*The peer review reports below were provided for the submission by Nicholas Lo Vecchio, “Translation as a tool for lexicology: A case study of* gay*,” commissioned for the TaCo special issue on taboo of* mediAzioni *journal (forthcoming fall 2024). The paper was submitted in its earliest version on 29 June 2023 and the reports were received from the guest editors on 19 December 2023*. *The author requested an investigation into the allegation that the reports were produced by generative AI and also requested that a revised version be submitted to a replacement round of human review. The editors reaffirmed on 11 January 2024 that they stood by the reports as human work; following my public denunciation of 31 January, the journal provided responses from the two reviewers (*[*see here*](https://nicospage.eu/ai-and-peer-review-official-journal-response)*). Here the reports were annotated by the author of the article, with updates to account for those responses.*

# Author position

As the author of the article in question, I take the position that these reports were unambiguously produced using generative AI, without any possible doubt – so flagrantly as to represent a prototypical example, indeed a caricature, of human-prompted machine-generated text. On principle, I oppose engaging with machine-generated content unsituated with respect to any individual human taking responsibility for it: without attachment to some human authorial positionality, such text is, to me, literally meaningless. Because others do not know my paper or the material as I do, and because AI-produced text is still new to humanity, I reluctantly offer these annotations as a way to contextualize the mostly fake reports, with the practical aim of raising awareness and of encouraging the journal to establish public accountability for the individuals responsible for this most fundamental ethical breach.

The use of AI in peer review has prompted an urgent dialogue in the sciences, where it is seen as inevitable. Its use in the humanities warrants a dedicated discussion, which perhaps this incident will incite. Relevant here is Hosseini and Horbach’s (2023) critical, and realistic, paper[[1]](#footnote-1) addressing issues of ethics, confidentiality, bias, inconsistency of output or (ir)reproducibility, the rapidly evolving technology, and the inherently social function of peer review; the authors conclude proposing a number of sensible guidelines. I can’t speak for the sciences. For language study, I do not see how generative AI could be meaningfully used to review scholarship in a way that is not antithetical to the values of human intellectual creativity. The solution to the major political and logistical problems of peer review is not to lazily outsource the work to the machines, which reproduce human error and bias in opaque ways, but to radically rethink a broken and inequitable system of knowledge gatekeeping.

# Method of AI text generation

The reports could have been produced in several ways: 1) Feeding my paper into a generative AI program, then human prompting the program with the questions here and post-editing; 2) Human prompting the generative AI program without ingesting the paper, then post-editing the results. I believe that the paper was indeed ingested into an AI platform (method 1) due to the frequent repetition of text sequences from my own paper as well as the patterns noted below. Assuming my text was ingested into a commercial AI platform, this would have been illegal, as I did not consent to my intellectual property being subject to such processing and potential theft.

I simulated this by feeding the initial draft into various AIs with the below prompts. The results (see [here](https://nicospage.eu/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/LO-VECCHIO-Chat-GPT-tests-run-2024.02.03.docx)) yield striking text similarities that could not possibly be due to chance but instead reproduce patterns known to disproportionately occur in AI text generation (see [here](https://nicospage.eu/update-on-ai-peer-review-incident-journal-response#An-article-describing-AI-text-patterns)). ChatGPT 3.5 was almost certainly the AI program used. Among the many text patterns recurring in the below reports and the simulated ChatGPT output are the following: “the author should consider,” “there are instances,” “to improve (the) clarity,” “benefit from,” “help readers,” “reader’s understanding,” “unique perspective,” “existing literature,” “issue(s) at hand,” “fall short,” “fully grasp,” “fully explore,” “enhance,” “enrich,” “solidify,” “lack,” “findings,” “elements,” “dimensions,” “challenging,” “roadmap,” “alternative interpretations.” In reviews that have not a single interesting or engaging thing to say about my arguments, the most telling examples are those involving text cohesion: “seamless,” “transition,” “gaps,” “progression,” “coherence,” “cohesion,” “abrupt,” “disjointed.”

# General observations

***Comparison to human responses provided by the journal:*** The structure, style, voice, correctness, and expertise shown in the reviewer responses, evidently human produced, contrast with all of the below points. These responses provided control samples against which to test the original reports. The human responses are not flagged as machine generated by AI detectors, unlike the below. See the controlled [AI detection analysis here](https://nicospage.eu/ai-and-peer-review-official-journal-response#Controlled-AI-detection-tests).

***Omniscient point of view:*** There is no first-person point of view in either report, unlike all previous reviews I have received. The AI reports are not dialogic but one-sided as they talk down at me omnisciently, rather than engage with my ideas as an equal participant in a dialogue.

***Formal correctness:*** The formal presentation of the text is close to perfect in terms of English orthographic and punctuational norms, by now a well-known clue of AI text generation. The only glaring error is the use of plural “authors” in one case in Review 1 (highlighted in red), whereas all other instances are singular – the exact type of error easily produced during a patchwork process of prompting and post-editing of AI text.

***Formulaic textual structure:*** Most sections follow the same basic machine text pattern: *Banal general statement. However, contrasting banal general statement*. Or: *While banal general statement…, contrasting banal general statement*. Or: *Banal general statement. Therefore, following banal general statement*. There is giveaway overuse of text connectors (highlighted here in blue) in a way that reads unidiomatically. In some cases, there is no logical flow with the connectors, such as the use of “however” in contexts presenting no semantic contrast. Formulaic phrases like “it is advisable” are found in both, along with other suspicious similarities.

***Fixation on textual cohesion:*** The reviews parse my language obsessing over textual cohesion in a way only a robot would notice. There is a focus on supposedly “disjointed” text or transitions, though without ever stating where these occur (highlighted here in yellow). The fixation on the “abruptness” of the case study, inaccurately analyzed in both reviews as being presented without “background information,” is especially revealing.

***Unspecific content:*** Line by line, the reviews make extremely general critiques without any textual substantiation. To the extent the reviews mention the paper’s content at all, they only focus on the initial Cory section; no mention is made of the also significant *Der Kreis* discussion. Most importantly, the reviews do not engage with my arguments in any way – not with respect to historical lexicology, LGBTQ studies, or translation studies. Particularly dubious is that the evaluations for a journal affiliated with a renowned translation faculty did not have a single thing to say about my translational approach! The reviews could describe basically any research article, with the critiques limited to superficial observations that a machine could make (smooth out transitions, cite more sources, clarify the theoretical or methodological basis, use a formulaic conclusion). Plus, the extreme superficiality of these reports could have been achieved by a human in ten minutes with a quick glance at the paper, in much more concise reviews.

***Meaningless content:*** In line with unspecific content, a related aspect is meaningless content. Most statements are pure AI syntactic sequences that convey no meaningful sense to humans.

***Repetitive content:*** Also relatedly, the review reports expend a lot of words saying the exact same thing, just reformulating it in different but equally unspecific or meaningless ways.

***Lack of human expertise:*** The review reports do not display human expertise in the fields of historical lexicology, translation, or LGBTQ studies. Despite many calls for me to cite more sources, no specific citations are provided: as if the strength of an argument is based on the fact of citing lots of sources, rather than citing the right and relevant ones. A human expert on the topic would have known that there is little queer lexicological work relevant to this paper, beyond what is cited here. Alternatively, a human expert could have made recommendations about what authors/sources they felt were lacking from the bibliography, justifying them (unlike the one useless mention of Paul Baker in Review 2). At a minimum, a human expert would have pointed to the specific areas that needed additional development, and explained why.

***Lack of human regard:*** Various points are repetitively overexplained, to such an extent that they are shockingly condescending. A clue that a robot overexplanation is coming, in both reports, is via the transition “in other words” or reference to what the “reader(s)” will expect (highlighted here in purple). A human would have known, for instance, that there was no need to explain to the author of this paper how to write a conclusion or to explain why it’s important for readers to be able to grasp its argumentation. Also striking is that there is not a single positive or constructive comment about what is ostensibly, to humans, a fascinating topic. For a paper submitted to a special issue on “taboo,” one might have expected some observation on the topical social interest it presents, or even a little enthusiasm.

***Personal context:*** I compared the reviews to all other review reports I have received. No reviewer has ever made mention of abruptness, disjointedness, transitions, text cohesion, or lack of clarity (to the contrary). But they have helpfully engaged with my argumentation and recommended specific citations they felt were missing. Even for past review reports that I disagreed with, it was obvious they were written by real humans who actually read and engaged with the text – in contrast to this disrespectful and anti-intellectual peer review sabotage.

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| **Nicholas Lo Vecchio**  **31 January 2024 (updated 5 May 2024)** | *For updates:*  www.nicospage.eu |

# REVIEWER 1:

**1. OVERALL RECOMMENDATION:**

The paper could be suitable for publication if **significant changes** are made.

**2. SUGGESTIONS TO THE AUTHOR:**

* 1. Does the paper present original research?

*The paper under review focuses on a specific area of study – the role of translation in the development and spread of LGBTIQ+-related lexis, with a case study on the word ‘gay’. While the author does adopt a unique perspective, the topic is not novel and has been analysed frequently in the field of queer studies. One the of most interesting aspects, however, is represented by the historical examples of LGBTIQ+-related words, both contemporary and past ones, and their relationship with translation and language contact. This historical context adds an original dimension to the research. Additionally, another element that makes the paper original is the investigation into the spread of the term ‘gay’ in different language communities (Spanish, French, and German) starting in the 1950s, which is a comparative and multilingual approach that offers original insights into the dynamics of lexical transfer. Still, the paper needs to be more critical in the way it approaches the issue at hand. The author seems to refer particularly to previous studies carried by themselves. Expanding the context of research by focusing on other relevant research could more clearly occupy the niche they are occupying.*

* 1. Is the author explicit about what knowledge s/he is adding to the knowledge already presented elsewhere?

*The paper would benefit from a more robust exploration of the existing literature concerning queer approaches to lexicological analysis in order to provide a stronger foundation for their study. While* Section 2 – Toward linguistic self-determination in the twentieth century *does offer some context, there are instances where the paper makes generalisations that could benefit from past empirical studies or clear references to existing research. Additionally, it is important to note that the author appears to heavily rely on their own previous work throughout the paper. This reliance on their own research can lead to a degree of circularity in the approach. In other words, the author is using their own research to support their current claims, which can create a closed system of validation without seeking external or diverse sources of evidence or viewpoints. This can potentially limit the objectivity and breadth of the research, as it relies predominantly on a single source (i.e., the author’s own work) for support. To enhance the rigour and credibility of the paper, it is advisable to incorporate a more extensive range of references and perspectives.*

* 1. Is it clear what the reported research is founded on?

*The reported research is founded on a clear basis. The paper does provide a strong foundation by addressing the historical and sociopragmatic context of linguistic innovations within LGBTIQ+-related terminology, discussing how translation and language contact have played a crucial role in shaping these lexical developments, especially in the twentieth century. However, once again, more explicit references to existing scholarly literature that informs and supports the research must be provided. Indeed, while the paper does discuss the historical and sociopragmatic context of LGBTIQ+-related terminology and the role of translation, it would benefit from citing relevant academic sources in these areas.*

* 1. Is there enough reference to the relevant literature?

*See previous comments.*

* 1. Is the author’s line of reasoning explicit?

*The reasoning is supported by concrete examples and references to specific texts, both in English and other languages, which helps make the argument explicit and comprehensible. However, while the text is generally well-structured, there are some areas where further elaboration and contextualisation could enhance the clarity of the author’s argument. This includes providing additional background information and explaining the significance of the evidence presented. This can help readers more easily follow the author’s line of reasoning and understand the significance of the analysis presented in the text. For instance, the author of the paper abruptly introduces Cory’s case study without prior reference or context. The book is not briefly described, nor is the historical context in which it was written explained. Consequently, the examples provided seem detached from the original historical dimension, making them challenging to interpret. The author of the paper should therefore consider revising the analysis to provide clearer contextualisation of the information presented. This would help readers better understand the significance of the analysis and its relevance to the broader framework of the study.*

* 1. Are there any flawed arguments?

*There are no obvious flawed arguments. The author’s reasoning is generally sound and well-structured, and the claims made are supported by evidence from various examples. However, the authors should consider breaking down complex concepts into simpler language where possible, especially when introducing them. In particular, this is evident when using specialised terminology. Also, the author should consider breaking the analytical section text into smaller, clearly labelled subsections so as to make it easier for readers to navigate and understand the analysis. Finally, the concluding section of the paper seems to function more as an extension of the analysis rather than a comprehensive conclusion. To improve it, the author should consider incorporating the following elements:*

* *provide contextualisation for the study to solidify its place within the research space;*
* *summarise the main findings of the work and establish connections with existing literature;*
* *make explicit claims, offer explanations for the results, and compare the new findings with previous studies, potentially presenting alternative interpretations;*
* *highlight additional aspects or areas for future analysis related to the investigated phenomenon;*
* *address any remaining desiderata or unresolved questions.*

*These suggested elements should be included to enhance the clarity and completeness of the conclusion.*

* 1. Are the examples adduced relevant? Are they interpreted correctly?

*The examples provided in the text are relevant to the topic of the paper, and they help illustrate various points related to the translation of LGBTIQ+ terminology. The author uses these examples to support their arguments and demonstrate the cross-cultural adoption of the term ‘gay’. However, the author should consider the previous comments provided in this report to improve the clarity of the interpretation of specific phenomena.*

# REVIEWER 2:

1. **OVERALL RECOMMENDATION**

The paper could be suitable for publication if significant changes are made.

1. **SUGGESTIONS TO THE AUTHOR**
2. *Does the paper present original research? Is the author explicit about what knowledge s/he is adding to the knowledge already presented elsewhere? Is it clear what the reported research is founded on? Is there enough reference to the relevant literature?*

The paper titled “Translation as a tool for lexicology: A case study of *gay*” can be situated in the field of translation and lexicographic studies, exploring the use of translation analysis as a valuable tool in historical comparative lexicology, with a specific focus on the cross-cultural transfer of LGBTIQ+-related terminology between languages. More specifically, the study examines the neologistic processes involved in the spread of the word ‘gay’ (but it also focuses on others) across different linguistic and cultural contexts, mapping its transfer over time from English to Spanish, French, and German. The analysis highlights the role of translation in establishing concrete chronologies and geographies of cultural contact, offering insights into the evolution of LGBTIQ+ lexicon beyond language-internal innovations. In this way, the broader aim of the investigation is to contribute to a diachronic lexicological understanding of the origin and spread of lexical terms in LGBTIQ+ discourse. In so doing, the paper presents original research. However, the paper does not provide a complete account of previous research done in this context. The work carried out (among others) by Paul Baker, for instance, in the study of LGBTIQ+-related terms is missing from the paper. Also, the sociolinguistic dimension of the study background is somehow lacking. Indeed, the author underlines how important it is to focus on language practice and change, and cites the connection between mediated discourse and sociolinguistic change. However, this dimension is not fully explored neither in the literature review nor in the analysis of the case study taken into consideration.

1. *Is the author’s line of reasoning explicit? Are there any flawed arguments? Are the examples adduced relevant? Are they interpreted correctly?*

The author’s line of reasoning occasionally proves challenging to track. The progression of introduced topics lacks linearity and can be abrupt at times. In this sense, the paper gives the impression of being a condensed version of a more extensive work, where transition paragraphs may have been omitted, making it challenging for readers to seamlessly follow the presented arguments. Additionally, the sudden introduction of the case study without prior mention and, more significantly, without a comprehensive background creates difficulty in grasping the observations provided. While the author supports their analysis with various examples, enhancing the discussion with background information on the case study would aid readers in better comprehending the insights derived from the analysis.

1. *Are there any important omissions?*

As previously highlighted, the paper could gain substantial value from an expanded literature review and, notably, a more robust sociolinguistic approach to the presented case study. While the author acknowledges the significance of this dimension, it remains largely unexplored, and if connections are drawn to the sociological aspect of the case study, they appear tenuous and inadequately developed. Moreover, the methodological framework lacks clear discussion, and the author should provide a more explicit presentation of it. In other words, a more direct and identifiable articulation of the theoretical and methodological underpinnings would enhance the overall clarity and coherence of the paper. Readers would indeed benefit from a deeper understanding of it, contributing to the study’s broader implications. Additionally, a thorough discussion of the methodological framework is crucial for readers to evaluate the validity and reliability of the research findings. By addressing these aspects, the paper can establish a more solid foundation, ensuring that both the theoretical framework and methodological approach are transparent and accessible.

1. *Is there any material which is superfluous in relation to the objectives of the paper?*

No material introduced in the paper is extraneous concerning its objectives. However, it is advisable to expand on these points to enhance the comprehensibility of the analysis, thus bolstering the overall clarity of the analysis and also ensuring that the readers can fully grasp the relevance and implications of the presented information.

1. *Are examples in less commonly known languages sufficiently and plausibly explained?*

The author adeptly elucidates all examples from languages other than English, offering a comprehensive and persuasive explanation. The clear presentation of these examples serves to justify the insights derived from the contrastive analysis. However, to further enrich the reader’s understanding, the author could consider providing additional contextual information for each non-English example. This would not only strengthen the persuasiveness of the analysis but also ensure a more thorough comprehension of the various linguistic elements explored.

1. *Is the format of the paper appropriate and the writing style suitable for the intended readership?*

The paper displays an appropriate format, and the writing style aligns well with academic standards. However, the author is encouraged to revise specific sections by providing more comprehensive information on certain concepts. In reading the paper, there is a recurring feeling that it has been summarized/condensed from a more extensive version, contributing to occasional gaps in clarity. For instance, the Introduction falls short in setting a clear scene for subsequent sections; it inadequately outlines the study’s objectives and overlooks any mention of the case study under investigation. Similarly, the section titled “Toward linguistic self-determination in the twentieth century” appears disjointed and would benefit from revision to strengthen the coherence of the presented information. Also, the section “Cory in translation: Cultural contact through a seminal gay text” lacks a sufficiently detailed background for the examined case study. Therefore, expanding these sections and providing a more robust foundation for the case study would greatly enhance the overall cohesion and reader comprehension. This can start by offering a clearer roadmap in the Introduction, and smoothing out transitions in the subsequent sections would contribute to a more seamless and engaging narrative.

1. *Are there any formal (e.g. grammar, spelling) mistakes?*

The paper demonstrates proficient writing with no discernible grammatical or spelling errors.

1. Mohammad Hosseini and Serge P.J.M. Horbach, “Fighting Reviewer Fatigue or Amplifying Bias? Considerations and Recommendations for Use of ChatGPT and Other Large Language Models in Scholarly Peer Review,” *Research Integrity and Peer Review* 8, no. 4, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.1186/s41073-023-00133-5> [open access]. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)