



Dickinson

<http://www.gendersexualityitaly.com>

g/s/i is an annual peer-reviewed journal which publishes research on gendered identities and the ways they intersect with and produce Italian politics, culture, and society by way of a variety of cultural productions, discourses, and practices spanning historical, social, and geopolitical boundaries.

Title: Making an Italian Non-Binary Language: Understanding Speakers' Motives and Behaviors

Journal Issue: gender/sexuality/italy, 12 (2026)

Author: Ade Grossi 

Publication date: 08/10/2026

Publication info: gender/sexuality/italy, "Continuing Discussions"

Permalink: <https://www.gendersexualityitaly.com/making-an-italian-non-binary-language-understanding-speakers-motives-and-behaviors>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.15781/M9R4-CY44>

Author Bio: Ade Grossi (rMSc) is an independent scholar with a Research Master in the Social Sciences from the University of Amsterdam. Their research is situated within gender & sexuality and queer studies, with a particular focus on sociolinguistics. Centrally, they have worked on the behavioral aspects of nascent linguistic strategies among nonbinary individuals in Italy, contributing to emergent developments on the topic of inclusive language in Italian.

Abstract: Institutionally approved Italian mandates binary gender inflectional markers, precluding speakers from communicating in a non-gendered manner. For many non-binary users this means not being able to adequately refer to themselves and their experiences. In the past few decades, both activists and scholars have been working on and promoting different grammatical strategies to move beyond binary gender communication. Nonetheless, the vast majority of Italian speakers are either unaware of or opposed to these advancements, in part due to the forceful condemnation of these novel strategies published in 2021 by the Accademia della Crusca (Crusca Academy), a leading Italian language institution. Scotto di Carlo's work on gender-inclusive language in Italian provides a quantitative understanding of practices and attitudes from a diverse variety of speakers, while leaving open the question of motivation for non-binary individuals' preferences. Through grounded thematic analysis of nineteen semi-structured interviews, this research examines what aspects influence non-binary people's choices of self-referential grammatical (non)gendered forms in Italian. Four main aspects affecting individuals' linguistic choices were identified: *identity*, *performance and interpretation*; *feasibility*; *habitus*; and *exhaustion*.

Keywords: gender, language practices, Italian, LGBTQIA+, non-binary

Copyright Information

g/s/i is published online and is an open-access journal. All content, including multimedia files, is freely available without charge to the user or his/her institution and is published according to the Creative Commons License, which does not allow commercial use of published work or its manipulation in derivative forms. Content can be downloaded and cited as specified by the author/s. **However, the Editorial Board recommends providing the link to the article (not sharing the PDF) so that the author/s can receive credit for each access to his/her work, which is only published online.**



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 3.0 Unported License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/)

Making an Italian Non-Binary Language: Understanding Speakers' Motives and Behaviors

ADE GROSSI

Introduction

Italian is a gendered language, with articles, nouns, past participles, and most adjectives being either masculine or feminine.¹ The main strategy to establish grammatical gender is the use of either *masculine* suffixes -o (sg.) / -i (pl.) [e.g. caro amico/cari amici (dear [male] friend/dear [male] friends)] or *feminine* suffixes -a (sg.) / -e (pl.) [e.g. cara amica/care amiche (dear [female] friend/dear [female] friends)], with no option for constructing a non-gendered alternative. Overextended masculine (the use of masculine grammar for mixed-gender groups) is often referred to as the *neutral* form, but extensive critiques have been leveled against how the practice reinforces existing patriarchal dynamics and remains perceived as predominantly referring to men.²

Over the past few decades, there has been an increase in the number of Italian individuals who identify as transgender and non-binary, alongside a rise in public awareness of LGBTQIA+ issues and rights.³ While MtF (male-to-female) and FtM (female-to-male) individuals often align with binary gendered language with regard to their gender identity, non-binary people are uniquely positioned at the emergence and problematics of non-gendered language, preferring neutral pronouns over traditionally gendered ones, such as the singular *they* in English, *hen* in Swedish, and the novel neutral suffix *-e* in Spanish and Portuguese.⁴ To accomplish this in Italian, people in LGBTQIA+ spaces have created several new approaches to allow for non-gendered uses of the language. These can be divided into *standard strategies*, which utilize legitimized grammatical rules in an original manner, and *sub-standard strategies*, which modify gender-specific suffixes to create non-gendered formulations.⁵

Table 1: Standard and Sub-standard Strategies

Strategy	Example	Description
Standard Strategies		
Periphrasis	Ieri sono andato al mare (yesterday I went to the beach) <i>becomes</i> ieri ho passato la giornata al mare (yesterday I spent the day at the beach)	The speaker structures sentences in a manner that avoids gendered words. At this time, the strategy has yet to be researched. It is important to note that even critics of these nescient strategies have acknowledged that it is not always possible to avoid gendered words via the use of periphrasis. ⁶
Mixing masculine and feminine: using masculine	Ieri sono andato al mare quindi oggi sono stanco	Some non-binary interviewees consider it to be a non-gendered strategy, because the masculine and feminine

¹ See Baiocco et al., “Italian Proposal”; Batisti, “Linguistic Relativity”; Di Giannantonio et al., “The Third Table”; Gheno, “Gender Inclusiveness”; Scotto Di Carlo, “Is Italy Ready?”

² See Baldo et al., “Ricostruire il genere”; Batisti, “Linguistic Relativity”; Ducoli et al., “Districare gli stereotipi”; Gheno, “Gender Inclusiveness”; Kenda, “Grammatica inclusiva in italiano.”

³ Scandurra et al., “Gender Identity Milestones.”

⁴ See Baiocco et al., “Italian Proposal.”

⁵ See Comandini, “Salve a tuttə, tutt*, tuttu, tuttx e tutt@.”

⁶ See D’Achille, “Un asterisco sul genere.”

and feminine formulations interchangeably within a sentence or conversation	(yesterday I went [M] to the beach so today I am tired [F])	“cancel each other out,” while for others the overall effect remains gendered, if not even a form of gender maximization. Although the tactic subverts the implied guideline of maintaining gender accord between words, its use of legitimized Italian vocabulary makes it a standard strategy. Mixing has also been called “alternation,” but for this paper, the former term was preferred, as it was used with and by participants, calling it <i>mischiare maschile e femminile</i> (mixing masculine and feminine), and because it conveys more effectively the creation of a new approach as a complex tactic. ⁷
Sub-standard Strategies		
-*	Car* amic*	(dear friend)
-@	Car@ amic@	
-x	Carx amicx	
-u	Caru amicu	The morpheme is present in the language but not as a (non)gender marker, and although it is not utilized in standardized Italian, -u is a masculine ending in several Southern dialects. ⁸
-ə (both sg. and pl.), or -ə (sg.) -3 (pl.)	Carə amicə/ Car3 amic3	(dear friend(s)/dear friends) In some Southern regions of Italy, the schwa is present in speech, indicating either masculine singular or feminine plural, depending on the noun, but the sound is not present in standardized Italian. ⁹ In written forms, the plural can be denoted with either -3 or -ə, with the latter being discernible from the singular via interphrasal accord. Speakers’ initial reactions have been wary; with practice however, it has proven feasible for individuals to pronounce it effectively. ¹⁰
Truncation	Car amic	Also noted as omission. ¹¹ Dropping the last letter in Italian is not easy from a phonetic standpoint, but is considered an achievable feat, tending to create a schwa sound. Some participants count truncation as the oral counterpart of the written -x.

While in many languages gender is inferred only when talking about a third person, English being one such case, in Italian it arises even when talking about oneself (e.g. *sono stato al mare*, M.), meaning that in many interactions, non-binary people may have to choose between misgendering themselves or using a tactic possibly unfamiliar to the interlocutor.

Several academics and journalists have come out in opposition to the sub-standard strategies, accusing supporters of attempting to impose illegitimate rules on the population.¹² However, even

⁷ See González Vázquez et al., “Beyond Pronouns.”

⁸ See Scotto Di Carlo, “Is Italy Ready?”

⁹ See Carosella, “Sulla proposta di creazione”; Russell, “Ciro è Morto o Morta?”

¹⁰ See Facchini and Torresi, “Non-Binary Language.”

¹¹ See Scotto Di Carlo, “Is Italy Ready?”

¹² See D’Achille, “Un asterisco sul genere.”

those in opposition admit the unfeasibility of using standard Italian strategies in a fully non-gendered manner.¹³ While the abundant backlash may suggest concrete and widespread attempts to legitimize sub-standard strategies, this is not the case. These forms have not been widely applied outside of LGBTQIA+ spaces, and strategy choice varies among individuals.¹⁴ Existing research has generally focused on corpus analysis, examining the issue from a linguistic standpoint.¹⁵ In addition, the question of why non-binary people choose to use certain forms over others has yet to be comprehensively researched, especially with regard to oral self-reference. Therefore, the goal of this research is to understand what aspects influence non-binary people's choices of self-referential grammatical (non)gendered forms in Italian, with a specific interest in oral communication. Focusing the question on direct, in-person interactions allows for inferences about individual behavior in a social setting, including aspects that are absent in written exchanges, such as embodied gender performance, expected social behavior, and possible social sanctions. For this study, nineteen non-binary individuals currently living in Italy were interviewed about their linguistic practices. Questions were directed at instances of self-reference, focusing on word-ending (non)gendered tactics. The small sample size allowed for a more focused analysis of individual responses, and while preferences for grammatical gender strategies varied vastly, four main aspects were identified at the heart of each person's choice. Understanding these reasonings may allow for a better understanding of how to ameliorate the current social context, particularly from a socio-linguistic standpoint.

Theoretical Framework

On the Italian Linguistic Context

Although masculine is often considered the neutral form in the Italian language, many studies have shown that overextended masculine still holds gendered connotations.¹⁶ In the 1960s and 1970s feminists started a discussion about “linguistic sexism,” prompted by the notion that language affects social reality and its power dynamics.¹⁷ Interpreting masculine as neutral and feminine as gendered reinforces an understanding of men as the generic human, whose experiences are universal, while women become the Other. Papadopoulos notes that “the markedness of feminine forms in language is emblematic of women's markedness in society, as the prescriptive shape of a language reflects the behaviour and ideologies of speakers.”¹⁸ In the case of non-binary people, the absence of a non-gendered grammatical form is both an expression of how their experiences are largely unrecognized in the country and an ongoing consolidation of their invisibilization.¹⁹ At this time, when using standardized Italian, unless one were to specifically talk about gender, non-binary people are linguistically absent, being made to utilize gendered forms even if they do not adequately represent their identity.²⁰

¹³ See Baiocco et al., “Italian Proposal”; Batisti, “Linguistic Relativity”; D’Achille, “Un asterisco sul genere”; Gheno, “Questione di privilegi”; Gheno, “Gender Inclusiveness”; Kenda, “Grammatica inclusiva in italiano.”

¹⁴ See Duncan and Grazioli, “Power and Inclusivity”; Scotto Di Carlo, “An Analysis of the Use”; Scotto Di Carlo, “Is Italy Ready?”

¹⁵ See Comandini, “Salve a tuttə, tutt*, tuttu, tuttx e tutt@”; Formato, “Gender Inclusive Language.”

¹⁶ See Baiocco et al., “Italian Proposal”; Ducoli et al., “Distribuire gli stereotipi”; Gheno, “Questione di privilegi.”

¹⁷ See Baldo et al., “Ricostruire il genere”; Kenda, “Grammatica inclusiva in italiano.”

¹⁸ Papadopoulos, “A Brief History,” 41.

¹⁹ See Comandini, “Salve a tuttə, tutt*, tuttu, tuttx e tutt@”; Feketova and Raviv, “The Inescapable Cage.”

²⁰ See Sulis and Gheno, “The Debate on Language.”

While discussions on linguistic sexism in Italy have been taking place for the past decades, dialogue on non-gendered grammatical forms began in LGBTQIA+ communities during the 2010s. The first structured piece on the matter, specifically detailing usage of the schwa [-ə] in Italian, was Luca Boschetto's Google document titled *Proposta per l'introduzione della schwa come desinenza per un italiano neutro rispetto al genere, o italiano inclusivo* (Proposal for the introduction of schwa as an ending for gender-neutral or inclusive Italian) but it primarily circulated inside LGBTQIA+ spaces.²¹ In 2020, conversations on sub-standard strategies entered the public sphere, with the publication of Mattia Feltri's *Allarmi siam fascista* (Alarm we are fascists) in the newspaper *La Stampa*.²² In the article, Feltri scorns possible usage of the schwa in Italian and accuses a linguist from the Accademia della Crusca of having supported the form's introduction into the language.²³ Since the Accademia della Crusca is one of the world's oldest linguistic research institutions and a highly regarded authority on the Italian language, its pronouncements on the language are commonly regarded as official decisions on the language.²⁴ After Feltri's article, the Accademia disputed the author's claim that an affiliated linguist had supported the schwa and publicly disapproved of sub-standard strategies.²⁵ The exchange prompted the start of the ongoing debate on the new forms, to which several journalists and general academics have contributed, both in favor and against.²⁶

Most research on non-gendered grammatical forms is focused on explaining the reasons why there is a need for them, and on justifications based on a historical-linguistic standpoint.²⁷ Concurrently, studies on the current use of sub-standard strategies have either analyzed online practices, or used a quantitative approach to understand their use by non-binary people and the broader Italian population.²⁸ What transpires is that sub-standard strategies are most often textually used to refer to groups or generic third parties, rarely used in speech, with overall attitudes towards the forms being positive and how, specifically, use of the schwa in text is becoming more common.²⁹

On Gender Performance

Since the current academic conversation on non-gendered forms in Italian is primarily focused on the linguistics aspect of the matter, there is a lack of inquiry into its social quality, and how (non)gendered strategies impact the lives of non-binary individuals. Losty and O'Connor noted that non-gendered language helped non-binary individuals express their identity to others, validating their experience, and that people considered it an important element of their identity.³⁰ Therefore, the lack of non-gendered Italian forms negatively impacts non-binary people, as they are rendered linguistically invisible and forced to either utilize gendered grammar or be at the forefront of linguistic change.³¹ Language shapes

²¹ See Boschetto, "Proposta per l'introduzione"; Gheno, "Gender Inclusiveness."

²² See Feltri, "Allarmi siam fascista."

²³ See Feltri, "Allarmi siam fascista."

²⁴ See Scotto Di Carlo, "Is Italy Ready?"

²⁵ See Feltri, "Allarmi siam fascista"; Gheno, "Gender Inclusiveness."

²⁶ See Gheno, "Gender Inclusiveness."

²⁷ See Baiocco et al., "Italian Proposal"; Baldo et al., "Ricostruire il genere"; Batisti, "Linguistic Relativity"; Gheno, "Questione di privilegi"; Gheno, "Gender Inclusiveness in a Binary Language"; Kenda, "Grammatica inclusiva in italiano."

²⁸ See Comandini, "Salve a tuttə, tutt*, tuttu, tuttx e tutt@"; De Cesare, "Sulla diacronia breve dello schwa"; Formato, *Feminism, Corpus-Assisted Research*; Scotto Di Carlo, "An Analysis of the Use"; Scotto Di Carlo, "Is Italy Ready?"

²⁹ See Comandini, "Salve a tuttə, tutt*, tuttu, tuttx e tutt@"; De Cesare, "Sulla diacronia breve dello schwa"; Scotto Di Carlo, "An Analysis of the Use"; Scotto Di Carlo, "Is Italy Ready?"

³⁰ See Losty and O'Connor, "Falling Outside."

³¹ See Feketova and Raviv, "The Inescapable Cage."

how people are able to conceptualize reality, and the absence of non-gendered forms in Italian leads to restrictions in both the linguistic and social spheres.³²

The relationship between language and gender construction may best be understood from a social interaction perspective, where West and Zimmerman define gender as “an ongoing activity embedded into everyday interaction.”³³ With gender being an ongoing process, the ways in which one is enabled to speak about oneself influences their performance, both to others and to themselves. The connection between gender and language is further supported by Barbee and Schrock, who researched non-binary identities from the perspective of “ungendering” social selves.³⁴ Ungendering is posed as an alternative to “doing a non-binary gender,” as the researchers argue some non-binary individuals might perceive their gender performance not as the creation of a third category, but an undoing of gendered expectations. The authors note that non-gendered linguistic practices were a significant part of how individuals attempted to ungender their social selves; however, within standardized Italian, non-binary people have reported their inability to linguistically present their authentic selves.³⁵ Still, individuals have some level of autonomy in such regard, as their understanding is informed by existing social systems, but not completely defined by them. One’s gender performance is in conversation with existing standards, based on the presence of an audience, be it real or imaginary, who holds the same frames of reference.³⁶

In the case of Italian, one’s gender performance is impacted by the linguistic toolbox even when the audience is not present, as self-reference requires the use of gendered terminology. At the same time, linguistic gender performance to a real audience is the locus for socio-political change, as it is through such interactions that linguistic evolution can happen.³⁷ Since the larger social sphere impacts how the individual performs their gender, an approach via social interactionism may allow one to see such (un)gendering of the social self and, over time, these small-scale interactions go on to impact the larger social sphere. Still, even though the individual holds some agency in their performance, Butler notes that if one fails to perform gender in a socially appropriate way, or in accordance with others’ expectations of behavior, they will suffer social sanctions.³⁸ Non-binary people’s performance is affected by the risk of negative, or even violent consequences, as there is an abundance of transphobic attitudes in the country.³⁹ As a result, individuals’ choices of non-gendered forms must be analyzed not only from a linguistic perspective, but also with regard to their relationship with gender performance and identity.

Methodology

Interviews

Participants were recruited via social media posts, by scouting for individuals identifying as non-binary, living in Italy, and speaking Italian. The call was initially shared by me and personal connections, and later further circulated by the interviewees themselves. Five people who had been part of a previous project were re-contacted and participated in this research. Materials from the previous project were

³² See Duncan and Grazioli, “Power and Inclusivity.”

³³ West and Zimmerman, “Doing Gender,” 130.

³⁴ See Barbee and Schrock, “Un/Gendering Social Selves.”

³⁵ See Barbee and Schrock, “Un/Gendering Social Selves”; Feketova and Raviv, “The Inescapable Cage.”

³⁶ See Goffman, *The Presentation of Self*.

³⁷ See Duncan and Grazioli, “Power and Inclusivity.”

³⁸ See Butler, “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution.”

³⁹ See Scandurra et al., “Gender Identity Milestones.”

included in the current analysis. All individuals self-identified as non-binary, understood as encompassing a number of varied identities, including, but not limited to, agender, gender-neutral, genderless, genderqueer, and genderfluid.⁴⁰ Between September and December 2024, nineteen people participated in individual semi-structured interviews, held online for participant convenience. Overall, twelve of the interviewees were from Northern Italy, four from Central Italy, two from the South, and one from the Isles (see Appendix). This sample underrepresents people from Southern Italy, who are potentially most affected by the gendered implications of using the schwa and the u as non-gendered formulations, and only one interviewee grew up in an environment where the u was part of the regional dialect. Respondents' ages ranged from 21 to 38, meaning that the findings lack the perspective of older non-binary people; minors were excluded from the study. While these limitations did inform the interview development and analysis, the field would benefit from further research to fill possible gaps.

Information gathered throughout the process informed later sessions, with developments being grounded in the data acquired, which allowed for the creation of theory closely associated with the interviewees' opinions.⁴¹ The semi-structured format of the interviews favored this approach and allowed each interview to follow unexpected directions. Additionally, interviews greatly benefitted from our shared lived experience as Italian non-binary people, and the interview itself being an inherently social encounter, promoted collaboration and mutual understanding.⁴² All interviews were held in Italian, and self-referential instances by the participants were included in the data. As the interviewer, applying and verbalizing sub-standard strategies (where appropriate) presented some initial difficulties, but was achieved throughout. Instances of grammatical gender were less frequent than expected, both for my own self-reference, in which masculine was utilized, and for referring to interviewees. Sometimes participants made what could be called mistakes, using non-preferred strategies for themselves, which in itself provided pertinent information to the study.

In April 2025, participants were re-contacted to respond to additional questions and confirm the existent analysis of their behaviors (see Appendix). Esther, Francesca, Lisi, and Vic did not participate, while the other fifteen individuals did take part in the supplementary discussions. Due to the political nature of the research, participants were asked if they wished to choose a pseudonym, have a pseudonym chosen for them, or for their first name to be utilized. Names were used in accordance with their decisions.

Transcript and Data Analysis

Audio recordings were transcribed, although in several instances it was not always clear what (non)gendered grammatical formulation had been used by the researcher or the participant. Specifically, u and o (masculine), truncation and schwa, and feminine and schwa, were not always discernible. This might be partly due to personal perception, but several interviewees had also shared a similar difficulty with auditory discernment between the tactics.

Transcripts were coded throughout the interview process, using constant comparison between the interview itself and others' responses.⁴³ Codes were grounded in the data and the aspects transpired via an iterative process.⁴⁴ Due to this approach, and via confirmation during second interviews, some initial categories were modified as more information was gathered. Nonetheless, even though efforts were made to remain as grounded in the data as possible, it is debated whether a researcher can remain

⁴⁰ See Di Giannantonio et al., "The Third Table."

⁴¹ See Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory*; Charmaz and Thornberg, "The Pursuit of Quality."

⁴² See Talmy, "Qualitative Interviews in Applied Linguistics."

⁴³ See Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory*.

⁴⁴ See Hallberg, "The 'Core Category.'"

value-free and impartially analyze information. In this regard, member-checking was utilized to mitigate the effects, controlling for misreading of interviewee meaning.

Findings: The Four Aspects

One of the first questions asked to participants regarded what pronouns they would choose for themselves in an English-speaking context, a pertinent question simply because the study itself is written in English. Most chose they/them, except Chiara, who opted for she/they, Ruth for “any,” and Allen for he/him. Each of these responses conveys how every individual has a desire to linguistically denote their trans/non-binary identity, represented by the choice of the gender-neutral *they*, or pronouns different from the ones assigned at birth. In the Italian context, this is problematized by the lack of a standardized non-gendered solution. Given this absence, at the beginning of each interview, individuals were asked what strategy should be used to refer to them in Italian. While many indicated a specific tactic, several responded with generic *neutri* (neutrals). It became clear that for participants, neutrals refer to sub-standard strategies (truncation, schwa, and u), and while individuals did have a preferred one for self-reference, they were open to the interlocutor using any of the strategies to refer to them. The desire not to be gendered was stronger than the preference for a specific linguistic choice, and allowing interlocutors to choose a form makes it more likely that it will happen. While each individual’s decisions are based on their personal circumstances, there are four main aspects affecting the subjects’ linguistic choices: *identity, performance, and interpretation; feasibility; habitus; and exhaustion.*

Identity, Performance & Interpretation

The first aspect impacting choice of formulations in Italian is identity, performance, and interpretation. The latter is especially relevant for some such as Jaghi. In all contexts, Jaghi chooses to use periphrasis and feminine, with periphrasis being most often utilized in LGBTQIA+-friendly spaces. While periphrasis is what Jaghi finds to be the most correct gender-representation, their choice of feminine formulations is tied to how they are perceived as they note

well, with the feminine I think it’s only habit, I don’t even relate it to being a woman per se. Like, when someone says she, I know it’s feminine, but in my head it is only to refer to me, basically I do not care what gender it refers to. But if someone refers to me with the masculine ... which does not really happen because I am very feminine in my presentation. There is not really ... you do not really have the doubt when looking at me.

Having been raised and socialized as a woman, and self-describing as feminine presenting, leads to Jaghi being more comfortable with feminine formulations over masculine ones. Specifically, they mention that their non-binary identity does not impact what language they use, as how they are perceived by others plays a larger role. Therefore, while the choice of periphrasis is related to a desire for a non-gendered linguistic option, the choice of feminine is tied to outside interpretation. Jaghi’s performance is, to their own estimation, feminine, and while they would prefer not to be seen as a woman, they often are, so for them feminine markers seem the most logical choice. This can be tied to the conservative socio-political context of Italy, where homogeneity is strongly favored, and given

that for Jaghi, feminine formulations no longer feel overly-gendered, they make linguistic choices aligned with how they expect interlocutors to gender them.⁴⁵

While for Jaghi the relevant aspect was how their gender is interpreted by the people around them, other interviewees are more affected by a desire to convey their non-binary identity, regardless of expected language. Jules chooses to use the *u* to indicate their non-binary identity. They talked about how they do not expect most people to interpret them as non-binary based on their visible performance and have accepted that visual readings are tied to heteronormative standards of performance, so they stopped “caring about it” from a visual standpoint. Jules, having both recognized how being non-binary is not tied to a specific visual performance, and feeling a lack of power over how others interpret their gender identity, has decided to use language as a major indicator. In discussing the relationship between their linguistic choices and their identity, Jules specifically notes how they started using neutrals immediately after coming out. So, for them, use of sub-standard formulations is a way to express their non-binary identity, which is not impacted by the observer’s expectation of a gendered tactic, but mostly reliant on their own desire to express themselves in the most linguistically correct manner. Jules discusses how

maybe [in the future] when I will have deconstructed more, or fully stopped caring about what people think, maybe I will start using she/they as pronouns, but at the moment I really identify with the neutrals in using the *u* when talking about myself, because my identity is closer to that of non-binary agender.⁴⁶

On the same issue, Gael expresses that “in any case, since I am genderfluid, pronouns change based on how I feel. Literally how I feel.” With the same desire as Jules to express their non-binary identity, Gael chooses masculine, feminine, or, rarely, mixed formulations, depending on how they want to be interpreted. Here we can see how the individual’s specific gender identity impacts what linguistic options they utilize. In English, both Jules and Gael would choose they/them pronouns, but in Italian, their decisions are starkly different. One reason is self-reference, as for Gael the choice between gendered forms is an element of gender performance that would not be present in English. In this sense, Italian speakers have a way to indirectly convey their identity and/or grammatical (non)gender preference by using their chosen formulations in a self-referential manner. Neither Jules nor Gael feels impacted by how others perceive them before conversation happens, and while both use markers to convey gender identity, it is precisely due to the identity difference that they opt for different strategies. For Gael, the use of masculine, feminine, or mixing allows them to communicate “how they feel that day,” while overall, they still want to convey that they are genderfluid, not sometimes a man and sometimes a woman. Therefore, the goal for both individuals is to make people understand a non-binary identity, just from different perspectives.

A desire to properly convey gender identity is also at the heart of Ezra’s choice of tactic. They were first interviewed in early 2023, and have always used mixing, but their feelings towards it have changed. Initially, Ezra’s preferred formulation was masculine, but they were also fine with mixing, as long as people did not solely use feminine. In this sense, the choice was based on a desire not to be perceived as a woman, and favoring masculine was a way to distance themselves from that outside interpretation. In their 2024 interview, Ezra expressed a shift in perspective. Now, like Jules, Ezra had come to terms with not having power over how people interpret their visual gender performance; therefore, their choices are based on what they are personally more comfortable with than to a desire not to be seen as a woman. So, while they were already comfortable with both tactics, now they

⁴⁵ See Formato, *Feminism, Corpus-Assisted Research*.

⁴⁶ Jules was speaking in Italian and directly used the English “she/they” during the original sentence.

personally used feminine more frequently, and to them it felt less like an admission of womanhood than it did two years prior. Ezra's desire to convey identity had an impact over their choice of mixing, but a changed perspective on performance and presentation led to a shift in the specific use of the tactic.

Feasibility: The Form Itself

In addition to how identity, performance, and interpretation shape individuals' opinions on (non)gendered tactics, participants were also influenced by how socio-linguistically practicable they find the different options to be. While it was noted how Ezra has moved from preferring masculine to mixing due to reasons related to identity, there is another factor affecting their choice: they do not see sub-standard formulations as orally feasible. They explain that

because in reality, for me, the most important thing is that neither he nor she fits me. It's a dress that's too tight anyways because there isn't a neutral. So, I choose to switch it up. I say, well, either one. That's why I always say I don't mind either, because actually neither is good ... And I do not like how truncation sounds. Writing it is another thing, but not in speech.

So, while identity is the reason behind Ezra's desire to use a strategy other than single masculine or feminine formulations, the determining factor is that they do not deem sub-standard formulations to be practicable. Alfa expressed the same view, and they also choose to use mixing as their main strategy, but gave a different explanation regarding the feasibility of neutral formulations. Ezra talked about disliking how sub-standard strategies *sound*, while Alfa noted them being too verbally complex. Still, while both opt for mixing, they do not see it as a non-gendered formulation, because to them it feels more like using two gendered forms than creating a gender-neutrality. The choice is a "band-aid" as it is the most practicable option to convey their identity, while also not comprehensively doing so.

In contrast, Vic chooses mixing as their preferred strategy because, for them, it does create a form of gender neutrality. For Vic, the tactic has a "destructive force" and is sufficient from a gender performance standpoint. Specifically with regard to feasibility, Vic notes that they prefer it to neutrals because they find it to be more legible, meaning that even people who are unaware of non-binary linguistic issues can perceive that something is happening; to Vic, mixing appears more noticeable than the schwa, for example.

Lisi also most commonly uses mixing for themselves, and they note that while it does not create a gender-neutrality, they are satisfied with it. Nonetheless, they also sometimes use neutrals as a political choice in order to both more clearly indicate their non-binary identity, and to make the tactics more socially visible. Specifically, Lisi chooses to include truncation amongst their preferred formulations:

I see it as the same difficulty between saying *tutt3 l3 artist3* (all the artists) and *tuttu lu artistu*, they have the same kind of difficulty, which I instead do not have in saying *tutt l' artist*. Also, the u seems ridiculous, most of all in Northern Italy, sadly, because it's a dialectal deformation of other dialects, and it does not seem correct even just from a political positioning standpoint.

For Lisi, the decision to use truncation is based both on a phonetic element, and a political one. Specifically, the note about the u being present as a masculine form in some Southern dialects speaks to the existing biases against Southern Italy present within the country.⁴⁷ Establishing the form as a

⁴⁷ See Russell, "Ciro è Morto o Morta?"

neutral countrywide, while it is already present with gendered connotations in Southern regions, could perpetuate existing dynamics of marginalization towards the people of the Mezzogiorno, which impacts Lisi's decision not to use the tactic. Still, although Lisi and other interviewees had political arguments against the use of the *u*, they did not express negative feelings towards the individuals who do use it, with the overall argument remaining focused on issues of large-scale adoption more than individual use.

Jules' preferred grammatical choice is exactly the *u*, and part of their argument for it is that it is more easily introduced into the existing Italian grammatical structure, as the *u* is the sub-standard strategy closest to legitimized grammar when compared to the others. Since it is a vowel, and in fact the only vowel not yet utilized to denote grammatical gender in the country at large, it does make sense that one could expect it to be easier to introduce into the canon, especially when compared to the schwa and truncation. Therefore, Jules discusses how

usually, as a neutral pronoun, I use the *u* ending because in Italian we do not really have a neutral vowel, so I use the *u* because it's the most neutral. ... I also use the *u* because sometimes I do truncate words and people don't understand the person's gender ... If I truncate a word, like *ti sei divertit* (did you have fun), you can clearly hear the cut, *ti sei divertitu ieri* (did you have fun yesterday), that comes out much smoother.

Jules' decision is based on a phonetic element, but their personal assessment is opposite that of Lisi, since truncation is noted as overly complex by the first, while coming easily to the second. In this sense, the feasibility of the formulation is for both a relevant part of their choice, but their individual opinions lead them to opposite conclusions. Remarkably, while Jules talks of truncation going unnoticed and making things unclear, that is precisely the reason given by Blu and Ruth for choosing it. Blu notes that

the people who are already aware can read the fact that I am using the neutral, because maybe other people, if I only use truncation, simply think I cannot speak [clearly]. Maybe with truncation and the schwa, it is actually less noticeable, so if one isn't paying attention or aware of it, it is noticed less. Whereas if I use the *u*, there are possibly more questions.

In a similar manner, Ruth "discovered that often, even in unsafe spaces, meaning where you do not know if the person or people you are with know or not, the missing vowel is noticed less." Therefore, while neither Blu nor Ruth has a preference for truncation alone (see Appendix), their linguistic practices are influenced by the potential for the tactic to go unnoticed, especially in certain contexts.

In terms of feasibility, Gigi had different difficulties with all of the tactics. They tried mixing, but felt that given how Italian is structured, they were generally using one form at a time, therefore not creating the neutrality they desired, while truncation and *u* were disliked phonetically. Therefore, Gigi's preference is for feminine formulations and the schwa, though the latter is rarely used, because they do not know how to "properly pronounce it."

Habitus

During second interviews I asked participants whether they had other non-binary people in their social spheres, and what (non)gendered grammatical formulations those friends used. Existing research has shown that people's preference was deeply influenced by their life experiences and social circles, and

this present study consolidates such results.⁴⁸ For almost all interviewees there is a correlation between their preferred tactics and those of their social spheres, meaning that their habitus is also an aspect affecting (non)gendered linguistic practices.⁴⁹ Going back to Gigi, their difficulties with the schwa are related to this, as

the schwa is the best neutral basically. But at least with my [university] friends, we did not really understand how to use it in oral language, just that. Outside of those friends, I do not use it with anyone. And it's not hard to understand it as a sound, but *mamma mia quanto sei bella* (oh wow you are so beautiful) sounds strange.

Gigi does not have many other LGBTQIA+ people around them, outside of online spaces, but they do have a group of friends with whom they collectively decided to start using the schwa. The mention of being unsure how to pronounce it implies that the group does not exist in a space where others also use the formulation, corroborated by it being the only place where Gigi uses the sub-standard strategy. So, Gigi's choice of the schwa is heavily impacted by the people around them, as it was a shared decision regarding the tactic, and even their assessment of feasibility is due to them not having access to people who are already proficient with the formulation.

As discussed, Alfa is unsatisfied with the tactic of mixing, and they do not find neutral options to be feasible. To this assessment it must be added that, while Alfa is part of queer spaces and circles, none of the people around them use sub-standard formulations. Therefore, it can be understood that Alfa's assessment of neutral formulations as complex is impacted by the fact that they do not regularly hear or use them, since they do not have friends who do. Sun, while in a similar situation, did have one person who also used the schwa

but they aren't in my close circles, meaning that I know M exactly because of the non-binary language activism, so in a way *ci siamo spallegiatə a vicenda* (we leaned on each other) for this, on standing up for ourselves on this, instead of: okay I can also accept another pronoun. So, actually making use of the schwa.

Overall, Sun's non-binary friends use mixing as their preferred strategy. Still, it seems that even though it was only one other individual, having had someone who was going through the same linguistic experience might have helped Sun become more comfortable with the tactic. From how they talked about it, the presence of a friend (albeit not a close one) who was undergoing the same process, was an aspect that positively influenced their decision to use the schwa as their preferred strategy.

For Chiara, habitus has a different sort of impact. Their chosen formulation is mixing, also utilized by her friends, but Chiara sometimes decides to incorporate truncation. In their case, their comfort with neutrals is affected by the u being used as a plural in their circles. This means that while people do not apply it for self-reference, the environment is nonetheless one where sub-standard strategies are accepted and practiced, and in this context, it becomes possible for her to use their preferred (non)gendered choice.

Exhaustion

⁴⁸ See Duncan and Grazioli, "Power and Inclusivity."

⁴⁹ Esther, Francesca, Lisi, and Vic did not have second interviews and were therefore unable to provide information on the topic.

In part, Chiara chooses truncation for the same reasons shared by Blu and Ruth, that it is not always noticeable. The characteristic becomes relevant because outside of queer spaces, Chiara is preoccupied with “not wanting to be seen as weird,” and the use of neutral formulations would impact that. “Because for me having to explain it, like, it causes discomfort, I feel uneasy, it’s all wrong.” Therefore, while Chiara’s preferred formulations are mixing and truncation, which they use in queer, or at least “queer-friendly” spaces, if Chiara is unsure about their interlocutor’s opinion and/or knowledge of non-binary issues and neutral grammar, she will use either truncation or feminine markers. On the other hand, if she believes the person to be completely unaware of, or even hold a negative view towards queer issues, they stick to feminine formulations. From this, three contexts arise, those with people who are either queer or allies, those where the individual is unsure about the interlocutor’s stance, and those with people who appear to be unaware of even the cause of LGBTQIA+ discrimination.

Upon identifying the three contexts, there initially appeared to be a safety assessment at play, as many interviewees were using different tactics based on the people they were talking to. The assumption was that the less safe the interlocutor seemed to the speaker, the more likely one was to use gendered tactics for self-reference, in order to avoid the potential of a dangerous encounter. However, when asked directly if safety was a concern, participants refuted this idea. It became clear that the operative aspect was one of context and exhaustion, as respondents often mentioned a feeling of *stanchezza* (tiredness/exhaustion). Anticipatory exhaustion, as explained by Todd, affects how trans individuals navigate interactions, because their awareness of being “out-of-place” in the social sphere leads to heightened fear and anxiety and, when having to use Italian, non-binary people report the extreme effort required to use non-gendered strategies, leading to an overburden of cognitive demands.⁵⁰ One of the participants, Giulia, shared opinions in line with these theories, as “if in front of me I see that there can be a hope for a conversation, then maybe we can talk about it, otherwise there is a bit of this exhaustion of having to constantly make speeches to people.” Giulia’s preferred formulations are periphrasis, truncation, and feminine, but in situations where the interlocutor seems either unsure or unaware of non-gendered tactics, they only use feminine markers. The process behind the decisions is not as much for the comfort of the other, or for physical safety, hinging instead on a consideration of emotional fatigue and preservation. Knowing that there is a possibility for pushback creates a situation in which the non-binary individual must decide whether they have the energy and desire to hold a complex conversation about themselves in that moment. Giulia knows that most people in Italy are unaware or even opposed to the issue of non-gendered language, which informs their overall linguistic decisions. As they say, one does not constantly desire to make speeches about their own identity to people.

The word exhaustion especially resonated with both Giulia and others when denoting how they felt about the process of constantly assessing situations and having to adapt their preferred language because of it. Esther expressed that “I would use the feminine, [with a person I meet] on the street like that, but only because it is much simpler.” So, Esther, while preferring mixing, specifically noted that using the cisnormatively assumed pronoun in non-queer contexts made things easier for them. Knowing that the use of non-gendered forms, even standard ones, might lead to a conversation about one’s identity, right to exist, and desire to be linguistically recognized, impacts the grammatical gender chosen in the moment. Having to justify one’s reality is exhausting; therefore, it is easier to avoid the conversation by not bringing attention to the issue. For this reason, Esther chooses to use the gender marker that aligns with their assigned gender at birth, a decision influenced by the fact that they are not uncomfortable with the tactic itself, but would prefer mixing with masculine, which to

⁵⁰ See Todd, “Exhaustion, Exhausting Temporalities,” 780; see also Feketova and Raviv, “The Inescapable Cage.”

them creates a non-gendered method. Icaro, on the other hand, while preferring the schwa and truncation, and having the same assigned gender at birth as Esther, chooses masculine formulations in non-queer contexts, and

[it's not] a fear of repercussions, because in the end that's always present when the person in front of you knows you're trans ... So I often end up using the masculine most of all to avoid the exhaustion of having to explain non-binary identities to a person that has never heard of them and who's not even aware they can exist.

While both Giulia and Icaro are affected by considerations of exhaustion, their choices with people who they are unsure about, or who appear unaware of the tactics, are different because of their gender identity, performance, and interpretation. Icaro expressed a desire to be seen as trans in all (safe) contexts, even if the non-binary element of their transness goes unnoticed. Luci makes the same choices as Icaro, with the additional insight that

I usually have two different registers. Like, with my people, even queer people that I don't know, who I just met, I use truncation, I don't care, they also use it. Truncation and masculine, because sometimes the masculine sounds better, and I do use it. While in fact, with normal people, from the normal straight world, I directly use the masculine. They do not, but I try to use it as much as possible. [And in any case I do not correct them] mostly to avoid feeling hurt. Because after I explain "do not use the feminine," you do it, then obviously I'm hurt. If you do it then it's better that I do not explain. It's a matter of exhaustion, yeah. It hurts quite a bit.

Thus, feelings of exhaustion are intensified by repeated occurrences of pushback and requested language being ignored. It is clear that, for Luci, these instances have impacted their current behavior during interactions, as they will use their preferred formulations for self-reference, but will not directly discuss the topic with people who do not appear open to it. Evidently, personal experience and habitus affect how much one's choices are impacted by exhaustion, and while for Luci it has led to forgoing neutrals in non-queer contexts, Francesca finds themselves in the opposite situation

since I am non-binary, I have stopped accepting not being *considerata* (considered, F.) in the language, and not being *nominata* (mentioned/named, F.). What isn't named cannot exist. ... Also because I have not yet met much resistance. Admittedly I also have faced discrimination ... but yeah, I have never found spaces where they told me "no this is not okay, this is."

Francesca's preferred tactic is feminine markers, in all contexts. The choice is both due to them being comfortable with the formulation, feeling identification with it, and more importantly as a political stance, since they are often perceived as a woman and, therefore, affected by heterosexist practices. Francesca is not acutely affected by feeling unable to express themselves, since on an individual level, they are content with the options available. Still, they have a desire to support the push for non-gendered formulations in Italian, which, paired with a high willingness to hold conversations on the topic, results in them using the schwa, truncation, or the u in several non-queer contexts. Specifically, Francesca discussed utilizing it for self-reference with some professors who they deemed to be not queer-friendly, or in larger contexts when referring to a collective group. Francesca mentions tailoring the formulation choice around what the interlocutor will find more displeasing, which was usually the schwa for professors and the u during non-LGBTQIA+ activism meetings. Thus, Francesca takes advantage of their lack of exhaustion by willingly taking on conversations about non-gendered language and normalizing its use. Possibly, through actions such as theirs, people will become more accustomed to the tactics and everyone will feel freer to use whatever formulation they prefer.

Discussion

Throughout the course of repeated interviews with nineteen non-binary individuals currently living in Italy, it was possible to catch a glimpse of the motivations behind their (non)gendered linguistic choices, which were grouped into four main aspects. First is their identity, performance, and desired interpretation, as the person's preferred grammatical gender tactics are affected by how the strategy itself aligns with those factors. Second, is feasibility, or the form itself, as different tactics may come more naturally, feel better politically aligned, or be less noticeable, as noted by several participants with both the schwa and truncation. In this regard, individuals hold varied and even contrasting opinions on the same tactics. Third is habitus, meaning the grammatical gender choices made by other people in the individual's social sphere. The linguistic decisions made by one's friends and connections impact the individual's specific grammatical preference and their overall comfort with non-gendered options. Lastly, exhaustion, informed by context, as people change strategies based on whether they are in a queer-friendly space, with individuals they are unsure about, or with people who appear unaware of or even hold negative opinions towards LGBTQIA+ matters. In this, the interviewee's choice is affected by the possibility of questioning or pushback from the other, leading to an assessment of one's own willingness to potentially justify their identity in the moment.

Overall, each individual is uniquely impacted by each aspect, and everyone's preferred strategies differed from the others, creating a mosaic of choices and justifications among participants. Nonetheless, all exhibited behavior and attitudes were consistent with and applicable to the identified themes. Therefore, it can be presumed that the four aspects may provide indications on how to understand the linguistic choices of other non-binary people in Italy. Due to the age range of participants spanning one generation, it is possible that the behavior of different groups would be impacted by the aspects through different dynamics, if at all. Moreover, the insufficient regional variation among individuals, with an overrepresentation of Northern regions, limits the results to those areas, in no small part due to the possible impact distinct dialects could have on people's approach to social reality and their behaviors. The *u* and schwa as features of some Southern dialects with gendered connotations is an additional element needing further research, as individuals' experiences with them as tactics are likely affected by their experience. Having had only one respondent with such a linguistic background, further exploration would help provide better context and improve our understanding of how non-binary individuals interact with the formulations. The analysis would also benefit from a phonetic, phonological, morphological, and syntactic examination of the data, elements not taken into consideration for this study. The data relied on individual's own understanding and explanation of their behaviors, without participant observation. An ethnographic research approach into the practices might also grant supplementary information with which to further advance the theory.

Overall, the participants all made distinct linguistic choices, with not much overlap with one another. In part, this can be understood by noting that non-binary is an umbrella identity which encompasses vastly different experiences, such as agender, meaning identifying with no gender, and genderfluid, meaning possibly identifying with all genders, either separately, or simultaneously, or in another manner altogether. Still, although individually the respondents have different linguistic needs and desires, there was a consensus over the need for non-gendered grammatical options in Italian, be it unified or multiple. None of the interviewees held any hope that such a solution would be institutionally recognized in the near future, but there were more positive prospects with regard to individual interactions, as participants expressed optimism that more and more people will encounter the new strategies and become accustomed to them. Further research could elucidate whether it is

possible, or even desired, to come to a consensus on a strategy, which might help broaden its overall use and acceptance. Still, even in languages with an established non-gendered tactic, such as they/them in English, neo-pronouns are sometimes preferred and utilized by many people, meaning that providing a standardized option does not automatically make it suitable for everybody. In this sense, while Italy is currently more institutionally restrictive on the topic of grammatical gender, it is also a blank canvas. No interviewee expressed or showed complete opposition towards others' linguistic preferences, even when they directly contrasted their own. At this moment, every individual has the liberty to choose whatever non-gendered strategy best fits them, because in a way, when none are systemically allowed, why not just do what's best for you?

Appendix

Table 2: Participants' preferred strategies based on context

	<i>Queer-friendly spaces</i>	<i>Unsure</i>	<i>Person unaware of non-binary issues</i>
Alfa	Mixing M & F		
Allen	Masculine or feminine		
Blu	Neutrals (truncation, u, schwa)	Feminine, sometimes truncation and schwa	
Chiara	Mixing M & F, truncation, u, schwa	Truncation, feminine	Feminine
Coco	Neutrals (u, schwa, truncation)	Sometimes u and truncation, else feminine	Feminine
Esther	Mixing M & F	Feminine	
Ezra	Mixing M & F	Periphrasis, truncation	Feminine
Francesca	Feminine	Feminine, schwa and u in some contexts (see Exhaustion)	
Gael	Masculine or feminine or mixing		
Gigi	Feminine, schwa	Periphrasis, feminine	Feminine
Giulia	Periphrasis, truncation, feminine	Feminine	
Icaro	Schwa, truncation	Periphrasis, truncation, masculine	Truncation, periphrasis
Jaghi	Periphrasis, Feminine		
Jules	u	u	Periphrasis, u
Lisi	Any (mostly Mixing M & F and truncation)	Masculine, neutrals (truncation)	Masculine
Luci	Masculine, neutrals (truncation)	Masculine	
Ruth	Mixing M & F	Tries mixing M & F and truncation, else feminine	Tries mixing M & F, else Feminine
Sun	Schwa	Periphrasis, neutrals	Periphrasis, masculine
Vic	Mixing M & F	Periphrasis, feminine	

Table 3: Participants' demographics

	<i>Currently Lives</i>		<i>Originally From</i>	
Ezra	Emilia-Romagna	North	Emilia-Romagna	North
Gigi	Toscana & Puglia	Center & South	Puglia	South
Alfa	Lombardy	North	Liguria	North
Vic	Lazio	Center	Marche	Center
Sun	Emilia-Romagna	North	Emilia-Romagna	North
Jaghi	Veneto	North	Veneto	North
Icaro	Emilia-Romagna	North	Marche	Center
Chiara	Emilia-Romagna	North	Emilia-Romagna	North
Esther	Emilia-Romagna	North	Lombardy	North
Francesca	Tuscany	Center	Tuscany	Center
Luci	Emilia-Romagna	North	Emilia-Romagna	North
Ruth	Veneto	North	Veneto	North
Coco	Friuli-Venezia Giulia	North	Umbria	Center
Lisi	Piedmont	North	Emilia-Romagna	North
Allen	Piedmont	North	Puglia	South
Gael	Emilia-Romagna	North	Emilia-Romagna	North
Blu	Piedmont	North	Piedmont	North
Jules	Emilia-Romagna	North	Emilia-Romagna	North
Giulia	Sicily	Isles	Sicily	Isles

Works Cited

- Baiocco, Roberto, Fau Rosati, and Jessica Pistella. "Italian Proposal for Non-Binary and Inclusive Language: The Schwa as a Non-Gender-Specific Ending." *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Mental Health* 27, no. 3 (2023): 248–253. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19359705.2023.2183537>.
- Baldo, Michela, Fabio Corbisiero, and Pietro Maturi. "Ricostruire il genere attraverso il linguaggio: Per un uso della lingua (italiana) non sessista e non omotransfobico." *gender/sexuality/italy* 3 (2016): xii–xviii. <https://doi.org/10.15781/s27e-ad39>.

- Barbee, Harry, and Douglas Schrock. "Un/Gendering Social Selves: How Nonbinary People Navigate and Experience a Binarily Gendered World." *Sociological Forum* 34, no. 3 (2019): 572–93. <https://doi.org/10.1111/socf.12517>.
- Batisti, Filippo. "Linguistic Relativity and Gender Inclusive Language: General Remarks upon the Debate on Italian." In *Actas del Congreso Relatividad Lingüística y Filosofía Experimental*, edited by Patricia Hernando Carrera and Carlota G. Llorente, XI–XVIII. Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 2024.
- Boschetto, Luca. "Proposta per l'introduzione della schwa come desinenza per un italiano neutro rispetto al genere, o italiano inclusivo." Google Docs. 2015. https://docs.google.com/document/d/1FQ0_e456qEmd0pj9mPeXtB-GLfuhfEAAChp0LVWAh7o/edit#heading=h.7ctli09vqyc4.
- Butler, Judith. "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory." *Theatre Journal* 40, no. 4 (1988): 519–531. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3207893>.
- Carosella, Maria. "Sulla proposta di creazione di un nuovo genere in italiano: Riflessioni, problemi, simboli." *Circula*, nos. 17–18 (2023): 261–275. <https://doi.org/10.17118/11143/21785>.
- Charmaz, Kathy. *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide through Qualitative Analysis*. Sage, 2006.
- Charmaz, Kathy, and Robert Thornberg. "The Pursuit of Quality in Grounded Theory." *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 18, no. 3 (2021): 305–327. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14780887.2020.1780357>.
- Comandini, Gloria. "Salve a tuttə, tutt*, tuttu, tuttx e tutt@: L'uso delle strategie di neutralizzazione di genere nella comunità queer online. Ricerca sul corpus CoGeNSI." *Testo e Senso*, no. 23 (2021): 43–64. <https://testoesenso.it/index.php/testoesenso/article/view/524>.
- D'Achille, Paolo. "Un asterisco sul genere." Consulenza Linguistica dell'Accademia della Crusca, September 24, 2021. <https://accademiadellacrusca.it/it/consulenza/un-asterisco-sul-genere/4018>.
- De Cesare, Anna-Maria. "Sulla diacronia breve dello schwa nei testi di 'mediattivisti di movimento': Forme, frequenza e funzioni socio-identitarie." *Lingue e culture dei media* 8, no. 1 (2024): 37–54. <https://doi.org/10.54103/2532-1803/24869>.
- Di Giannantonio, Bianca, Karine Milanese, Marta Mirabella, et al. "'The Third Table Where I Would Sit Comfortably': Narratives of Nonbinary Identity Routes." *International Journal of Transgender Health* (January 2024): 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.1080/26895269.2024.2303466>.
- Ducoli, Maria, Giuliana Giusti, and Gianluca Leboni. "Districare gli stereotipi dal genere semantico in italiano: Una ricerca psicolinguistica." In *Lingua inclusiva: Forme, funzioni, atteggiamenti e percezioni*, a cura di Anna-Maria De Cesare e Giuliana Giusti. LiVVal. Edizioni Ca' Foscari, 2024. <https://doi.org/10.30687/978-88-6969-866-8/006>.
- Duncan, Lauren E., and Bruno Grazioli. "Power and Inclusivity: Bolognesi LGBTQIA+ Activists Reflect on Representation in the Italian Language." *gender/sexuality/italy* 11 (2025): 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.15781/knh7-j315>.
- Facchini, Igor, and Ira Torresi. "Non-Binary Language in Consecutive Interpreting from English into Italian: An Experimental Study on the Viability of Schwa Endings." *Meta* 69, no. 2 (2024): 408–427. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1118384ar>.
- Feketova, Lucia, and Limor Raviv. "The Inescapable Cage of a Man and a Woman: Experiences of Non-Binary People with Gender Identity (Non-)Affirmation in the Context of a Gendered Language." *International Journal of Transgender Health* (August 2025): 1–26. <https://doi.org/10.1080/26895269.2025.2544022>.

- Feltri, Mattia. “Allarmi siam fascistə.” *La Stampa*, July 25, 2020. <https://www.lastampa.it/topnews/firme/buongiorno/2020/07/25/news/allarmi-siam-fasciste-1.39122109/>.
- Formato, Federica. *Feminism, Corpus-Assisted Research and Language Inclusivity*. 1st ed. Elements in Language, Gender and Sexuality, edited by Helen Sauntson and Holly R. Cashman. Cambridge University Press, 2024. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009236379>.
- Formato, Federica. “Gender Inclusive Language in Italy: A Sociolinguistic Overview.” *Mediterranean and European Linguistic Anthropology* 5, no. 1 (2023): 22–40. <https://doi.org/10.47298/jomela/v5-i1-a3>.
- Gheno, Vera. “Gender Inclusiveness in a Binary Language.” In *Inclusiveness Beyond the (Non)Binary in Romance Languages: Research and Classroom Implementation*, edited by Gláucia V. Silva and Cristiane Soares. Routledge, 2025. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003432906-5>.
- Gheno, Vera. “Questione di privilegi: Come il linguaggio ampio può contribuire ad ampliare gli orizzonti mentali.” *AG About Gender – Rivista internazionale di studi di genere* 11, no. 21 (2022): 388–406. <https://doi.org/10.15167/2279-5057/AG2022.11.21.1982>.
- Goffman, Erving. *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. Anchor Books. Doubleday, 1959.
- González Vázquez, Iz, Anna Klieber, and Martina Rosola. “Beyond Pronouns: Gender Visibility and Neutrality across Languages.” In *The Oxford Handbook of Applied Philosophy of Language*, edited by Ernie Lepore and Luvel Anderson. Oxford University Press, 2024. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780192844118.013.37>.
- Hallberg, Lillemor R. M. “The ‘Core Category’ of Grounded Theory: Making Constant Comparisons.” *International Journal of Qualitative Studies on Health and Well-Being* 1, no. 3 (2006): 141–148. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17482620600858399>.
- Kenda, Jana. “Grammatica inclusiva in italiano: Le alternative linguistiche offerte e il riscontro dell’opinione pubblica.” *Linguistica* 62, nos. 1–2 (2022): 205–222. <https://doi.org/10.4312/linguistica.62.1-2.205-222>.
- Losty, Mairéad, and John O’Connor. “Falling Outside of the ‘Nice Little Binary Box’: A Psychoanalytic Exploration of the Non-Binary Gender Identity.” *Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy* 32, no. 1 (2018): 40–60. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02668734.2017.1384933>.
- Papadopoulos, Ben. “A Brief History of Gender-Inclusive Spanish.” *DEP. Deportate, Esuli, Profughe* 48, no. 1 (2022): 40–48.
- Russell, Eric Louis. “Ciro è Morto o Morta? Symbolic Power and Discursive Effability.” In *Redoing Linguistic Worlds*, edited by Kris Aric Knisely and Eric Louis Russell. Critical Language and Literacy Studies. Multilingual Matters, 2024. <https://doi.org/10.21832/9781800415102-016>.
- Scandurra, Cristiano, Agostino Carbone, Roberto Baiocco, Selene Mezzalana, Nelson Mauro Maldonato, and Vincenzo Bochicchio. “Gender Identity Milestones, Minority Stress and Mental Health in Three Generational Cohorts of Italian Binary and Nonbinary Transgender People.” *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 18, no. 17 (2021): 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18179057>.
- Scotto Di Carlo, Giuseppina. “An Analysis of the Use of Inclusive Language among Italian Non-Binary Individuals: A Survey Transcending Binary Thinking.” *I-LanD Journal. Beyond Binary Thinking through Inclusiveness* 2 (2020): 70–89. https://doi.org/10.26379/II.2020002_005.
- Scotto Di Carlo, Giuseppina. “Is Italy Ready for Gender-Inclusive Language?” In *Inclusiveness Beyond the (Non)Binary in Romance Languages: Research and Classroom Implementation*, edited by Gláucia V. Silva and Cristiane Soares. Routledge, 2025. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003432906-7>.

- Sulis, Gigliola, and Vera Gheno. "The Debate on Language and Gender in Italy, from the Visibility of Women to Inclusive Language (1980s–2020s)." *The Italianist* 42, no. 1 (2022): 153–183. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02614340.2022.2125707>.
- Talmy, Steven. "Qualitative Interviews in Applied Linguistics: From Research Instrument to Social Practice." *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics* 30 (2010): 128–148. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0267190510000085>.
- Todd, Jay. "Exhaustion, Exhausting Temporalities, and Young Trans People's Everyday Lives in the UK." *Annals of the American Association of Geographers* 113, no. 3 (2023): 771–789. <https://doi.org/10.1080/24694452.2022.2134087>.
- West, Candace, and Don H. Zimmerman. "Doing Gender." *Gender & Society* 1, no. 2 (1987): 125–151.