The 'Synonymy' of *Gay* and *Omosessuale* in Italian:
A Corpus Linguistic Analysis of Two News We sites

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A‡stPa&ct
This study explores the apparent synonymy between omosessuale (homosexual) and gay (gay) in Italian and what attitudes prompt their usage Two corpora were generated and analy!ed" one #rom a $atholic news website" Tempi" and one #rom an %&' T(I) * a#fliated website" &ay it Tempi generally showed a negative attitude towards homosexuality and the institutionali!ation o# $ivil nions in Italy" resulting in a polari!ed use o# the two terms" with gay being used to represent #oreign, and subversive practices that undermine the $hurch,s heteronormative view o# the +natural #amily , In contrast" a positive endorsement o# %&' T(I) * lives expressed in &ay it generated a more nuanced use o# omosessuale and gay" with the words being used in more #ormal discourses The fndings suggest how teachers o# –nglish to spea. ers o# other languages should be aware o# the political and cultural practices behind using (apparently) synonymous words The paper #urther discusses implications o# borrowing #oreign terms" a process that is seldom neutral or straight#orward

Introduction

In Italian" both the borrowed term gay and the native term omosessuale ylose(

Background

Italian thesauri broadly define gay and omosessuale as synonyms" but a more in0depth analysis o# dictionary definitions #or the two terms shows a less uni#ormed picture 3ome dictionaries" such as Dingarelli" simply associate the two words as synonyms without providing any context #or their separate usages Ethers" such as Treccani" a highly respected encyclopedia with an online dictionary service" suggest that the two words are not per#ect synonyms" i e they cannot be used interchangeably in each and every case (&ay" 567F Emosessuale" 567F) =hereas Treccani defnes omosessuale as Hrelated to" or characteri!ed by homosexualityI #or the ad/ective and Hone who turns their sexual attention to their own sexI #or the noun (Emosessuale" 567F)" it gives a di#erent defnition #or gay (&ay, 567F) Hhomosexual (the term does not have a negative connotation" and it is thus pre#erred in certain contexts) I The somewhat vague defnition seems to suggest that omosessuale has a negative connotation in some contexts" but it does not explain where and when gay is pre#erable) common #eature o# all dictionaries seems to be that omosessuale is usually defned in relation to the word homosexuality" or expressions such as Hrelated to same0sex"I whereas gay is commonly defned by providing the synonym omosessuale The semantic relationship between the two words seems thus to suggest that9 a) there is a certain degree o# synonymy b) omosessuale is used to illustrate the meaning o# gay but not vice0versa c) despite this" some dictionaries suggest a more positive meaning #or gay" with little elaboration o# the connotation It is clear that" in order to fnd out whether these two terms are really synonyms

in combination with the concept o# semantic prosody to investigate the collocations o# the word inmigraci#n (immigration) and its semantic prosody in two 3pain,s newspapers" aiming at uncovering attitudes behind the portrayal o# immigration in the public discourse Their corpus linguistic analysis revealed that" contrary to the initial expectations" both the conservative and the more progressive newspaper share a rather negative view o# immigration This paper aims to carry out a similar research to gain insight on the degree o# synonymy #or gay and omosessuale in Italian

#ueer Linguistics

The general #ramewor. within which this corpus0based analysis will be carried out is that o# (ueer %inguistics" which has emanated #rom (ueer Theory ((T) (T developed as a criticism o# the #ay an#lesbians stu#es o# the 78F6s and 78<6s" when scholars and activists began expressing doubts about ta.ing sexuality as a main identity category detached #rom other" plural identity0 de#ning #actors (4otschenbacher K 3tegu" 567B&3ullivan" 566B) This shi#t wor.ed to de#ne the core pro/ect o# (TPthe Hreconceptualisation o# dominant discourses which shape our understanding o# gender and sexuality" o#ten to the detriment o# people who L M are /udged as

to uncover the types of discourse practices at play in the country in the construction of sexual identities

Research Questions

The analysis of the data will address the following research questions:

1) How are the terms gay and omosessuale used in Italian?
2) How does the usage of each term construct and reflect the authors' viewpoints and agendas?

Methodology

In order to answer the research questions, two corpora were created from two different news websites, Tempi and Gay.it. Tempi is a Catholic-inspired journal founded in 1995. After a brief closure in 2014, it is now published online on a monthly basis (https://www.tempi.it). It is national in scope and covers a wide variety of topics, ranging from news, current affairs, culture, politics etc., mainly under a center-right, Catholic framework. It has always been vocal in regards to topics such as abortion and traditional family, aligning with the Church in deprecating the

Tempi $orpus					
) d/ectival Omosessual ((Total9 F5)			) d/ectival Øay (Total9 <7)		
$oposate	Translation	$tequency	$ollocate	Translation	1reJuency
$oppia>e?	$ouple(s)	5;	$oppia>e?	$ouple(s)	7<
Persona>e*	Person>people	77	4atrimoni(o)V	=edding(s)	7F
nioni ($inå!CE"7* M877					
		nioni ($in7½			

mar.s and b) present practices such as the $ivil nions and stepchild adoption as #oreign and trendy might suggest a deliberate attempt at stripping the term gay o## o# its counter0hegemonic meaning" thus ignoring the Italian %&' T(I) * community,s alignment with the liberation movement in the nited 3tates

To gain more granularity in the analysis" the 55 noun collocates o# omosessual (and the 276 Pg,ay ones o# gay were then grouped according to semantic categories 1igure 5 shows the result o# this grouping" with common semantic categories #or the two terms in the le#t section and uniJue semantic categories presented in the right side o# 1igure 5

Tempi $orpus9 $ommon semantic categories	
1amilial	
Omosessual (: < (; ; FU)	Say ; ; (<7 : U)
-ouple&/ -hil/ren 0-i il /2hions Spouse We/ing&/ -ohabitee /amily&/ Parenthoo/ 3/ption Partner	-ouple&/ We/ings 3/options 0-i il /2hions Matrimony -ohabitee
) ggregation	
Omosessual (: (C ; U)	Say C (; 5U)
En ironments /ien/s -ommunity Organi/ation	Worl/ /lliance -ommunity Lobby
3ex	
Omosessual (7 (7 BU)	Say 7 (7 5U)

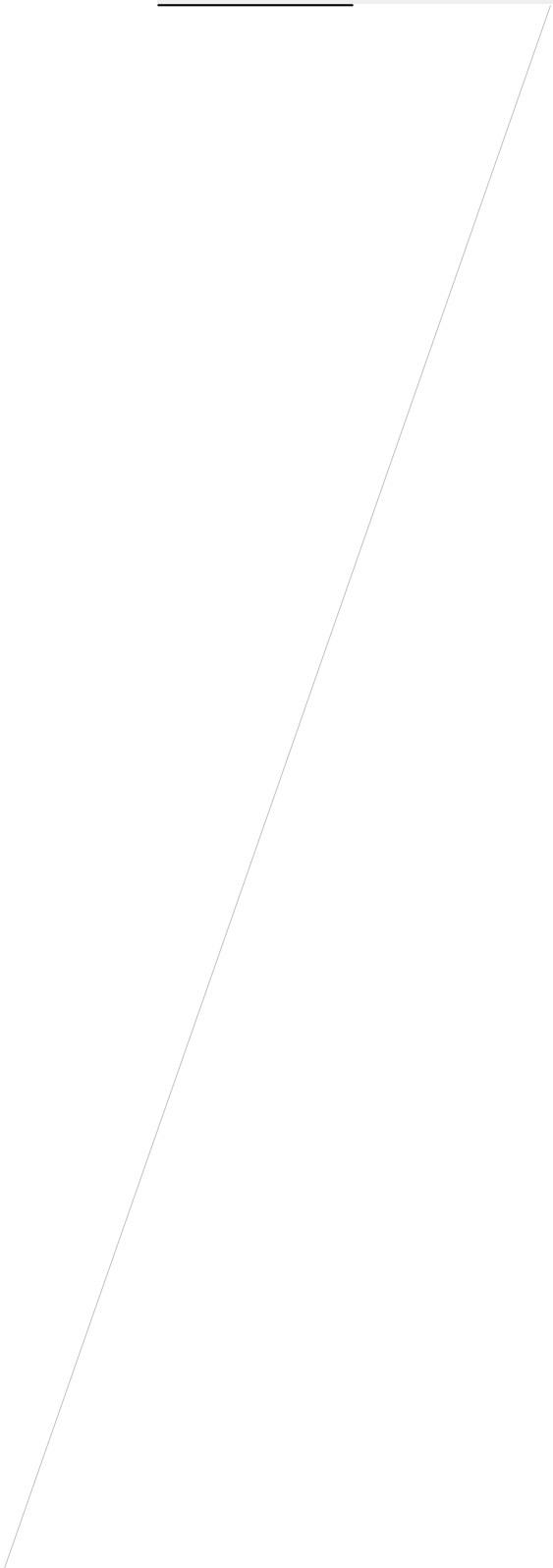| Tempi $orpus9 niJue semantic categories	
) d/ectival Omosessual (	) d/ectival Say
People 7B (7< 7U)	Politics C (; 5U)
Person /People Men Women	3en/a /ights
	Problem 5 (5 CU)
E rientation C (FU)	Matter /nti *
Ten/ency&/ -on/tion	3ociety 7 (7 5U)
E ccupation 7 (7 BU)	/con
Stu/ent	Place o# origin 7 (7 5U)
	Westerner

gender (lesbians and transgender people" as per 1igure :) 1urthermore" Hlesbiansl and Htransl are used in negative semantic prosody" as they are in close proximity with the verbs Hhatel and Hto deny I HItalian"I too" is used as an ad/ective in the nominal phrase HItalian gaysl in a #oreign context" such as in the sentence H$ali#ornia is the most popular destination among those ‭talian gays to whom Lthe adoption through surrogateM is denied by –astern –urope or other low cost

In the corpus" nominal gay is thus used as an identifer #or people only in the dichotomy #oreign>local" or di##erent>same The other collocates #or nominal gay" in #act" are Juotes #rom other sourcesAHmerci#ull is #ound in a reported sentence in a news article and the copula era (Hwas!) is part o# a song title as reported in another article" HLuca era gay e a#sso sta con lei! (H%uca was gay and now he is with her!)

Tempi corpus	
Wominal Omosessuale	Wominal #ay
1amilial # C (BB BU)	Xeligion # B (BF CU)
To a#pt –hil# Parents 3#options We##ng	Muslim #1 Merci #l
	@iscrimination;

again" the collocates seem to suggest a pre#erence in use #or omosessual ⟨#or gay individuals abiding to the homonormativity reJuired by the $atholic church" i e " gay people who still de#end the traditional #amily and ta.e sides against surrogates and other alternatives #orms o# #amily Ence again" this seems to support the interpretation that Tempi constructs heteronormative"

political or technical #ocus The data thus show how" throughout the corpus" omosessual ⸍ is pre#erred #or instances o# political" technical" or #ormal discourses

%oo.ing at the uniJue collocates" ad/ectival gay is used #or a wider variety o# contexts" especially the arts (Hballet dancers"I Haudience"I Hchoirl)" culture>society (Hiconl in the #ormulaic and established expression icona gay, gay iconG Hyoutuber"I and the word Hculturel itsel#)" and generally leisure and entertainment (Hclubs"I Hpartyl) Omosessual (is largely in collocation with terms related to the political debate and especially the issues concerning le ámiglie arcobaleno" Hthe rainbow #amilies"I a phrase #ound in the corpus 1urthermore" most o# omosessual (collocates are #rom articles concerning the ' ill proposed by 4onica $irinnT or news concerning religious debates" which" once again" are topics which o#ten fnd their #ormal articulation in +o#fcial, or technical discourses

1igure ; shows the collocates o# ad/ectival omosessual (and gay grouped according to semantic categories)t a frst glance" the number o# shared categories is larger #or the &ay it corpus" which might suggest a less polari!ed use o# the two terms and" in turn" a more Ruid interchange between them) semantic prosody analysis confrmed this" with a general positive polarity #or both ad/ectives but also instances o# neutral and negative semantic prosody @espite the absence o# a clear divide" there are elements o# di##erence that could broaden the scope o# the analysis 1or example" even though the #amilial category shows a wider variety o# collocates #or ad/ectival

sons>daughtersI (Italian has a common word #or both" &gli" which is
erm H. idsI)

&ay it $orpus				
(58)		Wominal &ay (5C)		
	1reJuency	$ollocate	Translation	1reJuency
	:	%esbic**	%esbian(s)	:
	B	$alcio*	3occer	5
a& 0I	5	@ichiarato>		

5 5

&ay it $orpus9 common semantic categories	
3exual Erientation	
Omosessox(C (7F 5U)	&ay F (5<U)
Eterosexual isexuals	Lesbian Straight Openly gay

Tempi $orpus9 uniJue semantic categories	
) d/ectival Omosessual (	) d/ectival &ay
People B (76 BU)	%ove 7 (: U)
Men Women >oung person	3no
) ge B (76 BU)	Ether 7 (: U /

whereas gay identifes discourses more centered on pop0cultural and in#ormal topics" with collocates such as gusto popolare (popular taste) and sho⸴girl (a borrowed term #rom –nglish)

The uniJue semantic categories show additional evidence supporting the general" underlying pattern o# nominal (and ad/ectival) pre#erence according to discourse reRected in register   niJue categories o# omosessual ⸍are in #act related to politics and religion (high register" #ormal categories" +o#fcial, discourse)" among others" with terms such as H/uror"I H$hurch"I Hrights"I and H$irinnT I) common trait running through both corpora is the high prevalence o# collocations #or omosessual ⸍and terms related to the Hperson>peopleI category In the &ay it corpus" this point is evidenced by the terms Hmen>women"I Hyoung person"I with the HageI category" tightly related to the Hperson>peopleI category" represented as a personal trait (Hthe 5C0 year0old homosexual"I Hthe : 60year0old homosexual"I and Hthe ; 60year0old homosexualI)

Ence again" aside #rom di##erences in use #or the two nominal terms" it is clear how the

and nominal omosessual/ were more related to personal #eatures o# homosexuality" in a Juasi0reactionary attempt to represent it as more private matter" and thus less threatening to the status Juo This reRects the homonormative view that the $atholic church holds towards homosexuality %astly" this more polari!ed use nullifes the socio0political #orce o# the counter0discourse expressed by the term gay, associated with the liberation movement in the nited 3tates" thus denigrating it and casting it as a general Ether

5) In contrast" a more positive attitude towards %&' T(I) * issues in the &ay it corpus appears to be lin.ed to other linguistic choices that support the #ollowing implicit agendas9

- Æepiction o ″a more i i∥an∥ arie∥reality #or Jueer individuals Xe#erences to the arts" culture" sports and entertainment can be seen as a purpose#ul attempt to sel#0determination and a#firmation" especially in collocation with gay and omosessual/ =ords related to love" mainly amore (love)" are also present" both in instances o# amore gay and amore omosessuale∥) wider variety o# contexts in which the two words are used" together with a greater variety o# linguistic categories involved (nouns and ad/ectives)" showed a general confidence in using the two terms in the &ay it corpus" which is hardly a surprise" due to the very nature o# the news website

- 𝟥less polari∤∥∥stinction bet．een omosessual* an∥gay" which caused a more Ruid" and thus harder to detect interchange between the two terms The meaning attached to omosessual/ and gay is not generally centered on the dynamic normative vs subversive as it was the case #or Tempi Wonetheless" a di##erentiation in terms o# authors, construction o# discourses could be #ound" with omosessual/ utili!ed #or more #ormal and technical discourses (politics and religion among others)" and gay associated with more intimate" in#ormal" pop0cultural (and sometimes trivial) topics This clearly shows a di##erent use o# the counter discourse against the hegemonic one expressed in heteronormative nuances by the Tempi corpus =hereas in Tempi the counter discourse was delegitimi!ed and diminished" in &ay it it is endorsed and #ully characteri!ed with a larger selection o# topics

The analysis above clearly Juestions the superfcial and limited semantic portrait #or gay𝜕 and omosessuale expressed in the Italian dictionaries (ma/or linguistic behemoths such as Dingarelli and Treccani included)" which clearly ignores the di##erent attitudes that might prompt people to use the two words di##erently and #or di##erent agendas" and the role o# specifc terms in building discourses #oregrounding di##erent" and in this case" opposite" Weltanschauungen

* iscussion and Conclusion

The investigation o# the rich and complex semantic and linguistic landscape in the two corpora demonstrated how di##erent attitudes and world0views resulted in non0uni#orm usage o# the terms omosessual/ and gay (∖ay and ∖empton" 78<:) These attitudes are reRected" especially in the Tempi corpus" in deliberate linguistic choices that involve the borrowed term gay∥) lthough the term is #ully integrated in the Italian language" ignxaȳ à#@` ℙ§" tà ℙs #oregp eg

HHomonormativity is the assimilation o# heteronormative ideals and constructs into homosexual culture and individual identity It re#ers to politics that do not contest dominant heteronormative assumptions and institutions such as monogamy" procreation and binary gender rolesI (Homonormativity" 567C)

3ixty two instances o# gay in f xed phrases and proper names were removed #rom the analysis" such as Hgay pride"I H&ay [illage"I Hgay street"I and &ay it = hile these instances constitute interesting and valuable data" as f xed phrases and terms that cannot be used with the term omosessual (" they have been excluded #rom the present analysis to not s. ew the data

) t the same time" the choice between gay and omosessual (could be rhetorical ' oth instances are in #act encountered in a title and a subtitle o# a piece o# news The title contains the phrase tre genera λoni ℳ artisti gay (three generations o# gay artists)" while the subtitle has a similar tre genera λoni ℳ artisti omosessuali a con fonto (comparing three generations o# homosexual artists)   Titles are usually supposed to be shorter" which might have prompted the writer to use gay) nd the choice o# omosessual (in the subtitle could be derived by a reluctance o# the Italian language to resort to repetition

Ac" nowledgements

$eferences

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