FOREIGN WORDS DOING GENDER IDENTITIES:
THE CASE STUDIES OF “GENDER”, “QUEER” AND “SLUT”

This discussion starts with a theoretical overview of the sociolinguistic phenomenon of language contact. I will analyze in particular the lexical borrowing as a linguistic process (Malkiel; Lehmann) and I will proceed by making a distinction between necessary and luxury loans (Gusmani).

In Italian today there are many words that have been loaned from other languages, predominantly from English. Sobrero defines this as 'internationalization of languages', a phenomenon derived from the increasing contact between different cultures and languages. This process appears stronger and more rooted in the fields of science and technology and, according to Sobrero's theory, the language lending the words is that of a nation considered advanced in these fields. However, these loans are not restricted solely to these areas. This paper focuses on loans of a different nature, derived from academia and / or activism (the importance of this and / or will be explored in this paper), and reproduced in our language in these specific fields as much as in more mainstream contexts.

The analysis of this phenomenon will be developed through the analysis of three foreign words recently welcomed into the Italian language (albeit to varying degrees): "gender", "queer" and "slut".

The choice of these terms is partly dictated by the fact that these words all derive from the same technical context. Additionally these three key words have become widely used in the everyday language. Over the last year "gender" in particular has become widespread, following the discussion on the so-called "gender ideology".

The paper will discuss contextualisation of these three terms within the current panorama of Gender Studies and Queer Theory, and the exploration of the history of the movements that originated these words. This process will inform the discussion on whether these specific terms should be considered as necessary or luxury loans, and what sociolinguistic factors help determining this.

The aim of the discussion is to show that in the three cases described some factors are determinants in welcoming these words (Zoller), and to show in what ways and what kind of social implications there are.
At first I will focus on the word "gender", providing an analysis of the concept itself to check its translatability (or not) with the Italian use of "gender". I will then proceed with a brief history of his environment in Italian academic use and vice versa with its increasingly English use in the so-called battle against the "ideology of gender" in order to highlight the instrumental use of what here will be considered a luxury loan.

I will proceed similarly with the analysis of the term "queer", offering an etymological analysis of the concept, analyzing his use in Italian academia and the reception by the LGBT and feminist movements to confirm that its difficult to translate and looking to the impact this non-translation has both in academia and in the activism.

Lastly the term "slut" will be analyzed in relation to its use in the context of 'SlutWalk', following its arrival in Italy and its various translation attempts (ie: the Roman collective Cagne Sciolte). The analysis will reveal that this is in fact a luxury loan relating to the mutilation due to the prestige of one culture over another. While enjoying the prestige of another culture that this term is not widely known in our country because of a force de rupture loss (we refer clearly to the concept of Derrida) in its re-signification effects.

Despite the sociolinguistics methodological approach that has been used here, the background context remains a philosophical one. This approach encourages to focus on bodies who pronounce these words and the subjects and identities that are challenged by them (Butler). The aim of this article is therefore to see how these identities are constructed through language and how a performative politics can or can not become a policy of re-signification. An analysis of the history of these words, supported by the theory of performativity of language and the possibility of re-signification of the terms from time to time will show how the choice of using the term in Italian or English, it increases or it diminishes the strength, or at least leading to a different communicative impact.

**Bibliography**


