

# DECODING GAY LINGO: A MORPHO-SOCIOLINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF SWARDSPEAK AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS

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*Manuscript received 11 July 2023*

*Manuscript accepted 13 May 2024*

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<https://doi.org/10.33736/ils.5850.2024>

## ABSTRACT

The dynamic and creative nature of a language can lead to the development of linguistic deviations, such as the use of gay language. Gay language engages people of different ages, genders, and sexuality – inevitably including students. Thus, the study aimed at decoding morpho-sociolinguistic features of the gay language as used by college students. It used an explanatory sequential research design, utilising questionnaires and interviewing to gather data. Results revealed that there are more student swardspeakers than non-swardspeakers. Significantly, all LGBTQIA+ and “Prefer-Not-to-Say” groups are swardspeakers, while female swardspeakers outnumbered male swardspeakers. This study found most students use swardspeak in public places, in social media, and in texting. Morphological derivations of swardspeak include but are not limited to addition of the “j” phoneme, change of the final phoneme, clipping with affixation, code-switching, connotation through images, and eponymy. Finally, building relationships, concealment, and self-expression are some of the common reasons why students use swardspeak. Thus, the study recommends that a sociolinguistic primer of swardspeak can be developed to encourage students in learning a language. This can promote language competence among students.

**Keywords:** gay lingo; swardspeak; language competence; morpho-sociolinguistic analysis; social identity

## Introduction

One of the language trends that gradually change the perceptions of many, specifically in gender and social identity, is the use of gay language. The language became popular in the 1990's when scholarly studies were offered in the fields of queer and lavender linguistics. Queer linguistics posits that "who men and who women" are ideological formation (Leap, 2012) while lavender linguistics "focused attention on the importance of language, broadly defined, in gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered people's lives" (Leap, 2015, p. 649). Gay language has many different linguistic equivalents in different countries – *Bajub* in Brazil; *isiNgqumo* in South Africa (Raeymaekers, 2021); *Polari* in England (Baker, 2002); *Bahasa Gay* in Indonesia (Boellstorff, 2004). In the Philippines, the Filipino gay language is termed as swardspeak. It was coined in the 1970s by Nestor Torre, a known movie critic and columnist (Alba, 2006). According to Kaluag (2021), it was derived from the outdated term for "gay male", sward, though it was generally associated with the third sex in the 1970s.

Swardspeak is perceived nowadays as a form of creative use of language (Rubiales, 2020). Such creativity of the slang implies linguistic deviation (Abbas et al. 2017; Casabal, 2008), as it takes creative minds to develop vocabulary through resourceful derivations, which deviates from the norms of everyday conversations. Hence, it implies that closeted gay men (Romero, 2019) and other speakers, who are mostly women (Gregorio et al., 2022), also referred to as *babaeng bakla* - gay women, (Racoma, 2013; Garcia, 2009), are creative individuals.

Some gays are widely known for their capabilities and talents. This is unlike before, when they were afraid to express their abilities for fear of the rejection by the society. This time, many LGBTQIA+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning, intersex, asexual, and more) personalities are known for their talents, charitable acts, and successful stories. An example is Jennifer Pritzker, formally known as James Pritzker, an American who has donated millions to LGBTQIA+ charities. From the Philippines, Ricky Reyes, who was a floor sweeper in a parlour before becoming a hairdresser, is also known for a widely successful chain of beauty salons, a resort, and a line of beauty products. Rajo Laurel, also from the Philippines, is known as a multi award-winning fashion designer and a judge in Project Runway Philippines. They are merely some of the many gay persons who excelled in their own careers.

An ongoing issue that is prevalent in the society is the discrimination towards LGBTQIA+ members. According to Blackman (2015), there are different types of discrimination that LGBTQIA+ youths face, and it has adverse effects on them. Approximately 28% of gay and lesbian youths in the United States drop out of high school due to verbal and physical abuse in the school environment (Today's Gay Youth, n.d.). Furthermore, it was cited that their fears usually come from physical harm and name calling. Additionally, McCormick (2016) posited that many LGBTQ youths experience bullying, which in turn increased the risk for suicide, depression, drug abuse, and out-of-home placements. Another study by Malory et al. (2020) found that LGBTQ people in Virginia, USA experience bullying, harassment, and family rejection.

In Asia, despite reports of ongoing discriminations and hate crimes against the LGBTQIA+ community, the Philippines was found to have the most positive views toward homosexuality among Asian countries (Shadel, 2016), and that over the last several decades, Filipinos have become increasingly more accepting of gay men. However, in a recent report by the Human Rights Watch (2017), there are still cases of bullying against the LGBTQ community in the Philippines, especially among students. Gay lingo has become a source of laughter to many (Visaya, 2015) that even some straight guys use swardspeak (Dasovich, as cited by Shadel, 2016), though this observation is seen in the entertainment industry. Some people are irritated when hearing and listening to swardspeakers. When asked, they are annoyed as they do not understand the slang, though some honestly responded that they could understand a few words, and that they are irritated by the effeminate sound – gay voice (University of Toronto Magazine, 2022) – that gays, physically males, sound like females. Even though swardspeak has received so much attention and praise, it still has several flaws and limitations that make it vulnerable to disapproval and concern (Rubiales, 2020), one of which is the social context of the use of gay language either in formal or informal conversations. The other would be the status of interlocutors such as professionals, fellows, neighbours, and family members. Too much use of swardspeak may cause students to subconsciously make grammatical errors in their speech, which may lead to inconsistency in using one's language. Thus, the study aimed at decoding morpho-sociolinguistic features of the gay language as used by college students.

## **Literature Review**

### **Gay Lingo and Swardspeak**

Gay lingo simply refers to “gay language” – “gay” refers to the closeted male and “lingo” means an incomprehensible language on the part of the listener or reader.

Originally, swardspeak rose as an anti-language, which most of the marginalised community use as a secret language (Racoma, 2013), because, according to Casabal (2008), the argot was used by swardspeakers, mostly gays, to shield themselves from social stigma caused by gender discrimination. They were discriminated not only for the way they physically looked or the way they acted but also for the way they talked (Pascual, 2016), including their unique terminology and language expressions. Contrastingly, swardspeak was used to reinforce gay identity within their community (Muller, 2018). Thus, swardspeak may have risen as a need among the gay community to hide personal, private, or confidential topics and, more importantly, their social identity.

In the Philippines, swardspeak derivations come from different languages such as Spanish, English, Tagalog, Cebuano, Waray, Ilocano, Bicolano, and Hiligaynon (Racoma, 2013). In the 1990s, most of the root words used by the Filipino gay community were identified to have only originated from Cebuano, with English being the second largest source of words, while others from Spanish and Tagalog (Hart & Hart, 1990). Some elements also come from Japanese (Pascual, 2016), and that is why it was seen as a colourful language (Racoma, 2013) with colourful

associations, having the elements of parody and spirit of play (Remoto, 2020). This then suggests that the language is not only confined to the language of the swardspeakers, but it is also dynamic and extensive that almost all vocabulary categories, such as names of persons, movie characters, animals, places, foods, and activities, among others, could become lexical derivations.

The case of the Filipino gays was made known to the international audience by Manalansan (2003) via his study, "Global Divas: Filipino Gay Men in the Diaspora." He referred to queer as gay modernity – where most Filipino gays migrate to the US in pursuit of liberation, and clashes of gender, race, and sexuality brought about their queer identity (undetermined sexuality). Nowadays, it can be seen among students, gays or non-gays, that there is a sense of liberation on the identity of Filipino gay men and on their use of gay language. It is also observed that that they have their own derivations of gay terms.

### **Social Identity and Sociolinguistic Theories**

Social identity theory generally posits that every individual has the will to choose which group to participate and be identified with. The same case applies to swardspeakers, who possess the identity of their community. This could be observed through their language, actions, and physical dispositions.

Social identity refers to categories or classes of status that indicate one's place within a larger social system such as gender, age, and race (Davis et al., 2019). As such, social identity recognises a particular group through their collective similarities such as the gays through their gender and the business tycoons through their economic status.

Consequently, social identity theory, according to Harwood (2020), offers a paradigm for analysing "intergroup behaviour" and "intergroup communication" (pp. 1-2). This emphasises on an "individual's sense of belonging to a group," which could either lead to positive or negative behaviours. Hogg (2016), on the other hand, explicates that social identity theory was established to expound phenomena within the group and that language and speech are considered identity symbols. Thus, swardspeak gives identity to the gay community. Chambers (2017) postulates that there are factors affecting language use, such as age, gender, social class, and ethnicity.

Interestingly, Dang (2013) studied gay language in three sections: 1) definitions of gay language, 2) characteristics of gay language and 3) functions of gay language. As defined, it is a specific register or variant of language that is used in certain sociocultural circumstances (Cage, 2003). In some circumstances and contexts, this type of language has a specific application, but in others, it is used in relation to the LGBT subculture's social structure. According to Red (1996), gay language is a form of code employed in the gay community to prevent persons from outside the group (heterosexuals are referred to here) from understanding it and assisting members of the gay community to connect among themselves in their own discourse. This description draws our attention to Halliday's (1976) concept of anti-language, which is a specific type of language produced by some sort of anti-society.

## Methodology

The study used an explanatory sequential research design and employed a morpho-sociolinguistic approach in gathering quantitative data substantiated with qualitative data.

This study was conducted at Kalinga State University, Tabuk City, Kalinga. The questionnaire participants were 283 college students who were enrolled for the second semester of the school year 2022-2023. The interviews involved 10 students. The questionnaire covers the social context of swardspeak used among students. The instrument was crafted by the researchers based on the factual context of use of swardspeak observed among students and was validated by two language experts and one methodology expert. It has undergone reliability testing, which yielded a reliable correlation of 0.69 on the Spearman's Rho before administering.

Ethical considerations were factored into the study. All students gave their informed consent for inclusion before they participated in the study. No students were forced to answer the questionnaire nor undertake the interview unless they were willing to. In addition, utmost confidentiality of the details of the students and the gathered data was strictly observed.

For the interviews, the students were interviewed face-to-face when they were available. Follow ups were conducted through phone call interviews as it was most convenient to the students, which lasted for about 10-15 minutes.

The data gathered were analysed by employing morpho-sociolinguistic analysis. This is a combination of morphological and sociolinguistic approaches. Morphological approach analysed the word derivations of gay terms used among the swardspeakers. To quantify and interpret data on the word derivations, the three-point Likert scale was used as follows:

Value	Limits	Description
3	2.34 – 3.00	Always
2	1.67 – 2.33	Sometimes
1	1.00 – 1.66	Never

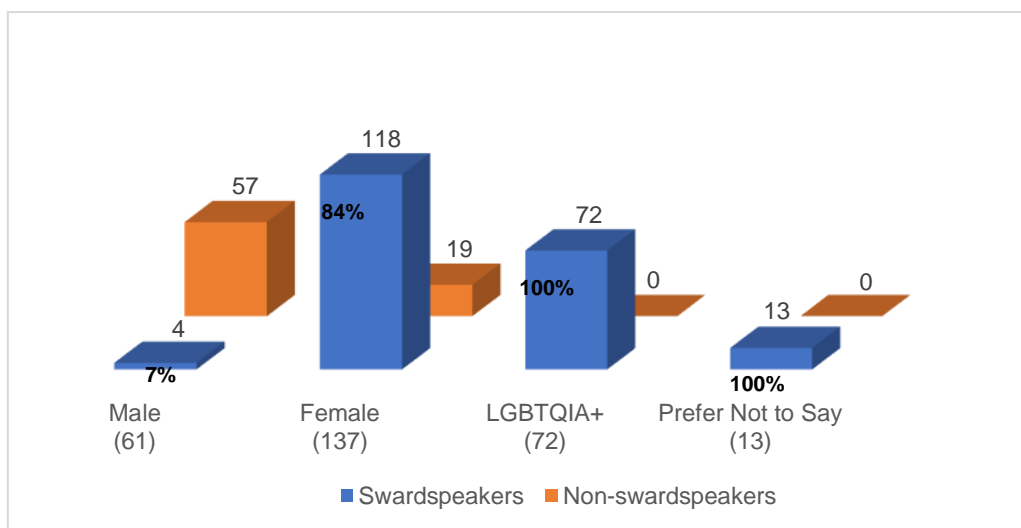
As for the sociolinguistic analysis, recorded interviews were transcribed, reduced, and coded. Common derivations of gay terms, including the implications on the use of swardspeak to the sociolinguistic competence of the participants were also extracted.

## Results and Discussion

Figure 1 shows that there are more swardspeakers than non-swardspeakers among the college students of Kalinga State University. Out of the 283 students who responded, 207 reported using swardspeak in communication. All LGBTQIA+ and "Prefer-Not-to-Say" group are swardspeakers, while there are more female swardspeakers compared to male students. Figure 1 indicated that four or 7% out of 61 are male swardspeakers, 118 or 84% out of 137 are female swardspeakers, 72 or

100% are LGBTQIA+ swardspeakers, and 13 or the same 100% are swardspeakers from the other group, who prefer not to disclose their gender.

**Figure 1**  
*The Gender of Swardspeakers*



Several studies reveal that non-gays also use gay language, such as other members of the LGBTQIA+ community – lesbians, bisexuals, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual and others (Gianan, 2008), straight females and straight men. Romero (2019) posits that both men and women use this language in daily conversations and Alba (2006) affirmed that non-gays (including all genders) acquired lexicons from the language.

The findings on the genders of swardspeakers further imply that gay language has characteristics that is adaptable to any speaker of any gender, because language learning starts with vocabulary knowledge – the more one learns of the vocabulary, the greater the capacity one has to communicate with the speakers of the language.

Since swardspak originated from the Philippines, more Filipino swardspeakers could understand the terms used. Literature has illustrated the colourful and playful language of swardspak which derived from different languages spoken in the country and also Spanish and Japanese (Hart & Hart, 1990; Pascual, 2016; Racoma, 2013; Remoto, 2020). Hence, learning and understanding the gay language would help reduce gender biases and promote mutual respect among gays and non-gay students and teachers (Rosales & Caretero, 2019).

**Table 1***Extent of Social Context of Use of Swardspeak (N=207)*

Indicator	Always (3)	Sometimes (2)	Never (1)	Weighted Mean	Description
1. I use swardspeak at home.	21 (63)	110 (220)	76 (76)	1.73	Sometimes
2. I use swardspeak in social media such as posting and commenting in Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, among others.	33 (99)	122 (244)	52 (52)	1.91	Sometimes
3. I use swardspeak when I communicate with my teachers /professors.	4 (12)	65 (130)	138 (138)	1.36	Never
4. I use swardspeak when talking to my friends and classmates.	31 (93)	118 (236)	58 (58)	1.87	Sometimes
5. I use swardspeak in texting.	36 (108)	111 (222)	60 (60)	1.88	Sometimes
6. I use swardspeak in oral recitation.	4 (12)	73 (146)	130 (130)	1.39	Never
7. I use swardspeak in my written compositions.	2 (6)	45 (90)	160 (160)	1.24	Never
8. I use swardspeak in public places such stores, malls, roads, and the like.	57 (171)	87 (174)	63 (63)	1.97	Sometimes
9. I use swardspeak in communicating with elder people.	14 (42)	73 (146)	120 (120)	1.49	Never
10. I use swardspeak in communicating with younger people.	21 (63)	127 (254)	59 (59)	1.81	Sometimes
Total Average Weighted Mean				1.67	Sometimes

Table 1 shows that most of the 207 student swardspeakers use swardspeak in public places such as stores, malls, roads, as well as in social media such as posting and commenting in Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube, and in texting. This was indicated by the weighted means of 1.97, 1.91, and 1.88 respectively under the category of *Sometimes*. Most of the swardspeakers can be heard talking in public places such as in malls, restaurants, and along the roads. The finding echoes the study by Romero (2019) which indicates that gay language is used by speakers in public places, social gatherings, and meeting places. Additionally, Gregorio et al. (2022) also supports the argument that gay language is used in public places with friends.

With the advent of technology, the use of gay language in texting, especially in posting and commenting in social media such as Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube, has become prevalent. Some even post videos in TikTok, YouTube, and Reels with gay language as content or using the language as the medium. Facebook has transformed into a knowledge base for many gay language users (Catacutan, 2013), including TikTok, which has become a stage for the LGBTQIA+ community (Benitez, 2022) and where much of their content has gone viral. Hence, social media plays the primary role in the proliferation of gay terms (Catacutan, 2013).

On the other hand, further significant findings revealed that most of the students never use swardspeak in written compositions, in communication with their teachers, and in recitation, as indicated by the lowest weighted means of 1.39, 1.36, and 1.24 respectively.

The findings imply that the students are aware of the appropriate contexts of the use of swardspeak, and that there is a proper place and time for the use of gay language. Restrictions on the use of swardspeak as evidenced by the findings are observed on the lack of swardspeak used in formal contexts, such as in the classroom, during discussions and recitations, and in writing compositions.

Consequently, since gay language can be considered a “sociolect” (social dialect), it is more prominent in speech compared to written works (Rosales & Caretero, 2019), especially in academic compositions because it does not have a specific grammatical structure for gay word formation (Sangga, 2015). In the case of gay language, most of its words are derived from existing languages such as English, Spanish, Nihongo, Tagalog, and Cebuano, among others. New words are formulated by adding affixes to the existing words (Susandi et al., 2018).

**Table 2**  
*Morphological Derivations of Gay Terms*

Category	Frequency	Percentage	Examples
Addition of “j” phoneme	146	70.5%	jikaw ( <i>ikaw</i> , <i>lmeaning “you”</i> ), jiwani/jiniwa, jooners, jorasan, jukas, jukawa, jusawa, juskis, jubis, boylet ( <i>boy</i> ), buysung chikaness, cryola, feelingness, getsung, givesung, gora, ikawa, kalaness, mudrabels, mudrakels, sisteret, waitsung
Addition of suffix	179	86%	akis ( <i>ako</i> , meaning “me”), aketch, anakshie, anes/aneshi, anik, besh, boyfie, ditech, ditey, itey, kakalurky, mamsh/momshie, murayta, papsh/papshie, sinetch, waley/waz, yonik/yoonik
Change of final phoneme	164	79%	bukit ( <i>bakit</i> , meaning “why”), gurl, makromi
Change of middle phoneme	123	59%	
Clipping	201	97%	bes ( <i>bestfriend</i> ), char ( <i>charing</i> )



Clipping with affixation	98	47%	baks ( <i>bakla</i> + suffix “s”), byunda, ganern, kyohay, kyota, madats, nopah, tanders, shupatid
Code switching	21	10%	nahear/nahearsung, nasight
Coinage	178	85.9%	aglipay ( <i>ugly+pinay</i> ), baboo/babush, charing, chika, echoz/echosera, nota, keme/pakeme, lafang/lafangers, wit chaka (from the character “Chucky” in the movie “Child’s Play), Ms. Nigeria, musical note, deadmatologist
Connotation through images	77	37%	Alma Moreno (almoranas meaning hemorrhoid), Bitter Ocampo, Carmi Martin, Gelli de Belen, Hagardo Versosa, Jano Gibs, Julie Yap Daza, Luz Valdez, OA Delas Alas, Rica Peralejo, Stress Drilon, Tom Jones
Eponymy	185	89%	atab ( <i>bata</i> , meaning “child”) lodi, moni, nobi, noypi, oka, rotom, sagib, sipal, walwal, werpa, yatap
Simple reverse	34	16%	adnatchi ( <i>tanda</i> , meaning <i>old + suffix chi</i> ), kohubsh (buhok + sh), prihams (mahirap + s), tokatch (takot + ch), yalkushi (suklay + hi)
Simple reverse with affixation	17	8%	

In Table 2, there are 12 identified morphological processes illustrating how words are formulated in swardspeak. Clipping is the most commonly used derivation process with 97% (201 instances). This is followed by eponymy (89% or 185 instances) and addition of suffix (86% or 179 instances). The morphological derivation of clipping words comes from the reduction of a word to form its shortcut such as bes for bestfriend and char for charing, meaning “just kidding”.

For eponymy, words are formed by creating new meanings to words which are borrowed from names of known people such as Alma Moreno for almoranas, meaning haemorrhoids, Bitter Ocampo for a bitter person, Carmi Martin for karma, Gelli de Belen for jealous, Hagardo Versosa for haggard, Julie Yap Daza for huli, meaning late, Luz Valdez for lost, OA Delas Alas for over acting, Stress Drilon for stressed, and Tom Jones for gutom, meaning hungry.

Additionally, many words in swardspeak are also formed through addition of suffix to existing words such as boylet (boy), buysung (buy), chikaness (chika), cryola (cry), feelingness (feeling), getsung (get), givesung (give), gora (go), ikawa (ikaw), meaning “you”, kalaness (kala), meaning “thought”, mudrabels/mudrakels (mudra), meaning “mother”, sisteret (sister), waitsung (wait). For instance, boylet is a gay term formed by adding the English term “boy” with suffix “let”.

Aside from the discussed derivation processes, other processes include addition of “j” phoneme, change of final phoneme, change of middle phoneme, clipping with affixation, code-switching, coinage, connotation through image, simple reverse, and simple reverse with affixation, as used by the swardspeakers.

The findings assert that there are many derivations for gay language to exist, such as the Bahasa Gay language which involves “derivational processes including unique suffixes and word substitutions, and pragmatics oriented around the community rather than secrecy” (Boellstorff, 2004, p. 248). Creativity most likely plays a vital role in formulating gay words. This concurs with Abbas et al. (2017), who posit that creativity is essential in all forms of communication and in swardspeak, they referred to this creativity as linguistic deviation – the use of language that deviates from its normal derivations and use. Rubiales (2020), Racoma (2013), and Romero (2019) also perceive the gay language as a creative language. However, it is still considered by many authors as “sociolect” rather than a language (Rosales & Caretero, 2019) as it cannot exist as a language (Salao, 2010) due to its limited linguistic dispositions in terms of grammar and structure. Additionally, swardspeakers do not have specific formula or rule about which particular prefix or suffix should be attached to a word appropriated from the mainstream language (Rosales & Caretero, 2019).

**Table 3**

*Implications on the Use of Swardspeak to the Language Competence of Students*

Informant ID	Response	Code
IN3	I have many <u>gay friends</u> and I should learn it for me to understand their conversation and communicate with them.	
IN4	To <u>communicate with gay friends</u> as camaraderie. Sometimes, when we want to <u>build relationship</u> with other people, we must learn to understand them through their language.	Building relationship
IN3	I can understand them now, and at least, we can <u>hide secrets and chismis (gossip)</u> through using gay language.	
IN5	I believe the purpose of using gay language is to <u>hide private topics</u> that we talk about among ourselves as gays or swardspeakers.	Concealment
IN8	Well, the purpose of why I use gay language is <u>to hide or secret our conversations that supposedly not to hear by others.</u>	
IN5	We also find confidence when we use the language because <u>we find the sense of belongingness.</u>	Identity marker

IN6	So from there on, <u>I felt confident to stand for my gender. I am a gay</u> and I have the purpose to live also, not as a straight, but at least I live without hurting other people or causing trouble to them.	
IN7	<u>I am a gay too.</u> I have learned about the terms they use and when he talks to me, he uses gay language.	
IN9	When I hear my female, lesbian, or male friends, whatever their genders, <u>I am happy because I feel like I belong.</u>	
IN7	I have learned about the terms they use and when he talks to me, he uses gay language. There, <u>I have learned to express who I am better when I use the language.</u> I think that is the purpose, for us gays to express ourselves better.	
IN9	Because it is a special language for me. It <u>provides a way for me to express myself</u> as a gay.	Self-expression
IN10	I know that many people do not like the language we use because they say it is very vulgar and like papansin (seeking attention), <u>but they do not know we can express our true selves with this</u>	

As seen in Table 3, there are four significant points or codes with regards to the responses of the students on to the implications of the use of swardspeak to their sociolinguistic competence. These are building relationships, concealment, identify marker, and self-expression. The students use swardspeak in order to connect to their gay friends in communication and to build relationship with them, as indicated in Excerpts (1) and (2):

- (1) I have many gay friends and I should learn it for me to understand their conversation and communicate with them (IN3).
- (2) To communicate with gay friends as camaraderie. Sometimes, when we want to build relationship with other people, we must learn to understand them through their language (IN4).

It is a predisposition that one must learn the language of the other person in order to start building relationship between each other. However, in the case of

swardspeak, when both swardspeakers use vernaculars, the gay language becomes the *lingua franca* in order to connect them to specific purpose such as building relationships.

Every language is used as a medium of communication, whatever the purpose may be. It is a man's potent tool because all our forms of expressions are transmitted through language, including one's need to be accepted and to feel the sense of belonging. With language as a tool, one can also build relationships with other people. Thus, this study shows a person may develop his or her ability to use gay language competently for the sake of fostering relationships with others.

Interestingly, Buarqoub (2019) explicated that one of the barriers to effective communication is the absence of common language – where two individuals misunderstand each other because of semantic miscommunication. Hence, to understand the LGBTQIA+ community better would mean to understand their language. As the LGBTQIA+ community gains acceptance in society, their language as their form of expression would be subjected to less discrimination. This in turn may result in more effective communication as the community becomes more understood by the society at large.

Another reason for using swardspeak among students is for concealment. Informant three stated, "I can understand them now, and at least, we can hide secrets and chismis (gossip) through using gay language." Similarly, Informant Five said, "I believe the purpose of using gay language is to hide private topics that we talk about among ourselves as gays or swardspeakers," while Informant Eight said, "Well, the purpose of why I use gay language is to hide or secret our conversations that supposedly not to hear by others." All three informants used swardspeak to hide secrets or topics that are private.

Past studies argued that swardspeakers used gay language to shield themselves from social stigma caused by gender discrimination (Casabal, 2008; Pascual, 2016; Racoma, 2013). The finding of the present study affirms Rubiales' (2020) argument that most students use swardspeak to hide explicit content of their conversations. Hayes (1976) pointed out that swardspeak was used for concealment of sensual topics such as sex, physical attractiveness, and intimacy of relationship. This notion is also supported by Taylor (2007), who identified topics hidden by swardspeakers include sex, body parts, and people.

As for the use of swardspeak as an identify marker, Informant 7 learned the terms in order to speak the gay language (Excerpt 3).

- (3) I am a gay too. I have learned about the terms they use and when he talks to me, he uses gay language. (IN7)

In the past decades, gays were harshly discriminated through their outward display of self – their appearance and actions, with some migrated to the US due to discriminations on gender, race, and sexuality (Manalansan, 2003). The use of gay language serves as their identifier. In recent years, an increasing use of swardspeak in the Philippines (Quackenbush, 2005) coupled with technological advancement (Catacutan, 2013) have led to gay language gaining a higher degree of acceptance in the contemporary era (Rubiales, 2020). The acceptance of gay language comes hand

in hand with the more visible identity of the gays and the LGBTQIA+ community. Students may make use of the gay language for the purpose of setting platform to freely express themselves and to be identified as part of their community without prejudice. Thus, the students can be more than just being the active ones, the academically-inclined ones, and the competitive ones when they can openly identify with their gender and orientation.

Another purpose on the use of swardspeak is for self-expression. This is directly related to the previously identified purpose and identity marker. As one is provided with the freedom to be identified as one's gender, the person becomes even more confident to express himself or herself, as illustrated in Excerpts 4 to 5.

- (4) I have learned to express who I am better when I use the language. I think that is the purpose, for us gays to express ourselves better. (IN7)
- (5) Because it is a special language for me. It provides a way for me to express myself as a gay. (IN9)
- (6) I know that many people do not like the language we use because they say it is very vulgar and like papansin (seeking attention), but they do not know we can express our true selves with this. (IN10)

According to Sunguitan (2005), the primary role of using the gay language is for freedom of expression among speakers. Linguistically, Romero (2019) explicates that Filipino gay language is flexible enough, having wide scope of lexicons – almost everything could be a source of word – that it gives freedom to speakers to articulate themselves expressively. Self-expression plays a vital role in the development of language competence because as one can express himself or herself, he or she can also possibly express language. Language is a means of communication and expression. The results show that swardspeak is used for building relationships, concealment, identity marker, and self-expression.

### **Conclusions**

For the purpose of decoding swardspeak among Filipino college students, the study determined the extent of social context use of swardspeak and identified the derivations of the gay terms used, including the purposes of the use of swardspeak among students. The study revealed that there are more swardspeakers than non-swardspeakers among the students, which implies that the language has become more acceptable at the present time. The gay language has the characteristic that is adaptable to any speaker of any gender, because the building block in language learning is vocabulary knowledge – the more one learns of the vocabulary, the greater the capacity to communicate with the speakers of the gay language. Thus, learning and understanding the gay language would help discard gender biases and promote mutual respect among gays and non-gay students and teachers. This study also revealed that most students use swardspeak in public places such as stores, malls, or roads. They also use swardspeak in social media, such as on Facebook,

Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube, and in texting. This suggests that the students are aware of the appropriate contexts of using swardspeak and that there is a proper place and time to use the gay language. Restrictions on the use of swardspeak, as evidenced by the findings, are observed on the discouragement of use of swardspeak in formal contexts such as in the classroom, during discussions and recitations, and in writing compositions. Moreover, it was found that there are many derivations for the gay language for it to exist, but creativity could play a pivotal role in formulating gay words. This shows that swardspeak is a creative language as gay terms are derived in many different ways, which deviate linguistically from existing languages. Further, it was also found that students make use of swardspeak mostly for building relationship, for concealment, as an identity marker, and for self-expression.

Thus, the study recommends that a sociolinguistic primer on the linguistic deviations of swardspeak may be developed for students to be motivated to learn a language, which may result in the development of language competence among students. Further studies on the development of swardspeak and the implications of use to the linguistic competencies of the students may also be conducted.

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