen they can relate to, which is crucial especially during the adolescent years of a person's life.

There is plenty empirical evidence to support this claim; for example, in a 2002 survey, Schiappa et al. examined the attitudes toward gay men in correlation with viewership of *Will & Grace* TV show among 245 undergraduate students [143]. The results illustrated that among the surveyees who admitted to watching the show "every once in a while" or more often, 81% agreed that "the show is an important step forward in television situation comedies because it features gay men in major roles" [143, p. 27], 60% said the show changed their opinion on the topic of homosexuality for the better [143, p. 27], and 71% disagreed with the statement that "heterosexual relationships are the only 'normal' sexual relationships", with the percentage dropping to 45% among those who did not watch the show [143, p. 28].

A more wide-scope survey on the topic of interrelatedness between media exposure and attitudes toward homosexuality, conducted on 1,761 undergraduate students age 17-27, more than half of them (62.7%) being female, from 2000 to 2002 [28, pp. 280-286]. The findings of the study confirmed the effect of exposure to movies, primetime sitcoms and drama, music videos, and popular culture magazines on the levels of tolerance for the sexual minorities [28, p. 286], with the scholars stating that "the pattern of correlations presents strong evidence of mainstreaming effect of media use on [attitudes of acceptance towards homosexuality]" [28, p. 293].

However convincing, these studies fail to account for causation, and therefore do not provide quantitative information on the extent to which the television representation affects viewers' perception of the queer community. The 2008 survey, for instance, did not determine whether the audience became more tolerant because they watched *Will & Grace*, or whether they watched the show precisely because they were already tolerant enough [143].

That being said, the growing of queer representation and leaving stereotypes behind do change public's perception of LGBT individuals, affecting at the same time the ways the related public policy issues are dealt with, same-sex marriage and adoption, protections against discrimination, bathroom bills, or transgender military ban within those.

Aside from facilitating the acceptance of LGBT community for the heterosexual cisgender audience, queer representation has radical impact on the members of the community itself. In 2005 and 2006 surveys of individuals who identify as queer, conducted by Sarah Gomillion and Traci Giuliano, the overwhelming majority of participants acknowledged queer characters seen on TV as having significant impact on their self-realization, self-acceptance, and coming-out experience, with some of the surveyees specifying that they consider these characters as role models [65, p. 336], and a source of pride or/and comfort [65, p. 343]. That said, the participants also voiced their desire for more "normal" or "realistic" portrayals of queer characters, more portrayals of LGBT characters in families, and more positive portrayals altogether [65, p. 337], highlighting that the stereotype-based representation took away from their feeling of inclusion and belonging in the society, and curbed their identity expression [65, p. 343].

A different study conducted by Bradley Bond in 2015, focused on the queer adolescents and how seeing the LGBT characters in media affected their mental well-being [13]. The survey results illustrated that exposure to positive, non-stereotyped

queer characters on screen alleviated negative feelings (sadness, dejection, and depression) among the LGBT youth, potentially lowering the chances of them contemplating suicide [13, p. 70], seeing as they are almost 5 times more likely to attempt suicide than their heterosexual peers, according to CDC [34, pp. 20-21].

1.3.2. Queer representation on children-oriented TV shows

As discussed in the previous subparagraph, there has been a massive surge of queer representation on TV since the 1990s, following the lifting of the restrictions imposed by Hollywood Production Code and Code of Practices for Television Broadcasters, as well as overall movement towards acceptance, tolerance and inclusiveness. As Ron Becker puts it, “as recently as the early 1990s ... viewers could likely spot only a handful of openly [queer] characters ... after only a few television seasons, however, gay themed episodes and references to homosexuality were everywhere” [10].

The expanding queer representation in primetime contributed to the broader diversity in media, in particular in the media targeted at older demographics. However, the same dynamics cannot be seen in the media catering to children, seeing as there is a prominent cultural anxiety regarding the queer content for children, as manifested in the news coverage on the assumed threat some people spot in certain children’s TV shows. An example of that would be Reverend Jerry Falwell harshly criticizing the children’s TV show Teletubbies for what he considered was propaganda of homosexuality, embodied in the character of the show by the name of Tinky-Winky [57]. This can be seen as a part of continuous societal concern regarding the children’s media content; the concern that has emerged together with the popularization of film and television and has recently advanced onto videogames and social media as well.

Being a vigorously debated issue per se, queer representation becomes even more aggravated when it comes to the children’s television, given that there is a lingering

misconception that queer sexual identity can be performed exclusively through sexual acts (due to the phenomenon of hypersexualizing queer characters mentioned in the previous subparagraph), which would be highly inappropriate to include into the media meant for children. The amount of sexual content is one of the main concerns of parents (42% are “very” concerned), followed by the violent content (36%, respectively), according to the Common Sense Census that looked at the different aspects of media use by children age 0-8 [139, p. 41]. However, this is only one aspect of a highly multifaceted notion of sexual identity, and paring it down to a single dimension of sexual intercourse (explicit depiction of which absolutely should not be included in the children’s media) would add to the heteronormativity and marginalization of queer characters and themes, and have further negative impact on the social role modeling and parenting.

The persistent queer underrepresentation in children’s media must be comprehended as a part of the overall cultural resistance to portray queerness in media that has been prevalent up until the 1990s, when queer characters started to appear in adult targeted media content. The main concept underpinning this tendency is the notion of heteronormativity, which, according to Didi Herman, “does not just construct a norm, but also provides the perspective through which we know and understand gender and sexuality in popular culture” [77]. Establishing sexual hierarchies, which marks queer sexual identities as a form “deviancy”, heteronormativity systematically privileges heterosexuality. To quote a political theorist Samuel Chambers, “the world we inhabit is structured by the presumption of heterosexuality, [and] while this phenomenon often proves to be masked sometimes, sometimes seems invisible, [...] we can witness it through variety of cultural [...] practices” [36, p. 34].

Just as Chambers mentions it, putting heterosexuality in a dominant and highly visible position renders queerness invisible. Not only that, but in “the majority of television shows heteronormativity operates in the exact same way it does in society: invisibly. That is, we assume everyone is straight” [36, pp. 34-36]. Heteronormativity

can also be seen in what Adrienne Rich called “compulsory heterosexuality” – “a political institution that has the ability to regulate behavior and desire” [138], empowering and reifying heterosexuality while simultaneously stigmatizing queerness.

Queer theory has also discussed the notion of children as related to the queer community, in particular to the oppression against its representation in the media. Lee Edelman argues that the symbol of the “future child” or unborn children is the basis for the concept he calls “reproductive futurism”, which is used to “impose an ideological limit” on, among other things, queer representation in media, “preserving ... the absolute privilege of heteronormativity” [98]. The previously mentioned case of Jerry Falwell’s bashing of the *Teletubbies*, even though the TV show has no references to sex or sexuality in the scripts, exemplifies this concept plenty. Having stated that “as a Christian I feel that role modeling the gay lifestyle is damaging to the moral lives of children” [9], Reverend was insinuating the corruptive potential of queer representations on television, should the children be exposed to them. The “reproductive futurism” here lies in the idea that current and future children must be kept safe and away from depictions of queer sexual identities so that the society does not collapse. Moreover, the concept also asserts queerness as deviancy out of the widespread belief that queer individuals are short of reproductive capability, or, as Samuel Chambers puts it, “queerness comes to stand for everything that rejects the future and the child” [36, pp. 183-184].

The lines of argumentation like these, used to dispute the queer representation in media, often allude to the notion of “childhood innocence”; Jennifer Mandel however argues that the seemingly commonsensical notion is nothing but a deeply ideological concept: “childhood is not simply a time of innocence – free from the social and cultural pressures of the adult world – but defined by historical trends and political agendas” [109], and can therefore be seen as another instrument to assert heteronormativity. The understanding of childhood as a period of vulnerability and

dependency comes from the early 20th century, and is heavily present in claims like Falwell's, who calls for protecting the future members of society from moral corruption during the susceptible years of their development.

However, with the further development of psychology, the theories on children's development highlighted a more important aspect of the very early years of an individual's life, an aspect of rapid learnability and malleability. A number of studies were conducted in order to examine how children form their understanding of gender, and the findings show that they start to comprehend the concept of gender identity at the age of two to three, with tenacious constructions of gender being developed by the age of five [110], rendering the pre-school television demographic a key point for intervention [21].

Queer representation becomes an issue of crucial importance, seeing as "on average, children from birth to age 8 use about two and a half hours (2:24) of screen media a day", with 73% of it spent on TV/video viewing, according to the Common Sense Census that looked at the different aspects of media use by children age 0-8 [139, p. 3]. Naturally, the consumed media content would impact the way the child shapes of basic understanding of the world, society, and their identity.

Conclusions to Chapter 1

The language, gender and sexuality is a complex and multifarious field of linguistics, which went through several pivotal turns, each of them changing the paradigm and the way the notions of gender, sexuality and language are interrelated. The first one was the dominance model, proposed by Lakoff [89], rendered women's speech as a deviant version of men's, and the differences between the two were explained in terms of access to power – or lack of one. With the emergence of the difference or “two-cultures” model of language and gender (e.g., Maltz and Borker [107]; Tannen [146] in the 1980s, which claimed that children are socialized into their respective gendered subcultures in same-sex peer groups, the tomboys and sissies –girls and boys who preferred to interact with the other-sex playmates – fell into the category of the linguistic deviant. Much like in the early research of the speaking patterns in non-European languages (Chamberlain [35] and Flannery [52]), where “effeminate men” or “mannish women” were mentioned only in the footnotes and were considered an exception that only proved the binary nature of speaking patterns used by men and women, the difference model of language and gender also saw the non-conforming cases of linguistic behavior as supporting the more normative two-cultures theory.

Another issue with the field's research of this era lies in the fact that while the scholars were striving to formulate universal statements on men's and women's speech, the theories were predominantly based on the linguistic data collected from heterosexual, white, middle-class English speakers. The issue became especially evident in the studies supporting a two-cultures model of language and gender, with the whole theory undermined by the recorded cases of women using non-normative speech patterns. Taking into consideration the fact that normative speech patterns were identified almost exclusively for the average middle-class white women, there was an abundance of such cases.

That is when the scholars considered narrowing down the scope of their research and started to study the language used by men and women on the scale of communities, societies, and cultures, putting forward a new theory of language and gender, one based on the notion of *communities of practice*. Although the term was coined by Lave and Wenger [92] for their theory of learning as a process of becoming a member of a sustained community, it was Eckert and McConnell-Ginet [46] who brought the notion into the field of language and gender as an alternative to the prevalent at that time broad-scale generalizations on the ways men and women speak. According to the community of practice theory, the differences between men's and women's speech patterns cannot be attributed solely to the language socialization at the early stages of life, as claimed by the supporters of the two-cultures model of language and gender; instead, the links between language and gender are 'learned' throughout the life, in the process of being involved in the diverse communities, each of them nurturing a different understanding of the relationship between language and gender [67].

Now, the research on gay language went beyond the mere cataloguing of the gay vocabulary, incorporating methodological frameworks from communication and rhetoric disciplines and looking at interactional and discursive patterns of gay speech using the tools of formal linguistics. Scholars such as Leap [96, 97] incorporated LGBTQ culture studies, cultural theory, and linguistics to study turn-taking and turn frequencies, while others – like Bacon [2] and Rust [140] – focused on the construction of topics and narratives in coming-out stories.

This shift also had its impact on the notion of linguistic deviant. Now, a linguistic deviant is seen as a member of the community whose speech patterns are influenced by more localized norms of language and gender [70]. This new perspective allowed for a potentially unlimited number of interpretations of “normative” linguistic behavior, bringing forth not only more diversified and more sophisticated studies on language, gender, and sexuality, but also queer linguistics – a new field that sees what

was believed to be the sexual and gender deviance in the preceding studies as its subject of research.

The aforementioned “discursive turn” also impacted the field of language and sexuality, as it assisted scholars in acknowledging the implicit effect the heteronormativity had on all the prior research conducted in the field. In its turn, this entailed the emergence of new perspectives, which would later frame the field of queer linguistics, which mostly deals with the ways heteronormativity is constructed and prevails in the society through the use of language.

In terms of queer representation, for the longest time it was non-existent, outwardly negative or merely hinted, but never actually confirmed, seeing as most of the twentieth century the cinema was restricted by Production Codes. Only when they were lifted did the film media see a spur of LGBT characters. Since then, the queer community being more and more vocal in their claims to be represented in media in the positive light, as it can facilitate the process of normalizing and destigmatizing the queer community, and provide information on the topic for both its members and the outsiders [145].

The special attention is paid to the queer representation in the children-oriented media, since there are lingering stereotypes regarding the appropriateness of queer topics for cartoon TV series. However, with the help of GLAAD, the queer characters start to appear in more and more children-oriented programming, either as main characters or secondary ones, giving the queer kids role models to look up to and heroes to relate with, and teaching the non-queer kids about the variety of gender and sexual identities.

CHAPTER 2. NARRATING QUEER GENDER AND SEXUAL IDENTITIES IN TV SHOW '*SHE-RA AND THE PRINCESSES OF POWER*'

2.1. Overview of the criteria for the analysis of the queer characters in children-oriented animated TV shows

The illustrative material of this study was compiled from several children-oriented cartoon TV-series with queer characters being among the main ones or the secondary ones ('She-Ra and the Princesses of Power', 'The Owl House'). The queer characters are identified as characters that are, or were mentioned to be in the same-sex relationship, or have shown overt romantic attraction, among others, to the characters of the same gender. Additionally, it was checked whether the writers or directors of the show confirmed that the characters are indeed queer (for example, on September 2, 2020, during a Reddit AMA, Dana Terrace confirmed that Amity is intended to be a lesbian and that Luz is bisexual [148]).

She-Ra and the Princesses of Power is an American reboot of the 1985 *Filmation* animated TV-series *She-Ra: Princess of Power*. The five-season series, developed by Noelle Stevenson and produced by *DreamWorks Animation Television*, is available on the Netflix streaming service, with the first episode having aired on November 13, 2018, and the last on May 15, 2020. *She-Ra and the Princesses of Power* follows a teenage princess Adora, who gets the power to transform into the legendary Princess of Power by the name of She-Ra, and becomes a leader of the rebellion against the evil Lord Hordak and his Horde. *She-Ra and the Princesses of Power* was particularly praised for its diverse cast and the LGBT inclusion; winning the GLAAD Media Award for Outstanding Kids and Family Programming award in 2021 [64].

The analysis material for this paper comprises of the lines of the dialogue from the episodes that were said by the queer characters themselves, as well as the lines of dialogue said by others with regard to these characters.

The samples from this cartoon TV show are analyzed in order to determine the ways the characters communicate their gender or sexual identity. The hypothesis goes as follows: since these TV shows are written in line with the ongoing process of normalization and destigmatization of LGBT and are striving to achieve positive queer representation on screen, the queerness of the characters would not have a negative connotation or be perceived as something wrong or deviant. The instances of negative connotation in the context of queer characters narrating their identity, or negative commentaries from other characters regarding the queer ones, should there be any, will be explored in greater detail in order to determine what type of ideology is portrayed by them – the heteronormativity or something else. Additionally, the way the characters perceive their own identities are explored. The analysis follows the Butler's model of performativity [24] and the Levon and Mendes's notion of intersectionality [99], so the impact of other social contexts is also taken into account.

The corpus of 211 utterances from 14 characters (both queer and straight, talking about the queer) was compiled for this section, and analyzed in accordance with the defined criteria.

2.2. Recurring themes in constructing queer sexual identities in *She-Ra and the Princesses of Power*

Seeing as the context of children-oriented context does not allow the expression of the sexual identity through the (explicitly shown or even implied) sexual intercourse, the sexual identities, be they heterosexual or queer, are narrated through the romantic attractions towards other characters. In the analyzed linguistic material collected from the TV-show *She-Ra and the Princesses of Power*, two of the main female characters, Adora and Catra, narrate their queer identities through a complicated and multidimensional concept of attraction to each other. It is multidimensional in that these characters do not only embody the idea of queerness, but also transmit, among

others, the topics of ‘childhood trauma’, ‘self-identification’, and ‘choice vs. fate’, all of which interfere with the narrative of ‘queerness’.

Besides Adora and Catra, the TV show has several characters explicitly depicted in the same-sex relationship – Bow’s parents, George and Lance [176, 205], and the two princesses who are canonically married to each other, Spinnerella and Netossa [159, 186, 201, 202, 204, 205]. The show has no ‘coming out’ narratives, i.e. the storyline is completely devoid of the lexical units denominating gender identity or sexual preferences (gay, straight, bisexual, lesbian; cisgender, transgender, genderqueer, etc.). In doing so, the writers deliberately reject the heteronormative worldview that requires a gay (or otherwise not cis and/or straight) person to come out, to announce their gender or sexual identity, as it can be considered as highlighting the queerness of a character as an oddity against the backdrop of otherwise cis and heterosexual ‘standard’. This is the technique of destigmatization and normalization of queer identities, which includes depicting them as part of the world without them having to explain themselves.

The pragmatic analysis allowed six main conceptual themes to be identified in the linguistic material collected from the show. These themes are as follows: ABANDONMENT, CHOICE, VICTORY, ASPIRATION, LOVE, and HOME, with each of them playing a specific role in the way characters construct and narrate their social identities.

1. ABANDONMENT. The concept of abandonment is translated mostly through the character of Catra, a cat-girl who, together with Adora, was raised by an abusive parental figure in the military regime. The premise of the show is that Adora, who was initially trained to become part of the antagonist’s army, finds a sword granting her the power of a legendary princess She-Ra, and switches sides, joining the rebellion. Her change of mind is perceived by Catra as a betrayal; a conflict that plays

out for four out of five seasons. The concept of abandonment is then reflected by Catra herself:

*She **left** us! She **left** me!* [160]

*She **left** me behind too, like I was nothing.* [166]

*Just **leave** ... like everybody else.* [183]

*Of course she's **gone**, that's what she always does.* [208]

as well as by others:

*Didn't need you...**left** you;* [194]

*Easy, Catra... Adora **is not here** to protect you anymore.* [167]

The concept is mostly expressed through the verb 'to leave', and is important to the Catra and Adora's relationship in that Catra's reaction demonstrates the significance of their connection for her, and the understanding that Adora preferred the new ideology, environment and power over this connection. Later on Adora says that it was not her intention to leave Catra:

*I never wanted to **leave** you!* [201]

The revelation helps Catra rethink her actions and make a first step towards her redemption, which in the end would be reflected in her own refusal to leave Adora:

*No, I'm not **leaving**! Whatever happens I am staying with you!* [208]

This can be interpreted as one of the most clearly communicated instances of Catra's sexual identity.

2. CHOICE. This concept is important for the analysis of Catra's understanding of the connection to other people. The way she was treated throughout her childhood defined her perspective of 'love' as a 'finite' resource, seeing as intimidation, manipulation and verbal and physical abuse of Catra went alongside favoritism of Adora. So, having adopted this mental framework, Catra sees Adora choosing the rebellion (and deciding to go with Shadow Weaver's plan later in the series) as not choosing her, adding to the overall idea of betrayal. This concept is mostly presented in the form of a verb 'to choose':

*She **chose** her side, I **chose** mine.* [173]

*That's what you'll always **choose**.* [207]

*When do you get to **choose**?..* [208]

*Adora **chose** Shadow Weaver, okay? Not me!* [208]

For Adora the concept of CHOICE is not contingent on constructing her sexual identity (in choosing to have feelings for Catra), but rather on an idea of constructing her identity itself. From her childhood, Adora was denied agency in her life; even when she finds a sword, she becomes She-Ra, and perceived by others as this mystical warrior and her self-worth is defined by what she can do or how she might be useful. The narrative of being the Chosen One renders Adora incompetent to make choices:

*No, this is your destiny. You do not **choose**, you were **chosen**.* [168]

In Adora's storyline, the concept of CHOICE becomes the enabling mechanism for her to construct her own self, including the sexual identity that comes through in the form of her relationship with Catra.

3. VICTORY. The concept of VICTORY becomes important later into the show, seeing as after Adora's 'betrayal' Catra builds her tactics according to the narrative installed in her mind by the abusive mentor from her childhood. She believes that winning would prove Shadow Weaver's perception of her as inferior to Adora, and, additionally, defeating Adora would be the only right response to her 'betrayal'. This concept is portrayed mostly through the verbs 'to win' and 'to lose':

*That means we **win** and you **lose**.* [163]

*Oh I'm going to make sure we **win**.* [175]

*I won't let you **win**.* [187]

*I thought **winning** would be... different.* [188]

*Adora always gets everything she wants...but not this time. I am going to **win**.*
[193]

The concept of VICTORY is closely connected with the idea of 'power as safety', which would be proven wrong in the end of the show through Catra's character.

4. ASPIRATION. The concept of ASPIRATION is central to the construction of identities of the main characters. With both Catra and Adora being the products of a military regime and stripped of their desires (as expressions of identity), realizing what they want – as opposed to what they were told to want:

*Is this not what you've **wanted** since you were old enough to **want**? [165]*

– marks the starting point of their self-realization. This concept is constructed mostly in a form of interrogatory sentences with the help of the verb ‘to want’:

*– Is this what you really **want**? To rule the world? [180]*

*– I mean...yeah, obviously. Isn't that what you **want** too? [180]*

*What do you **want**, Adora? [208]*

*What do you **want** when this is all over? [208]*

When the ASPIRATION is not contextualized in the form of question, it is usually to assert the evident desire:

*You **want** to go back for her. [198]*

or to state the absence of one:

*We both know that was not what you really **wanted**. [194]*

*Adora doesn't **want** me! Not like I **want** her. [208]*

*I never **wanted** to leave you! [207]*

The concept is the second most important in constructing the queer sexual identity, seeing as through it, the characters express their desire to have a connection with each other.

5. LOVE. The concept of LOVE is contextualized in many forms and is central to building up queer sexual identities of the characters, seeing as the show makes it clear that love helps us express our authentic self, which can get pushed down and corroded by fear. The main characters of the show, Adora and Catra, embody the process of self-actualization: both of them being manipulated and abused in the childhood, they are able to manifest their suppressed identities through their bond, which is most evidently expressed in the verbal form with the verb ‘to love’, in the end of the fifth season:

Don't you get it? I love you, I always have. [208]

You love me. [208]

I love you too. [208]

This encapsulates the central conflict of the whole show: love vs. power, magic vs. machine, natural vs. artificial. Two of the antagonists of the story – Horde Prime and Shadow Weaver – embody the denial of agency and identity and imposing foreign framework onto other people, either through mind-controlling chips or abusive conditioning, in a quest of gaining power, which can also be interpreted as heteronormativity and homophobia. The show makes it clear, however, that the real power comes from love, from being true to one's self, asserting the idea of embracing one's identity and acting according to one's own aspirations.

The concept of LOVE is also expressed in the form of denial of attraction, as in the following examples of Catra denying her attraction towards Adora:

*This is **not** because I like you. [165]*

*I knew you'd be weird about me letting you escape, I told you, it's **not** because I like you. [167]*

I don't like you. [167]

*Fine! I'm only doing this to make sure Shadow Weaver doesn't try anything, **not** because I like you. [206]*

This can be explained in the context of dysfunctional mental framework Catra picked up from her childhood abuser, the one where 'attachment' – as an expression of identity – is synonymous with 'weakness' and therefore not allowed. This can also be interpreted as internalized homophobia: being subjected to society's negative perceptions, intolerance, and stigma toward people with same-sex attraction, an individual can unconsciously turn those ideas inward, adopt them as inherently true, and experience self-hatred as a result of being a socially stigmatized person. The only difference is that for Catra it is not society that stigmatizes her attachment to Adora, but the abusive parental figure, Shadow Weaver.

The same character tries to discourage Adora's attraction towards Catra. Being more manipulative than abusive with her, Shadow Weaver frames the idea of having feelings towards Catra as unwanted and hindering her mission:

*Catra, she **distracts** you, **confuses** you.* [207]

The same idea will reoccur later, coming from Adora herself, portraying the dangers of being manipulated and the difficulties of dealing with the childhood trauma and the toxic mindset that emerges as a defensive mechanism in response to abuse:

*I'm **distracted** and **confused**.* [207]

It is only when both Catra and Adora are able to overcome the constructs imposed on them from the outside and allow their identities to manifest themselves, they are able to openly declare their love for each other, which in the end saves the world.

6. HOME. The final concept is contextualized almost exclusively throughout the last season of the show, with HOME being the metaphor for 'safety':

*I'm going to take you **home**.* [200]

*We're going **home**.* [200]

*I... I want to go **home**.* [200]

*We made it. We're **home**.* [205]

HOME is something that Catra, as a traumatized child, is constantly and frenetically seeking out. Because of the abuse she endured throughout her childhood, she was conditioned to associate 'safety' with 'power', so at first, after Adora leaves for the rebellion, she tries to regain the feeling of being safe by accumulating as much power as she can, rejecting the connections she had and not allowing the new ones – for example, that with Scorpia – to form (playing out the idea that 'connection' equals 'vulnerability'). When this tactics fails to give her the feeling of safety, she is forced to reconsider this seemingly indisputable concept of 'power = safety', and as a result she is able to recognize this mindset as artificially imposed and meant to suppress the expression of identity.

2.2.1. Flirting techniques in *She-Ra and the Princesses of Power*

Flirting is a relatively wide concept, and can be manifested on a spectrum of explicitness-implicitness, and can incorporate verbal as well as non-verbal elements. The most common techniques of flirting used in the TV show are ‘banter’ and ‘teasing’.

The characters of Adora and Catra can be observed engaged in flirtatious behavior throughout the course of five seasons. In their case, flirtation is bi-directional; Catra flirts with Adora:

Hey, Adora, how's it hanging? [157]

Oh, Adora... you know nothing's too low for me. [157]

Looks like you're mine now, Adora. [169]

What are you waiting for? You're gonna play me a song on that thing? [174]

You're such an idiot. [200]

What? I'm not doing anything. [203]

Of course I'm going with you, dummy. [208]

and Adora flirts with Catra:

Come on, Catra. We're senior cadets now. I can't believe you're still pulling such childish, immature— is that a mouse?! [157]

Wow, I can't believe you like me; it's so embarrassing for you. [175]

Did you just jump into fire for me? [207]

Some of the utterances acquire the connotation of flirtation through contextual non-verbal factors, such as prosodic features and eye gaze; otherwise, taken out of the context they may seem offensive or not related to the techniques of flirting. It can be said that this type of flirting is functioning on the pragmatic level of language.

Although not directly linked to the techniques of flirting, it is also worth mentioning that Melog, a shape-shifting creature that forms a connection with Catra, synchronizes with her and is able to project her emotions. Melog is calm and friendly

around Adora, mirroring Catra's fondness of her, and acknowledging the magical nature of Adora's alter ego, She-Ra [203-206]. Around Shadow Weaver, on the other hand, Melog is constantly alert and hostile, mirroring Catra's abhorrence and fear of her [204-206]. Melog's behavior can be interpreted as a visualization of Catra's attitude to these characters.

Spinnerella and Netossa can also be seen engaged in the flirting exchange of utterances as well:

Yes, darling, you have beautiful nets. [159]

That's my girl! You win. [201]

Hello, beloved. [205]

However, seen as they are established as a married couple even before the events of Adora's storyline begin to unravel, their banter is less latent and is expressed more on a lexical level, than on pragmatic.

2.3. Narrating queer gender identities in *She-Ra and the Princesses of Power*

The *She-Ra and the Princesses of Power* is unique in that it explicitly depicts the first ever non-binary character, Double Trouble, in the children-oriented TV show. They are a mercenary, a double agent and a performer, possessing ability to shape-shift, and, respectively, to impersonate a range of other characters from the show. Though no one has ever seen their true form, Double Trouble, when not pretending to be somebody else, looks like an anthropomorphic reptilian, which, according to the show runners, is supposed to resemble a chameleon.

Double Trouble is referred to by Catra using a singular they/them pronouns:

*Lord Hordak, I'd like to introduce you to Double Trouble. **They're** our newest asset in taking down the Rebellion.* [184]

Just as in the case with queer sexual identities, Double Trouble's identifying as non-binary is not questioned or explained in the show, further normalizing queer gender identities as well.

Being a performer, the character of Double Trouble serves as metaphor for the Butler's theory of gender performativity, seeing as they can 'perform' any gender role. The metaphor is further underpinned by a sheer number of lexical units referring to the theatre and theatrical performance:

*The **theatre** has many secrets!* [202]

*I know a way out! Take me to the **stage**! I...I mean it, take me to the **stage**.* [202]

*I can't cry **on cue**! Whenever a **role** calls for tears the only thing that works is thinking about children falling.* [194]

*I guess I should be working on my Adora **impression**; she's clearly the leader here.* [191]

***Bravo!** You caught me, again.* [194]

*Oh, **foreshadowing!** Love this!* [192]

*Did you really like my **audition**?* [192]

The highlighted words form a recurring concept of a play and are all thematically linked to the theatre and act of performance.

What might be considered problematic regarding the character of Double Trouble is the fact that they are depicted as a mercenary, working with both the protagonists and the antagonists as if being indifferent to whether their motivations and values are right or wrong. The representation through a morally grey character can be seen as not a positive one, not to mention that Double Trouble is the only non-binary character throughout the entire show.

The show featured several characters that the show runners confirmed to be transgender – like Jewelstar, who is a transgender man – but since these characters appeared in the show episodically, the collected linguistic material was insufficient to

conduct the analysis of their speech and make any conclusions about how they use language to narrate their gender identities.

What is remarkable, however, is the show's commentary on gender norms. Being a reboot of the animation series from the 1980s, *She-Ra and the Princesses of Power* got rid of the long skirts and diversified the body types of female (and male) characters. Apart from that Adora, Glimmer, and other female characters are often seen wearing trousers and leggings; Catra attended the Princesses' ball in a suit (a stereotypically male attire) [164] and Mermista showed up to the party in a tuxedo (which is as a rule required of men) [202]. Bow's usual attire, on the other hand, consists of a crop top (which is usually labeled as a female piece of clothing) and pants. Their costume designs do not imply the queerness of their gender identities, however, but further add up to the Butler's theory of gender performativity.

Conclusions to Chapter 2

The analysis of the linguistic material collected from the children-oriented animated TV shows *She-Ra and the Princesses of Power* illustrated the way queer gender and sexual identities are narrated in the show. The data for the analysis was compiled from the utterances of the characters that are, or were mentioned to be in the same-sex relationship, or have shown overt romantic attraction, among others, to the characters of the same gender. Additionally, the utterances from other characters speaking about the queer sexual or gender identities were taken into account. Seeing as the study falls in line with Butler's model of performativity [24] and the Levon and Mendes's notion of intersectionality [99], the additional social context was explored that might have had the influence on the way the characters performed their social identities— for example, abusive mental frameworks that suppressed the manifestation of queer sexual identity.

It was concluded that the queer representation was most overtly carried out by the main characters, Adora and Catra, and manifested through their relationship with each other. Within their storyline, six crucial recurring themes were identified, which played specific roles in the way their sexual identities were narrated. These are: ABANDONMENT, CHOICE, VICTORY, ASPIRATION, LOVE, and HOME. The most important ones being ASPIRATION, HOME and LOVE, others were defined as a result of the interference of the warped mental patterns learned throughout the abusive experiences of their childhood on the way they performed their sexual identity.

The way that antagonistic characters (Shadow Weaver, Horde Prime) tried to deny the main characters their agency and make them renounce their feelings for each other can be interpreted as a metaphor for heteronormativity and homophobia, and the show's finale – the main characters defeating the antagonists – can be read as the commentary on these phenomena.

Another means for queer sexual identities to manifest themselves is the practice of flirting. The analysis of the linguistic material allowed the following conclusions to be made: the main characters are engaged in flirtations on a pragmatic level of language (meaning that the ‘flirting’ connotation is added by non-verbal elements of communication – prosodic features and eye contact, for instance), while the established same-sex couples are observed exchanging the flirting utterances on a more lexical level using endearing terms, for instance *darling* or *beloved*.

The normalized queer representation is also conducted through secondary characters, established as canonical same-sex couples, for example, Spinnerella and Netossa, who refer to each other as ‘wives’, and Bow’s parents, both of them men, with Bow referring to them as ‘my dads’. The absence of ‘coming out’ narratives is defined as a measure against heteronormativity and for homonormativity, seeing as the phenomenon of ‘coming out’ is considered to unnecessarily highlight the queerness against the backdrop of ‘standardized’ heterosexual and cisgender characters.

The queer gender identity is narrated through Double Trouble, a non-binary mercenary and shape-shifter. The character is referred to with the help of singular they/them pronouns, and, being a performer with the ability to impersonate any person, be that a man or a woman, can be interpreted as a metaphor for the performativity of gender, proposed by Butler. It is further reinforced by the amount of lexical units related to the theatre, acting, and performance, that Double Trouble uses in their speech.

CHAPTER 3. NARRATING QUEER SEXUAL IDENTITIES IN TV SHOW 'THE OWL HOUSE'

3.1. Overview of the criteria for the analysis of the queer characters in children-oriented animated TV shows

The illustrative material of this study was compiled from several children-oriented cartoon TV-series with queer characters being among the main ones or the secondary ones ('She-Ra and the Princesses of Power', 'The Owl House'). The queer characters are identified as characters that are, or were mentioned to be in the same-sex relationship, or have shown overt romantic attraction, among others, to the characters of the same gender. Additionally, it was checked whether the writers or directors of the show confirmed that the characters are indeed queer (for example, on September 2, 2020, during a Reddit AMA, Dana Terrace confirmed that Amity is intended to be a lesbian and that Luz is bisexual [148]).

The Owl House is an American animated one-season TV-series created by Dana Terrace and produced by *Disney Television Animation*, available on Disney Channel, with the first episode having aired on January 10, 2020, and the last on August 29, 2020. The show follows a teenage human girl Luz Noceda, who accidentally ends up in another world, on an archipelago of the Boiling Isles, befriending the outcast witch Eda Clawthorne (a.k.a. 'The Owl Lady') and pursuing her dream of becoming a witch herself. *The Owl House* has been praised for the LGBT inclusion, being nominated alongside *She-Ra and the Princesses of Power* for a GLAAD Media Award for Outstanding Kids and Family Programming [64].

The analysis material for this paper comprises of the lines of the dialogue from the episodes that were said by the queer characters themselves, as well as the lines of dialogue said by others with regard to these characters.

The samples from this cartoon TV show are analyzed in order to determine the ways the characters communicate their gender or sexual identity. The hypothesis goes as follows: since these TV shows are written in line with the ongoing process of normalization and destigmatization of LGBT and are striving to achieve positive queer representation on screen, the queerness of the characters would not have a negative connotation or perceived as something wrong or deviant. The instances of negative connotation in the context of queer characters narrating their identity, or negative commentaries from other characters regarding the queer ones, should there be any, will be explored in greater detail in order to determine what type of ideology is portrayed by them – the heteronormativity or something else. Additionally, the way the characters perceive their own identities are explored. The analysis follows the Butler's model of performativity [24] and the Levon and Mendes's notion of intersectionality [99], so the impact of other social contexts is also taken into account.

The corpus of 94 utterances from 8 characters (both queer and straight, talking about the queer) was compiled for this section, and analyzed in accordance with the defined criteria.

3.2. Narrating queer sexual identities in *The Owl House*

In the animated TV shows *The Owl House* queer representation is conducted mainly through two of its main characters, a human teenage girl Luz Noceda and a teenage witch Amity Blight. Additionally, Willow – another major character of the show, Amity and Luz's classmate – is seen to be raised by a gay couple, having two fathers in Episode 15 *Understanding Willow* [223]. However, because Willow's parents are only seen in her memories and do not have any lines of dialogue, it is impossible to analyze the queer representation in the TV series through their characters. Likewise, during Episode 16 *Enchanting Grom Fright* several some same-sex couples can be seen dancing during the Grom, with no lines of dialogue to comment on the occurrence [224].

Just as in *She-Ra and the Princesses of Power*, same-sex relationships and same-sex parenting are not brought up for questioning or judgment at any given moment of the show. Furthermore, as in *She-Ra and the Princesses of Power*, *The Owl House* also does not feature the narratives of ‘coming out’, making a steady case for normalizing queer identities and decreasing the heteronormativity within the children-oriented media content. The queerness of the main characters was confirmed by the creator of the show, Dana Terrace, on social media, so as not avoid using the queer labels in the script.

Unfortunately, the show does not include any confirmed genderqueer characters – non-binary, transgender, or otherwise, – so the queer representation in *The Owl House* is narrowed to the portrayal of queer sexual identities. However, the show does give brief implicit commentary on gender norms, as well as on the expression of one’s identity, which will be discussed further.

The dynamics between main characters differs from that between Adora and Catra from *She-Ra and the Princesses of Power* in that the relationship between Amity and Luz is more one-sided, with Amity being clearly depicted as having romantic feelings towards Luz (while Luz’s attitude towards Amity would be more accurately described as ‘friendly’). On the other hand, the narratives of queer identities from both TV shows are similar in that they are heavily influenced by other factors, including upbringing and social status, for example, adhering to the Levon and Mendes’s notion of intersectionality of social identity.

With both of the main characters being confirmed queer (Amity is lesbian, Luz is bisexual [148]), the analysis is focused more on Amity, since Luz’s sexual identity is mostly hinted in the show itself, or otherwise expressed with the help of non-verbal language. For example, she blushes when winked at by Amity’s older twin siblings, Emira and Edric, in Episode 7 *Lost in Language* [215]. Amity’s character, on the other hand, provides plenty of linguistic material for the study. Apart from that, the

only other instance of Luz narrating her queer sexual identity can be observed in Episode 12 *Adventures in the Elements*:

*Now that I'll be a student at Hexside I want to learn all about it! I've got a new crush and **her** name is education!* [220]

It is noticeable that Luz uses female possessive adjective 'her', talking about an abstract notion of 'education' in the context of having a 'crush' on it, i.e. romantic feelings towards the same gender as herself.

3.2.1. Narrating same-sex attraction in *The Owl House*

The show first introduces Amity as a bully, picking on her classmate Willow. Over the course of seven episodes her character is explored further; she is shown to have her own motivations and aspirations, and is starting to become friendlier with Luz. Later she develops romantic feelings towards her, which peak in Episode 16 *Enchanting Grom Fright*.

The main technique used in the show to narrate Amity's attraction towards Luz is awkward speech and blushing. Amity blushes when Luz gets into her personal space, and stammers and talks nonsense when talking to Luz:

Oh, Luz! You're...here, I-I mean, obviously, you're here, this is school and you...go here, now. With, uh, me. [225]

Me? On a team with ...you? Running around...in cute uniforms? Sweating? I gotta go! [225]

I-I'm fine! Who's Amity? [225]

Oh. Wow. Sports. [225]

Every utterance mentioned above is completed with non-verbal language, such as blushing and darting glances.

Another peculiarity of the way Amity's sexual identity is narrated throughout the course of the show is that she, just like Catra, denies the existence of attraction towards Luz. In the examples:

She can be so stupid!.. Which I love... I mean hate! [225]

In any case she needs you right now. Which is sweet... I mean I hate it and it's dumb! [225]

Amity states that she finds traits of Luz's character endearing (*love, sweet*), directly followed by a contradiction (*hate, dumb*), completed with blushing and stammering.

To understand this denial of her feelings her upbringing must be taken into account. In Episode 15 *Understanding Willow* in a flashback into Amity's childhood it is revealed that her parents are manipulative and abusive, and forced her to sever her friendship with Willow in favor of more 'suitable companions' [223]. This pressure to maintain a high social status, together with constant effort to exceed in her studies can be interpreted as factors hindering her from openly admitting that she has a crush on Luz to others.

What might be interpreted as homophobic remark – Boscha's comment on Amity joining the team of Luz and Willow in Episode 17 *Wing It Like Witches*:

You just destroyed your social life. [225]

should be instead approached from the same standpoint. Willow and Luz are considered to belong to the lower social strata; Willow for failing her classes and Luz for being a human, so what Boscha really mean is that by joining the team of outcasts Amity consciously chooses to be associated with them.

Episode 16 *Enchanting Grom Fright* further explores Amity's reluctance to act on her feelings towards Luz. Throughout the episode she is seen holding on to a pink note, which was later revealed to be Amity's intention to ask somebody out for the dance and refusing to fight Grometheus, the Fear Bringer. Luz agrees to substitute Amity in her fight, and in doing so, she is forced to face her mother after she finds

out the truth about how Luz is spending her summer. The show makes a parallel between Luz's and Amity's fears, with the former being afraid of her mother being disappointed with her and the latter terrified of her invitation getting dismissed. In this parallel it becomes clear that both fear the same thing – rejection from someone dear to them. They engage in dancing sequence defeating the monster and become the Grom Queens. In the finale of the episode, the following exchange occurs between Luz and Amity:

– *So, who did you wanna ask out?*

– *Oh, it's... it's not important.* [224]

Still unwilling to admit the truth, Amity is depicted throwing out half of the note, which together reads '*LUZ, Will you go to Grom with me? Amity*'.

Worth mentioning is also an exchange of flirtatious teasing lines of dialogue between Amity and Luz just before the Grom:

– *And... Thank you, Luz. Honestly, I'm kind of amazed with how fearless you are. You've done things I could never do.*

– *You're right! You're going soft on me, Blight?*

– *Hah! In your dreams.* [224]

The last two lines, with both Luz and Amity using prosodic features and eye contact that is characteristic of flirting, as well as Luz using Amity's last name in a teasing way, can be interpreted as flirting.

3.3. Commentary on heteronormativity and gender conformity in *The Owl House*

Despite all of its characters being cisgender, the TV show nevertheless touches upon the topic of gender expression and gender conformity. Supporting Butler's idea of gender performativity, in Episode 16 *Enchanting Grom Fright*, Luz wears a fusion costume to the Grom, which consist of a skirt (usually worn by women) and a tuxedo

(a stereotypically male outfit). When Amity sees her outfit for the first time, her comment is meant to resonate with the viewer's impression of Luz:

You look nice. Strange, but... nice. [224]

In the same episode, Eda wears a suit, which is also typically associated with male clothes, and mentions her intention of applying red eye shadow, which is, along with other types of decorative make-up products, more often than not associated with women.

Likewise, King, who is referred to using he/him pronouns, wears a 'girly' cheerleader outfit – completed with a crop top and a skirt – in Episode 17 *Wing It Like Witches* while rooting for Eda in a match [225].

Furthermore, in Episode 16 *Enchanting Grom Fright*, Luz, while wondering through a forest, talks to herself:

*Eda doesn't know me! I'm brave! I'm a bad **boy**.* [224]

She uses the word 'boy' referring to herself, even though through the entire TV series she is referred to by everybody (including herself) using she/her pronouns. However, in this case the gender inconsistency is somewhat mitigated if the expression 'a bad boy' is taken as a single lexical unit, with the meaning of 'somebody does not conform to approved standards of behavior, especially in a particular sphere of activity'.

From the very beginning, the show asserts its stance on self-expression and self-actualization. In Episode 1 *A Lying Witch and a Warden*, in a pursuit of King's crown the characters find themselves in the Conformatorium, and Eda mentions that it is:

A place for those considered unsuitable for society. [209]

This can be considered as a metaphor for the heteronormativity, seeing as queer individuals are often seen 'inappropriate' or 'unsuitable' to be a part of a society.

Later, when Luz is talking to one of the individuals behind the bars inside of the Conformatorium, the following dialogue takes place:

– *I'm not a criminal.*

– [...]

– *Neither are we! The stupid Warden likes to lock people up who don't fit in. Like, I write fanfics of food falling in love; I like food, I like love – just let me write about it!* [209]

The other imprisoned characters also state that they are not, in fact, criminals, but instead are different and do not conform to the societal norms of behavior or presenting themselves.

The show's stance of the heteronormativity and gender conformity – or, otherwise, any labeling of particular means of self-expression as 'wrong' or 'different' by society – is then voiced by the character of Luz. When releasing the prisoners of the Conformatorium, she argues that:

Us weirdoes have to stick together. And nobody should be punished for who they are! [209]

This claim can be used as an argumentation supporting both queer gender and sexual identities and the multiple and diverse ways they can manifest themselves.

Conclusions to Chapter 3

The analysis of the linguistic material collected from the children-oriented animated TV series *The Owl House* illustrated the way queer sexual identities are narrated in the show. The data for the analysis was compiled from the utterances of the characters that are, or were mentioned to be in the same-sex relationship, or have shown overt romantic attraction, among others, to the characters of the same gender. Additionally, the utterances from other characters speaking about the queer sexual or gender identities were taken into account. Seeing as the study falls in line with Butler's model of performativity and the Levon and Mendes's notion of intersectionality, the additional social context was explored that might have had the influence on the way the characters performed their social identities— for example, the manipulative upbringing that might hinder the manifestation of queer sexual identity.

It was concluded that the queer representation was most overtly carried out by two of the main characters, Amity and Luz, and manifested through Amity's attraction towards Luz. Amity's sexual identity was mostly narrated using the means of flustering, stuttering, and talking nonsense. Another major characteristic is her denial of the existence of the attraction altogether and reluctance to admit having feelings for Luz in front of other people, Luz included. The characters were also shortly observed engaged in a flirtatious banter.

The other instances of portraying other same-sex relationships or same-sex parenting were present in the show, but devoid of linguistic material for the analysis. The queer gender identities are not represented in the TV series at all.

The show's attitude towards heteronormativity and gender conformity is conducted through Luz's claim that '*nobody should be punished for who they are!*' [1], and further backed up by characters being dressed in the clothes that are stereotypically

correlated with and are seen as appropriate for the opposite gender, such as female characters dressed in suits and tuxedos.

The normalized queer representation is also conducted through the absence of 'coming out' narratives. Just as in the case with *She-Ra and the Princesses of Power*, the notion of 'coming out' is seen as a heteronormative construct used to outline the queer individuals among the 'standardized' heterosexual and cisgender characters.

CONCLUSIONS

This thesis deals with the field of language, gender, and sexuality, as well as with queer representation in children-oriented animated TV shows. The main goal was to explore the ways queer gender and sexual identities are narrated in children-oriented animated TV shows.

Upon reviewing the theoretical studies on the topic, it was defined that the language, gender and sexuality is a complex and multifarious field of linguistics, which went through several pivotal turns, each of them changing the paradigm and the way the notions of gender, sexuality and language are interrelated. The first one was the dominance model, proposed by Lakoff [89], rendered women's speech as a deviant version of men's, and the differences between the two were explained in terms of access to power – or lack of one. With the emergence of the difference or “two-cultures” model of language and gender (e.g., Maltz and Borker [107], Tannen [146]) in the 1980s, women's speech became as valid as men's, the differences were explained by the ways boys and girls were socialized into their respective gender roles and the notion of linguistic deviant shifted to the sissies and tomboys.

The next shift – ‘discursive turn’ – narrowed down the scope of the research on male and female speech to the scale of communities, societies, and cultures, putting forward a new theory of language and gender, one based on the notion of *communities of practice*, which claimed that the links between language and gender are ‘learned’ throughout the life and in the diverse communities.

The queer linguistics emerged from the studies that were cataloguing the gay vocabulary, and evolved to incorporate methodological frameworks from communication and rhetoric disciplines, as well as LGBTQ culture studies, cultural theory, and linguistics. The field sees its main subject of study in the ways heteronormativity prevails in the society through the use of language.

In terms of queer representation, for the longest time it was non-existent, outwardly negative or merely hinted, seeing as most of the 20th century the cinema was restricted by Production Codes. Only when they were lifted did the film media see a spur of LGBT characters. Since then, the queer community being increasingly vocal in their claims to be represented in media in the positive light, as it can facilitate the process of normalizing and destigmatizing the queer community, and provide information on the topic for both its members and the outsiders.

The special attention is paid to the queer representation in the children-oriented media, since there are lingering stereotypes regarding the appropriateness of queer topics for children's programming. However, with the help of GLAAD, the queer characters start to appear in more and more children-oriented media content; giving the queer kids role models to look up to and heroes to relate with, and teaching the non-queer kids about the variety of gender and sexual identities.

The analysis of the linguistic material collected from the animated TV shows *She-Ra and the Princesses of Power* and *The Owl House* illustrated the way queer gender and sexual identities are narrated in the children-oriented media content. The data for the analysis was compiled from the utterances of the characters that are, or were mentioned to be in the same-sex relationship, or have shown overt romantic attraction, among others, to the characters of the same gender. Additionally, the utterances from other characters speaking about the queer sexual or gender identities were taken into account. Seeing as the study falls in line with Butler's model of performativity [24] and the Levon and Mendes's notion of intersectionality [99], the additional social context was explored that might have had the influence on the way the characters performed their social identities— for example, abusive mental frameworks that suppressed the manifestation of queer sexual identity.

It was concluded that in *She-Ra and the Princesses of Power* the queer representation was most overtly carried out by the main characters, Adora and Catra, and manifested

through their relationship with each other. Within their storyline, six crucial recurring themes were identified, which played specific roles in the way their sexual identities were narrated. These are: ABANDONMENT, CHOICE, VICTORY, ASPIRATION, LOVE, and HOME. The most important ones being ASPIRATION, HOME and LOVE, others were defined as a result of the interference of the warped mental patterns learned throughout the abusive experiences of their childhood on the way they performed their sexual identity.

For *The Owl House*, queer representation was most overtly carried out by two of the main characters, Amity and Luz, and manifested through Amity's attraction towards Luz. Amity's sexual identity was mostly narrated using the means of flustering, stuttering, and talking nonsense. Another major characteristic is her denial of the existence of the attraction altogether and reluctance to admit having feelings for Luz in front of other people, Luz included.

The way that antagonistic characters (Shadow Weaver, Horde Prime) tried to deny the main characters their agency and make them renounce their feelings for each other can be interpreted as a metaphor for heteronormativity and homophobia, and the show's finale – the main characters defeating the antagonists – can be read as the commentary on these phenomena.

The queer gender identity is narrated through Double Trouble, a non-binary mercenary and shape-shifter. The character is referred to with the help of singular they/them pronouns, and, being a performer with the ability to impersonate any person, be that a man or a woman, can be interpreted as a metaphor for the performativity of gender, proposed by Butler. It is further reinforced by the amount of lexical units related to the theatre, acting, and performance, that Double Trouble uses in their speech.

Another means for queer sexual identities to manifest themselves is the practice of flirting. The analysis of the linguistic material allowed the following conclusions to be made: the main characters are engaged in flirtations on a pragmatic level of language (meaning that the ‘flirting’ connotation is added by non-verbal elements of communication – prosodic features and eye contact, for instance), while the established same-sex couples are observed exchanging the flirting utterances on a more lexical level using endearing terms, for instance *darling* or *beloved*.

The normalized queer representation is also conducted through secondary characters, established as canonical same-sex couples, for example, Spinnerella and Netossa, who refer to each other as ‘wives’, and Bow’s parents, both of them men, with Bow referring to them as ‘my dads’; or Willow’s parents, both of them also men. The absence of ‘coming out’ narratives in both shows is defined as a measure against heteronormativity and for homonormativity, seeing as the phenomenon of ‘coming out’ is considered to unnecessarily highlight the queerness against the backdrop of ‘standardized’ heterosexual and cisgender characters.

In line with the modern tendency for accurate representation, it is important to understand how the queer topics are discussed in the media, especially in the children-oriented content. The analysis of ways queer identities are narrated in this particular discourse is of considerable interest for further research in the field of language, gender, and sexuality.

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SUMMARY

Стеблик Є. М.

НАРАЦІЯ КВІР ІДЕНТИЧНОСТЕЙ В ДИТЯЧИХ МУЛЬТИПЛІКАЦІЙНИХ ТЕЛЕСЕРІАЛАХ

У роботі було розглянуто лінгвістичні засоби створення квір персонажів в дискурсі дитячих мультиплікаційних телесеріалів.

Актуальність дослідження визначається його відповідністю вимогам сучасної лінгвістики, орієнтованої на вивчення комунікативно-функціонального аспекту мови, загальним збільшенням рівня терпимості до ЛГБТ спільноти та необхідністю детального аналізу того, як можна зобразити квір персонажів у позитивному світлі в медіа-контенті, цільовою аудиторією якого є діти. **Метою** дослідження є виявлення та аналіз способів зображення квір ідентичностей в дитячих мультиплікаційних телесеріалах.

Об'єктом дослідження є лінгвістичні засоби створення квір ідентичностей у дискурсі дитячих анімаційних телевізійних серіалів. **Предметом** дослідження є особливості висловлювання в англійській мові.

У цьому дослідженні використовувалися наступні **методи**: описово-аналітичний метод, метод суцільної вибірки, метод узагальнення, метод кількісних розрахунків.

Матеріалом дослідження слугували скрипти дитячих анімаційних телесеріалів «She-Ra and the Princesses of Power» («Ші-Ра і Могутні Принцеси») та «The Owl House» («Совиний Дім»). Корпус прикладів включає 305 висловлювань.

У першому розділі представлені різні точки зору на вивчення галузі мови, статі та орієнтації, висвітлені проблеми та полеміки в цій галузі, проаналізовано

внесок квір теорії та поняття квір-лінгвістики та досліджено явище квір репрезентації у медіа загалом та в контенті, цільовою аудиторією якого є діти.

Огляд наукової літератури дав змогу визначити, що сфера мови, статі та орієнтації є складною та багатогранною галуззю лінгвістики, у якій з плином часу відбулося декілька ключових змін у парадигмі, кожна з яких висувала нове розуміння того, як пов'язані між собою поняття статі та орієнтації, і яким чином вони відображаються у мові. Згідно з моделлю «домінування» жіноче мовлення вважалося девіантною версією чоловічого; відмінності ж між ними пояснювалися з огляду на нерівномірність розподілу влади між чоловіками та жінками. З появою у 1980-х роках нової моделі – «двох-культурна» модель, або модель «розбіжностей», – відмінності між стилями мовлення жінок і чоловіків пояснювались розбіжностями у тому, як їх соціалізують у відповідні гендерні ролі у дитинстві; поняттям мовного девіанта почали позначати мовців, чий стиль мовлення не відповідав їх гендерним нормам.

Наступна зміна парадигми – «дискурсивний поворот» – звузила предметне коло досліджень особливостей чоловічого та жіночого стилів мовлення до масштабів спільнот, суспільств та культур, висунувши нову теорію мови та статі, засновану на понятті *спільноти практик*, згідно з якою взаємозв'язки між мовою та статтю «засвоюються» мовцями протягом усього життя та в різних спільнотах.

Квір-лінгвістика з'явилася в результаті досліджень, що займалися каталогізацією специфічної лексики, яку використовували геї, і згодом розширилася, запозичивши методологічні схеми з комунікативних стратегій та риторики, а також напрацювання квір-теорії, культурознавства та лінгвістики. Квір-лінгвістика в основному займається дослідженням гетеронормативності та як ця тенденція створюється та передається за допомогою мови.

Впродовж довгого часу висвітлення квір тем або не було взагалі, або було негативним чи неявним, оскільки більшу частину XX століття кіноіндустрія була обмежена виробничими кодексами. Момент їх анулювання позначає початок появи ЛГБТ-персонажів в медіа. З тих пір ЛГБТ спільнота невпинно просуває ідею позитивної квір-репрезентації, з огляду на те, що це сприяє процесу нормалізації та дестигматизації квір-спільноти, а також надає інформацію по цій темі як тим, хто ідентифікує себе як квір, так і тим, хто знаходиться поза спільнотою.

Особлива увага приділяється квір-репрезентації в медіа контенті, цільовою аудиторією якого є діти, оскільки в суспільстві досі існують застарілі стереотипи щодо того, наскільки доцільним є висвітлення квір-тем в дитячих анімаційних телесеріалах. Організації на кшталт GLAAD заохочують збільшення квір-репрезентації у медіа контенті, орієнтованому на дітей до- та шкільного віку; це сприяє тому, що у дітей, які ідентифікують себе як частину ЛГБТ спільноти, з'являються рольові моделі та герої, з якими вони можуть асоціювати себе. У той же час позитивна квір-репрезентація виконує освітню функцію, розширюючи уявлення дітей про різноманітність гендерних та орієнтаційних ідентичностей.

Аналіз лінгвістичного матеріалу, зібраного з анімаційних телевізійних шоу «*She-Ra and the Princesses of Power*» та «*The Owl House*» мав на меті виявити, яким чином в орієнтованому на дітей медіа-контенті висвітлюються квір гендерні та орієнтаційні ідентичності. Предмет дослідження складається з висловлювань персонажів, які були зображені або згадані у одностатевих стосунках. Крім того, були враховані висловлювання інших персонажів, у контексті розмови про квір персонажів. Дослідження проводилося у відповідності з моделлю гендерної перформативності та поняттям інтерсекційності соціальної ідентичності, тому додатковий соціальний контекст

(наприклад, дитячі травми, які впливали на те, як персонажі актуалізували свою сексуальну орієнтацію) також був взятий до уваги.

В результаті дослідження було виявлено, що у телесеріалі «*She-Ra and the Princesses of Power*» квір-тематика найбільш явно висвітлена через головних персонажів (Адора та Кетра), зокрема через динаміку їхніх взаємовідносин. У їхній сюжетній лінії було визначено шість ключових тем, які впливали на те, як у серіалі проявлялася їхня сексуальна орієнтація: ПОЛИШЕННЯ, ВИБІР, ПЕРЕМОГА, БАЖАННЯ, ЛЮБОВ і ДІМ. Найважливішими з них є БАЖАННЯ, ДІМ І ЛЮБОВ, тоді як інші були деякою мірою визначені втручанням викривлених когнітивних схем, які стали наслідком дитячих психологічних травм.

У «*The Owl House*» квір-репрезентація була найбільш явно виявлена через головних персонажів, Еміті та Луз, і через їх взаємовідносини. Орієнтаційна ідентичність Еміті здебільшого проявляється через затинання та шаріння під час взаємодії з Луз, та небажанням визнавати свої почуття до Луз.

Тенденція антагоністів стримувати свободу волі протагоністів та змусити їх зректися своїх емоцій та почуттів можна трактувати як метафору гетеронормативності та гомофобії, а сюжет обидвох серіалів – перемога головних героїв над антагоністами – можна розуміти як засудження серіалами цих явищ.

Іншим засобом виявлення квір орієнтаційних ідентичностей є техніки флірту. Аналіз лінгвістичного матеріалу дозволив зробити наступні висновки: протагоністи більш схильні до флірту на прагматичному рівні мови (конотативне значення «флірту» створюється невербальними елементами мови – просодикою та зоровим контактом, наприклад), тоді як в утверджених

одностатевих парах спостерігається обмін фліртними висловлюваннями на більш лексичному рівні, з використанням термінів на кшталт *dear* чи *beloved*.

Нормалізоване висвітлення квір тематик також реалізується через другорядних персонажів, що перебувають у канонічних одностатевих шлюбних стосунках, чи/або разом виховують дітей. Відсутність наративів «камінг-ауту» в обох телесеріалах визначається як свідчення проти гетеронормативності та на користь гомонормативності, оскільки феномен «камінг-ауту» вважається недлишковим виокремленням квір ідентичностей на тлі «стандартизованих» гетеросексуальних та цисгендерних персонажів.

У світлі сучасної тенденції до розширеного репрезентації меншинств важливо розуміти, як квір тематика актуалізується у медіа, особливо в контенті, цільовою аудиторією якого є діти. Аналіз способів нарації квір-ідентичностей у даному дискурсі таким чином представляє значний інтерес для подальших досліджень у галузі мови, статі та орієнтації.