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Ethical and legal challenges of generative AI in scientific writing: authorship, transparency and translation plagiarism

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***Abstract*—As generative AI tools become common in academic writing, they are blurring the traditional lines of authorship and originality. This article explores the friction between current copyright laws and the emerging reality of AI-assisted manuscripts, specifically looking at the rise of 'translation plagiarism.' These challenges are intensified by a structural conflict of interests between authors seeking efficiency, publishers prioritizing scalability and liability reduction, and AI developers operating beyond traditional accountability frameworks. By blending legal theory with practical case studies, we show where current editorial standards are failing to keep pace. We conclude by offering an integrated model for publishers and institutions to handle AI involvement more transparently.**

***Keywords*—generative AI; scientific writing; research ethics; copyright law; translation plagiarism**

INTRODUCTION

THE rise of generative AI is pushing our traditional concepts of authorship and originality to their breaking point. For academic publishing, this isn't just a technical challenge. It's an ethical and legal crisis. This friction follows earlier observations regarding the shifting digital competencies of early-career researchers [1] and the emerging ethical considerations that modern technology imposes on social science research [2]. While digital tools have long been recognized for their ability to enhance research practices and simplify data management [3], generative systems represent a significant escalation in risk.

Our current regulatory frameworks were built on the assumption that writing is a uniquely human act. AI-assisted writing, particularly "translation plagiarism," shatters this assumption by exploiting a grey zone where copyright law and editorial ethics struggle to keep up. This article examines how AI is fundamentally reshaping what it means to be an "author" and how translation plagiarism exposes the massive holes in our current legal protections. We ask why our ethical guidelines lack real teeth and how we can align them with the reality of generative tech. By bridging the gap between legal theory and publishing practice, we offer a new model for institutional governance that moves beyond the practical ICT tools discussed in previous years toward a framework of radical transparency and shared responsibility.

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Abstract, introduction, and conclusions are written by M. W. R., as is the overall edition of the paper. Chapter I is written by A. M..; chapter II by M. K.

I. TRANSLATION PLAGIARISM. CHALLENGES RELATED TO COPYRIGHT PROTECTION IN THE AGE OF AI IN THE WORLD OF SCIENCE

A. *Introduction*

Artificial intelligence (AI) is dynamically changing the reality of the scientific world by offering attractive tools and optimization opportunities for authors, reviewers, and editors of scientific journals [4], enabling the automation of the analysis of huge amounts of data, the review of scientific sources, the development of research hypotheses, and the research process [5]. However, it poses a number of legal challenges [6] in terms of academic ethics and plagiarism detection [7]. The development of AI poses an unprecedented challenge to copyright. Ongoing litigation in the United States regarding copyright ownership of AI-generated data has significant implications for the future of generative AI (GenAI) [8] in the area of legal liability. There is debate as to whether ownership rights should belong to users, AI systems or platforms that enable broad access to AI [9]. The ethical and legal challenges associated with the use of GenAI in the world of science include, among others: attributing authorship of AI-generated texts to real scientists without their knowledge and consent and publishing them in so-called "predatory" journals [10], the limits of detectability of the degree of GenAI use in the creation of an article by an author [6], and finally, the issue of plagiarism related to the ease of translating texts using AI [7]. The concept of translation plagiarism refers to the unauthorized use of text through its translation, paraphrasing, or transformation using GenAI, if such content retains the essential elements of the original and is presented as one's own content without proper citation and source attribution [11]. Translations using GenAI significantly increase the risk of translation plagiarism and at the same time reduce the effectiveness of existing anti-plagiarism tools. The purpose of this text is to present possibilities of preventing this practice based on an analysis of theoretical and legal aspects and a description of a case of attempted translation plagiarism in one of the Polish scientific journals.

B. *Legal regulations and international standards*

Scientific articles are works protected by copyright. This means that their content may only be used in accordance with legal exclusivity, understood as the exclusive right to use the intellectual property granted to the author [12]. A significant problem in the context of discussing plagiarism is the fact that under the current legal framework, this phenomenon is not a statutory concept [13]. The concept of plagiarism is not defined in the Copyright Act or other related legal acts, despite

its standardized colloquial reference and use to describe various forms of appropriation of someone else's work [14] – not always correctly [15]. In the field of scientific work protection, plagiarism is understood as a violation of the moral right to indicate the authorship of a work (Article 16 of the Act of February 4 1994, On Copyright and Related Rights). Such an act is subject to civil and criminal liability (Articles 78 and 115 of the Copyright Act) [16]. Copyright law lists a number of conditions that must be met in order for the term plagiarism to be used [14], distinguishing between overt plagiarism, i.e., the appropriation of part or all of a work by verbatim reproduction, and covert plagiarism, where the use of content is modified and camouflaged. Attributing someone else's authorship to oneself or preventing the recipient from obtaining information about the authorship of a published fragment or the entire text constitutes a violation of the right to quote [14]. Although research results, statistical data, and research ideas themselves are not covered by copyright law, but using them without indicating authorship may constitute grounds for an allegation of infringement of personal rights in the form of the right to scientific creativity under the provisions on the protection of personal rights (Articles 23 and 24 of the Civil Code), or disciplinary proceedings initiated on the basis of the provisions of the Act of July 20, 2018, Law on Higher Education and Science Journal of Laws 2018 item 1668 [17]. The Copyright Act defines user freedoms referred to as fair use, which is exploited by publishers who oblige authors to accept the legal regulations and publication rules applicable to a given journal [12]. In the case of reputable scientific journals, these regulations are subject to verification and unification by organizations such as SCOPUS or COPE, which set standards for the reliability and ethics of scientific publications. Due to the fact that the rest of this article will describe a detected attempt to publish a plagiarized text through a translation made using AI-generated translation in the scientific journal Educational Psychology published by the The Maria Grzegorzewska University in Warsaw, the most important regulations applicable to authors seeking to publish there will be described. In the section on author declarations, under penalty of non-acceptance or rejection of the text for publication, the following requirements (selected) are visible: (1) I declare that the submitted work does not infringe the copyright, legal and material interests of other persons within the meaning of the Act of February 4, 1994, on copyright and related rights (Journal of Laws No. 24, item 83, as amended), (2) I declare that complete and accurate information about the authorship of the work, its sources of funding, the contribution of scientific and research institutions and other entities involved in its creation has been appropriately disclosed and provided in the work, and I have the authorization from the co-author(s) of the submitted article to express their will on their behalf to the extent necessary to submit this article, and (3) I declare that the content of the work discloses all instances of the use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) used to create the work, in accordance with the rules adopted in scientific literature (the author is also required to confirm the copyright statement by granting The Maria Grzegorzewska University Publishing House a free, non-exclusive, territorially unlimited license to use the Work under a Creative Commons license [18]. In accordance with applicable laws legal consequences, certification of falsehood in the presented paragraphs is subject to legal liability. However, the standards formulated by COPE defining the procedure in the event of submission [19] or publication [20] text that is plagiarized, boil down to contacting the author for clarification, issuing a warning, and refusing publication, and only in the event of disagreement do they indicate the legitimacy of informing the copyright owner and the relevant legislative institutions in the country. It should also be emphasized that organizations regulating the integrity of scientific activity, i.e., the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and The Office of Research Integrity (ORI), do not include the concept of translation plagiarism in their publications. The ORI and HHS (Department of Health and Human Services), with reference to the ORI manual (last revised in 2015) on plagiarism prevention standards [21], are issuing regulations applicable from January 2026, introducing definitive changes to the rules on research misconduct, where the discourse on plagiarism refers to its classical understanding, without taking into account the context of GenAI [22]. The NIH draws attention to the risks associated with GenAI, prohibiting only the use of GenAI tools in the review process for research grants [23], while specifying the rules for using GenAI support in scientific work [24].

C. Limitations of anti-plagiarism tools

Available sources provide little information on the detectability of plagiarism in texts translated using GenAI. The latest reports [7] provide an analysis of the variability of plagiarism indicators in the translation of academic texts into different languages in the context of the performance of Turnitin, iThenticate, and Grammarly plagiarism detection software. For the purposes of this study, ten English-language manuscripts published in the Web of Science and Scopus databases between 2023 and 2024 were selected and then translated into Spanish, Portuguese, and French. Indicators of plagiarism in both original and translated texts were comparatively analysed using the aforementioned plagiarism detection tools. The results show that they are ineffective in identifying plagiarism in translated texts and confirm that translation plagiarism can become virtually undetectable, which is a serious ethical threat in scientific publications [7]. The most common tool used to detect translation plagiarism is monolingual translation analysis (T+MA), which only works for small data sets and does not take into account modifications in the form of paraphrases, which significantly limits its effectiveness [11].

D. Case study – an attempt at translation plagiarism in Educational Psychology

In order to illustrate the ineffectiveness of automatic anti-plagiarism tools against translation plagiarism, a case study of an attempt to commit it will be presented, which took place in the scientific journal Educational Psychology published by The Maria Grzegorzewska University Publishing House during work on the publication of Volume 73 No. 31 (2025). The text submitted to the editorial office was sent for review in a double-blind system. The reviewer recognized that it was a plagiarism of an article recognizable in a thematic niche corresponding to his area of expertise. In order to verify and prove translation plagiarism, the text in Polish was translated using one of the most widely available translation tools using GenAI. The original English-language source text was identical to the translated Polish version. In the reviewed plagiarized work, the data concerning the authors, affiliations, and the place and

context of the research were changed. Despite the decision to reject the text and inform the authors of the direct copyright infringement, a post-factum check was carried out using the anti-plagiarism software used by the editorial office (plagiat.pl). The plagiarism detection rate by the system used by the editorial office indicated similarity coefficients of 1 = 32.82%; 2 = 11.71%, which, although exceeding the norm (1 to 25%; 2 to 5%), do not reflect the scale of the violation plagiarism. The system referred most of the plagiarized text to the source file, but the percentage of duplication only matched the content of the abstract in English. In addition, according to the report, the detection rate of AI-generated content in the text is 4%, which, according to the guidelines, is not controversial. Therefore, there is a high probability that, in the absence of the reviewer's narrow specialist knowledge, the author of the text would have been instructed to correct the text in order to reduce the plagiarism rate, increasing the risk of publishing translation plagiarism. On this basis, it can be concluded that the human factor (the reviewer's specific knowledge and high ethical standards) is of great importance and that commonly used anti-plagiarism tools are ineffective against translation plagiarism.

E. Discussion

A number of threats associated with the widespread use of GenAI in the scientific sector, and above all the incompatibility between the pace of development of modern technologies and legislative changes, have sparked a discussion on the legal and ethical aspects of regulatory mechanisms that could be introduced and enforced [25] [26]. The tools available for detecting plagiarism in scientific texts are not reliable, and what is more, GenAI tools can rewrite plagiarized text to avoid detection [27]. The issue of detecting translation plagiarism is still a narrowly discussed topic in the scientific world, despite the urgent need to consider methods of preventing it. Considerations regarding counteracting the phenomenon of plagiarism using GenAI in the field of scientific publications can be divided into two areas: (1) those referring to ethical standards and the conscience/will of authors to comply with them, promoting solutions such as declarations, statements, and forms for assessing the ethical correctness of published texts [4], and (2) proposing legislative solutions obliging organizations developing a base model for public use to demonstrate a reliable mechanism detection of generated content as a condition for making the tool publicly available [25] [28] with a clear definition of the responsibility of platform providers for compliance with regulations [6]. The applicable regulatory act governing this issue is the EU AI Act [28]. The usefulness of solutions such as digital watermarks assigning unique identifiers to digital content in order to track its use, and blockchain for time stamping and copyright authentication, is also emphasized [29]. It seems reasonable to publish restrictive recommendations from organizations supervising the activities of scientific journals concerning verification and procedures in cases of suspected or detected translation plagiarism, which should be further unified with the legal acts in force in a given country. It is necessary to include the possibility of enforcing legal liability with a clear definition of the procedure for dealing with attempts to publish plagiarism, especially in the case of intentional action to take over intellectual property. Perhaps until effective tools for detecting translation plagiarism become available, it is reasonable to introduce the obligation to use more than one anti-plagiarism tool in the editorial offices of scientific journals (access to a variety of databases and analysis algorithms). The importance of the human factor in counteracting the prevalence of translation plagiarism should not be overlooked - reinforcing the fundamental value of manual verification in the review process using available translators to check whether identical publications in another language can be found under the analysed keywords, title, and/or abstract. Both the focus on results in the scientific world and the lack of awareness of the limits of ethical use and knowledge of the application of GenAI by scientists may contribute to the intensification of this practice. Educational and training activities in the field of responsible conduct of research, introducing the issue of translation plagiarism into open discourse, seem to be justified.

In summary, in the era of AI development in the world of science there is a need for immediate and unified legislative action to regulate copyright issues and liability for non-compliance, as well as grassroots initiatives by individual scientific institutions, journals and organizations aimed at raising awareness of the threat of translation plagiarism and vigilance in its detection in everyday scientific and/or teaching work. Assuming an optimistic scenario for the development of this issue, we can expect international legal acts defining the limits of permissible use of GenAI in the scientific world and the consequences of non-compliance. In this approach, the assumption is that it is impossible to stop the use of GenAI for scientific work. Efforts should focus on regulating the permissible scope and transparency of its use. The concept of translation plagiarism should be widely understood by society and detectable thanks to the procedural and IT solutions introduced. Otherwise, assuming a pessimistic scenario, the lack of legislative and regulatory measures will lead to a direct violation of the integrity and reliability of the scientific world. The lack of operationalization of the concept of translation plagiarism in legal and ethical discourse, as well as ineffective tools for its detection, may allow for the widespread dissemination of this practice. A realistic scenario assumes a combination of top-down and bottom-up actions. While awaiting legislative action and regulations on the permitted use of GenAI in scientific work, individuals and organizations in the scientific world should focus their efforts on creating effective tools for detecting translation plagiarism and undertaking primary and secondary prevention measures aimed at increasing the importance of the human factor in counteracting translation plagiarism.

II. Ethical problems in the use of AI in scientific writing

A. Introduction

The use of artificial intelligence (AI), particularly large language models, to create scientific texts has sparked an immense debate about ethics, responsibility, and the importance of copyright. A growing number of voices emphasize that AI can support authors in their writing through literature searches, text outlining, editing, and proofreading, while warning of significant risks, including misattribution, hallucinations, bias, and threats to scientific integrity, when used without human oversight [30] [31] [32]. Proponents of potential efficiency benefits and caution that appropriate implementation of AI in

scientific literature requires disclosure of its use, type, origin of AI-assisted content, and robust controls to maintain control over the scientificity of the text [32]. There is a consensus across disciplines that AI should complement, not replace, human judgment, and that top-down governance and guidance should be essential components of responsible AI integration in scientific writing [33] [32] [34] [35] [36].

AI promises to improve writing efficiency and language quality, but its implementation raises significant concerns about accuracy, scientific quality, and reliability. AI should support human decision-making and critical analysis, not replace it; transparent disclosure, robust content verification, and clear author attribution are essential to maintaining trust in scientific work. A responsible path forward must combine structured use of AI support, transparent practices for disclosure and attribution of AI content, rigorous review of generated content, and guidelines that evolve alongside AI developments to guide responsible AI implementation in scientific work across disciplines and languages.

B. Transparency and provenance of AI-generated content

Transparency and provenance of AI-co-created content are repeatedly recognized as crucial for trust and reliability. Several articles have proposed a classification system for AI contributions to manuscripts, allowing readers and editors to assess the degree of AI support and ensuring appropriate safeguards for verification and accountability [32] but they need further improvement to better meet the needs of the current reality. Related discussions highlight the need for editorial policies requiring disclosure of AI tools used in editing, data analysis, illustration generation, translation, or linguistic editing, as well as clear attribution of origin when AI-generated content relies on external sources or generated data [37, 38]. Empirical case studies document the challenges of insufficiently documented sources in AI-generated texts or misattribution of references, highlighting the need for human verification of citations and data representation to prevent misinformation from entering the scientific record [39] [40] [41]. This convergence of conceptual and empirical work supports a stewardship approach in which AI is transparently disclosed, its contributions are detailed, and content is independently verifiable by researchers and editors. [38]. AI inaccuracy and hallucinations pose a persistent threat to scholarly publishing. Reports from AI-assisted writing experiments reveal that while AI can reduce writing time and improve language quality, it can also introduce or amplify inaccuracies, falsifications, and miscitations if not verified by humans. Importantly, higher similarity scores and incorrect referencing have been observed in AI-generated texts, underscoring the need for rigorous validation of claims, data representations, and bibliographies generated or reformulated by AI language models [39] [40] [41].

C. Social perspectives of AI use

Public perceptions of AI use in academic writing play a key role in shaping new norms. Academics and students' perceptions of AI use reflect a complex interplay between optimism, scepticism, and ethical dilemmas. This diverse perspective is shaped by both the potential benefits AI tools offer and the challenges they pose, leading to diverse attitudes. AI-based tools like Grammarly and Quillbot have been positively received by students, who believe these technologies improve their writing skills and increase motivation for academic tasks. This positive attitude stems from the immediate feedback and support these tools provide during writing, which is particularly beneficial for English as a foreign language learners [42]. Academics also recognize the benefits of AI, often viewing it as a tool to facilitate personalized learning and improve the writing process. For example, a systematic review found that many educators see AI as a beneficial complement to writing instruction in higher education [43]. These attitudes clearly indicate that the integration of AI tools into scientific writing is inevitable, regardless of the associated risks. Therefore, the academic community should focus on developing unified guidelines focused on the responsible use of AI.

D. Discussion

Comparison the ethical and normative approach with formal legal requirements allows for a better understanding of the obligations of authors and institutions using AI. In this context, the clash of the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) [44] principles with the EU AI Act [45], which together set a new framework for the responsible management of content generated by AI systems, is particularly interesting. COPE [44] guidelines focus primarily on integrating AI into the publishing process from an ethical perspective: they emphasize transparency, author responsibility, and prohibiting attribution of AI authorship. The EU AI Act [45], on the other hand, regulates the use of AI systems from a legal and technical perspective, classifying them according to risk level and imposing obligations regarding monitoring, transparency, and oversight.

To reconcile the COPE [44] with the EU AI Act [45], ethics must be operationalized into governance, risk management, and compliance workflows, emphasizing a risk-based and human-centered approach [46] [47]. A viable method is to embed COPE within a formal governance framework, which aligns ethical principles with regulatory requirements and employs assurance methodologies to monitor compliance. Additionally, integrating transparency, explainability, and meaningful human oversight through assessments is crucial.

The synthesis of these two approaches shows that both structures despite their different origins can be complementary. COPE [44] provides a normative framework for the principles of scientific integrity, while the EU AI Act [45] strengthens it with legal mechanisms that enforce additional transparency and documentation of the origin of AI-generated content. In practice, the integration of these approaches requires recognizing that it is the author and the institution that act as entities responsible for the compliance of the process of creating publications with the law, while AI tools are treated as an element of research infrastructure, subject to clear rules of supervision.

Students and scholars perspectives on the use of AI seem crucial for shaping further guidelines and regulations. These attitudes focus on the increasing integration of AI into the process of writing scientific articles. Optimistic attitudes can lead to inaccurate disclosure of AI contributions or ignoring guidelines. Thus, there is a need for education about the risks of using AI, as well as current guidelines for its use. It seems

necessary to introduce a number of courses for researchers and students, thus shaping attitudes of responsibility.

Further research on the use of AI in scientific writing is essential, particularly given the rapid development of large-scale language models. Research on the reliability of tools for reporting whether a given text was produced by AI is lacking. In particular, focus should be placed on creating simple and uniform guidelines for AI use across all disciplines. There is also a lack of in-depth analysis of the use of AI in the process of reviewing scientific articles.

E. Summary and implications

Responsible use of AI in scientific writing requires the implementation of three essential principles: transparency, human oversight, and limiting AI's role to supporting functions only. AI should be used for tasks such as supporting literature searches, generating outlines, refining language, and creating workflows, while leaving interpretation, methodological choices, and critical revision to subject matter experts. AI can assist with literature synthesis and manuscript writing, but human oversight remains essential for content validity. Transparent disclosure of AI use in the text should be ensured, along with the nature and scope of AI contributions. Where appropriate, this information should be included in author contributions and ensure readers understand the origins of AI-generated content. Editorial guidelines should require open disclosure to ensure accountability, reliability, and reproducibility. Information about the type of AI use, its model, and generation should be reported. Providing information about the software version used can also be significant. In the face of hallucinations and miss-citations generated by AI, rigorous human review of generated content should be implemented, citations double-checked, data representations cross-validated, and methodological details confirmed. AI should be used as an editorial aid rather than as an unverified source of truth. Tools offering automated suggestions should be coupled with verification of primary sources to minimize the risk of misattribution and plagiarism. Given the rapid pace of AI tool development, evolving guidelines for the use of AI and AI-powered writing should be constantly monitored. Journal guidelines themselves should also be updated to address emerging issues of transparency, accountability, and reproducibility in AI-assisted writing.

CONCLUSION

We are currently witnessing a profound mismatch between the rapid rollout of generative AI and the slow-moving legal and ethical frameworks meant to govern scientific writing. Our study shows that traditional ideas of authorship and originality are being stretched to their breaking point, especially with the rise of 'translation plagiarism' – a practice that exploits legal gray areas rather than breaking rules outright. Current regulatory and ethical frameworks remain largely ineffective because they attempt to reconcile fundamentally incompatible interests of commercial publishers, technology providers and academic authors, rather than confronting the power asymmetries that actually shape publishing practices.

The core of the problem is that our current laws still rely on a simple human-or-machine binary that no longer fits reality. When AI's involvement is hidden, responsibility becomes so diluted that accountability starts to disappear. By proposing an integrated governance model, we argue for a shift toward radical transparency. Naturally, there are boundaries to what we've been able to cover here. Any legal analysis is inherently tied to specific jurisdictions, and since the regulatory ground is shifting so rapidly, our conclusions must be seen as a snapshot of a fluid situation. Moreover, focusing on translation plagiarism means we haven't exhausted the entire spectrum of ethical challenges AI presents. Future research needs to move toward comparative studies of how different legal systems are reacting and, perhaps more importantly, provide an empirical reality check on whether new disclosure and attribution policies are actually being followed by authors and journals. If we don't align our ethical principles with these emerging practices, we risk a slow erosion of trust in the very foundations of scholarly communication.

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