Liminal genders, Sub-liminal argots: Contextually framing a Vergence theory for Asian LGBTQs.

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Scholarship has well extended itself to conceptualize the sociocultural and linguistic anthropologies of western LGBTQ communities, evident in work by Foucault (1978), Bucholtz and Hall (2004), Leap and Boellstorff (2004), Edley and Wetherell (2008), and Weinberg (2009). Little work, however, has noted the complex discursive dynamics and linguistic anthropologies of LGBTQ groups in post-colonial Asian regions (cf. Boellstorff 2005; Abe 2010), thus exposing a significant void in scholarship, and a need for progressive and ecological approaches.

This investigation constitutes a comparative study, drawing on empirical data, in the form of ethnographically grounded interviews and language documentation, collated at LGBTQ communities in five Asian regions; Tokyo, Bangkok, Kuala Lumpur, Shanghai, and Seoul. A Critical Discourse Analysis grounded in theories of social and gender identity (Foucault 1978; Butler 1990) elicits overarching themes, thus forging qualitative pathways for a sociolinguistic anthropology (Ochs 1992; Silverstein 2003; Rampton 2007). The discourse analysis therefore uncovers sociocultural and gender dimensions that mediate, and become indexed by, queer constructions of LGBTQ languages and identities. These factors and synmediations between larger-social-network factors, and the languages, sexualities, and gender identities of LGBTQ communities, point to Ethnolinguistic and other Vitalities as predictors of shifting indexicality. The study hence exposes the code-switching repertoires and linguistic affordances with which members of Asian LGBTQ communities of practice negotiate sociocultural positionings, as well as ways in which members of these communities negotiate aspired and forced liminalities, culminating in a Vergence model of language and identity.

The study therefore advances scholarship in linguistic anthropology as it raises, and responds to, the uninvestigated concerns of ways in which members of LGBTQ communities in Asian regions ‘switch’ across orders of indexicality, so to negotiate language and identity.

Keywords: Linguistic Anthropoplogy, Indexicality, Gender Identity.