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MULTILINGUALISM AND AI: GENERATIVE AI TOOLS AND BULGARIAN EDUCATORS' PERCEPTIONS AND PRACTICES

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ABSTRACT: The paper explores Bulgarian educators’ perceptions and practices related to the use of multilingual generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools on both personal and professional levels. Drawing on qualitative data derived from ten in-depth semi-structured interviews with educators and researchers from different disciplinary backgrounds, including language teaching, social sciences and information technology, the study examines how AI is currently being integrated into educational activities, communication practices and knowledge production. Particular attention is paid to the implications of AI for multilingualism and for the development of Bulgarian, a comparatively small European language spoken by approximately six million people in Bulgaria and by Bulgarian communities abroad. The study is situated within the broader context of European multilingual language policy, based on the principle of “mother tongue plus two languages”, and considers the emergence of BgGPT, the first Bulgarian large language model. The respondents compare using it to other generative AI tools, in particular with ChatGPT. Findings indicate that educators generally perceive generative AI as a useful tool that saves time, supports language learning, facilitates translation, enhances access to information and promotes multilingual communication. At the same time, they express concerns about overreliance on AI, reduced critical thinking, superficial learning, ethical issues, inaccuracies and the dominance of English-language content. The paper discusses implications for educational policy, multilingual practices, language maintenance and the responsible integration of AI in education.

KEYWORDS: Generative AI, BgGPT, AI in education, educators’ perceptions and practices, multilingualism

1. Introduction

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has started reshaping certain (if not all) areas of human activity and a growing number of researchers are trying to gain insights into these processes resulting in an abundance of scholarly papers written and published over the past several years. As the most popular generative AI tools are actually based on large language models (LLMs), it is natural to delve deeper into

issues surrounding the influence of using them in natural languages and communication. Since its appearance in 2022, ChatGPT seems to attract a significant portion of scholars' and educators' attention due to its growing popularity and ease of use in a number of contexts. In 2024, INSAIT (Institute for Computer Science, Artificial Technology and Education[1]) released the first open LLM designed for the Bulgarian language developed on the basis of Google's Gemma 2 – BgGPT.[2] Hardalov et al. (2023), report on BgGLUE, the first comprehensive benchmark designed to evaluate Natural Language Understanding (NLU) capabilities of language models specifically for the Bulgarian language, pointing out that despite some shortcomings when compared with large multilingual models, it provides a solid base for further development. The authors' aim in this paper is not to focus on the technological aspects of AI; instead, we are looking into how generative AI instruments are perceived to change the interactions and language use within the Bulgarian education context.

2. Generative AI in education and research. Implications for multilingualism – a brief overview

For the purposes of our study, without being exhaustive, we are going to briefly point out some of the trends of the current research which have implications for our investigation – these are the use of generative AI such as Chat GPT and BgGPT in education and research, and the effect of AI on multilingualism.

Some researchers focus on the use of AI in education with an emphasis on higher education. García-López et al. (2025) summarize four characteristics of the use of ChatGPT in universities, namely technological integration and obsolescence, personalization and equity in education, data quality and security concerns, as well as ethics and human-AI collaboration. The authors carefully weigh what they consider the advantages of using AI in educational settings against the potential dangers. They underline the need to stick to a modular construction of the tools which will allow the gradual non-disruptive upgrade of the systems as well as the use of diverse datasets to avoid stereotyping and non-equitable treatment of differences in societies. Other areas to focus on are transparent data management, building on educators' cyber security skills to ensure protecting personal data, and implementing strict policies concerning the ethical use of AI and robust institutional procedures. Similar considerations are raised by Nazir & Wang (2023) who focus on the potential to reinforce stereotypes and to increase societal inequalities. The systematic literature review by Heung and Chiu (2025) reveals that using ChatGPT for learning increases student participation as well as that it positively influences critical thinking, self-regulation, motivation and deep processing of information and that it fosters

[1] https://insait.ai/
[2] https://chat.bggpt.ai/

mostly enjoyment, interest, confidence and satisfaction, identifying certain risks mainly connected to reduced peer-interaction.

A number of authors dwell on the practical aspects of introducing AI in education exploring various opportunities. Boneva and Garov compare the usability of ChatGPT and BgGPT when developing lessons for ICT secondary classrooms (Бонева & Гъров/Boneva & Garov, 2024). They emphasize that the Bulgarian-language model is as useful as ChatGPT. In the Bulgarian context, ChatGPT is also seen as effective in supporting the process of performing tasks at the operational management level. Despite some technical, communicative and organizational difficulties in making strategic decisions, the tool supports the organization of training in a new environment. However, there is skepticism about its ability to think critically, analyze independently, and be creative compared to humans (Тоцева & Мавродиева/Totseva & Mavrodieva, 2024).

According to Giray et al.'s SWOT analysis (2024) of the use of ChatGPT in research, this tool is connected with a vast knowledge base and it can easily be put to uses in various scholarly domains. It can help with producing lesson plans and it can be used for translation into many languages. However, it sometimes has difficulty understanding centralized prompts, it does not display critical thinking and it can come up with fabricated data. They also raise ethical concerns about plagiarism and the potential spread of false data. Further considerations concern AI potentially perpetuating societal prejudices from the data it has been fed, the difficulty to ensure users' privacy, the lack of transparency in the decision-making process and the need for human efforts to ensure its ethical use (AlSamhori & Alnaimat, 2024).

The use of AI in relation to multilingualism also draws scholars' attention. It has been found useful in supporting multilingual communication by real-time translation (Santorelli & Catullo, 2023) and having great potential as an L2 (second language) writing aid in multilingual classrooms (Athanassopoulos et al., 2023). Schneider (2022), however, expresses concerns about AI actually changing linguistic landscapes by reinforcing language hegemonies and loss of linguistic richness (non-standard varieties, less widely used languages).

3. Methodology

The current paper is based on a study designed and carried out in the first half of 2025. The study focuses on the emerging practices and educators' and researchers' perceptions of using generative AI (including the specially designed LLM BgGPT).

We follow a qualitative methodology (Best, 2012), gathering our data from ten in-depth semi-structured interviews conducted in Bulgarian (Kvale, 2007). All interviewees are from Bulgaria. They have responded to an email invitation to join the study and have agreed to participate in an online interview and be recorded. The recorded interviews have been transcribed, analyzed and coded. The quotes from the interviews used in the current paper have been translated into English by

the authors but special efforts to keep to the original meaning as much as possible have been made.

3.1. Language policy in Bulgaria and the European Union

In Bulgaria, which has been a member of the European Union (EU) since 2007, the official language is Bulgarian according to its constitution. The latest census of 2021 states that the population is 6 437 360 people, out of whom 85.3% speak Bulgarian, 8.7% – Turkish and 3.9% – Romani. A small percentage have stated they speak a different mother tongue without identifying it – 1.1%, 0.2% have indicated they cannot define their mother tongue and 0.8% have chosen not to answer this question. The data about Bulgarian communities outside the country is collated by the Executive Agency for Bulgarians Abroad. However, due to a number of constraints among which the official policy towards minorities in some of the countries, the right to free movement within the European Union and currently the war in Ukraine make presenting the exact data extremely difficult. The biggest Bulgarian communities, however, according to the Agency, are in the USA, Ukraine, Moldova, Greece, Spain, Germany, Austria, and Italy. The Bulgarian diaspora in Moldova and Ukraine was formed at the end of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th century as a result of the Russian-Turkish wars of the time, while the majority of Bulgarian communities in other parts of the world are more recent and formed due to other reasons.

According to the entry on Bulgarian in Ethnologue, Languages of the World (Eberhard, Simons & Robinson, 2026)[3], the Bulgarian language vitality is "institutional", i.e. "sustained in institutions, beyond the home and the community" (this is the highest stage in the Ethnologue classification) and its digital language support is "vital", i.e. "supported by multiple tools in all of the above categories as well as some speech processing" (this is the second highest stage in the Ethnologue classification).

EU language policy is one of multilingualism and it "is based on respect for linguistic diversity in all Member States and on the creation of an intercultural dialogue throughout the EU" (European Parliament, 2025). It is enshrined in Article 3 of the Treaty on European Union – "It [the Union] shall respect its rich cultural and linguistic diversity" (Consolidated Version of the Treaty on European Union, 2016). The formula underlying this language policy is "mother tongue plus two (foreign) languages" (Beacco & Byram, 2007); it is focused on in EU-level documents such as the "New Framework Strategy for Mulitlingualism" (Commission of the European Communities, 2005) and "Strengthening European Identity through Education and Culture" (European Commission, 2017). All official languages of the EU member-states are official EU languages and with Bulgaria joining the EU in 2007, Bulgarian became one of these, while the Cyrillic alphabet became the third official alphabet of the EU, together with the Latin and the Greek.

[3] https://www.ethnologue.com/language/bul/

In Bulgaria, education in the Bulgarian language is provided from pre-primary to the end of secondary education, with opportunities for children and students of other ethnic backgrounds to study their mother tongue. In the second grade, pupils start learning a foreign language and in the ninth grade they start learning a second foreign language. All students sit a state school-leaving exam in Bulgarian and, depending on the type of school, they can opt to sit a state school-leaving exam in either of the studied foreign languages. At the tertiary level, most programmes are run in Bulgarian with instances of programmes delivered in another language, most often English. Apart from philologies and applied linguistics, BA and MA programmes can offer courses in foreign languages although this is not a requirement. The Ministry of Education and Science is responsible for implementing the state policy related to the education of Bulgarians living outside the Republic of Bulgaria, as well as for preserving the Bulgarian cultural and historical heritage.

3.2. Research questions

The research questions we seek answers to are:

- What perceptions of using generative AI for personal and professional purposes do educators have?
- What practices of using AI are currently emerging?
- How does AI use impact communication and language use?
- Is the use of AI seen as having a positive or negative influence on multilingualism as a whole and on the development of the Bulgarian language in particular?

3.3. Respondents' profile

The population sample comprises ten educators who have responded to our invitation to participate in the study. The majority of them (six) – hold a PhD degree in social sciences or IT, one of them holds a Dr. Habil title which is a higher research degree above PhD (considered a second doctoral degree in the Bulgarian higher education context). Five of them are university teachers, one is responsible for training researchers in various transversal skills and one works for a company providing online training for secondary school students in various subjects. Four respondents teach languages or language-related disciplines. Two interviewees are practicing teachers at the secondary school level, two are also currently working on their doctoral dissertations (in social sciences and IT respectively) and one is also engaged in the public administration sector. All of them have experience as educators of more than 5 years. All respondents but one are either employed by or they have gained their PhD degree at Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski, which is the oldest and the biggest university in Bulgaria. The sample studied is not representative, however, it helps understand the current processes of adopting generative AI tools in education and can be used for designing further qualitative and quantitative studies.

4. Findings

4.1. Use of generative AI tools for personal and professional purposes

Different AI tools are mentioned in the interviews – all respondents have experience in using free versions – ChatGPT, Gemini, Claude, DeepSeek, Grok, Grammarly, but most often they resort to using ChatGPT. They have used it – in at least two languages – Bulgarian (the respondents' native language) and English (which they use for professional purposes) – with R3 mentioning also Russian and R8 mentioning also French. The choice of languages is connected with

1) their personal linguistic repertoires, e.g. *"…so far I have used it in the three languages I am fluent in – Bulgarian, Russian and English…"* (R2);

2) the reason why the tool is being used – "…*in English or in Bulgarian according to my aims*…" (R9);

3) the perceived reliability of the tool – *"…some data were published that it [ChatGPT] has developed to such an extent that it is now possible to search for information … it now functions well even in Bulgarian and there is no problem now in chatting in various languages"* (R8). However, most often they use AI in English. All but one has used BgGPT at least a few times mostly for personal reasons and *"out of curiosity"* (R8).

Three of our respondents report on using subscription-type of AI instruments mostly connected with their specific professional domain.

The uses of AI that our respondents report on fall within the scope of those outlined by Nazir and Wang (2023). Most of them mention using AI as personal assistants (i.e. they use it to create itineraries, check practical information about travelling and accommodation (R1) or identify information they need); for language translation (R3); for education and tutoring (to create lesson plans (R2), to create learning materials (R2, R4), to create document outlines (R3), to brainstorm ideas concerning a specific topic (R7), to create presentations and images (R9)), for writing (for academic/research purposes – mostly in creating reference lists and identifying sources of information (R2, R7, R9), for analyzing documents and articles (R1 and R2)), for healthcare and medical assistance (R1 and R4), in code writing and programming (R4 and R5). The category of customer support is mentioned by two of our respondents as an example of how long they have already been acquainted with AI. Mental healthcare is mentioned by Respondent 5 as a concern-raising issue, while Respondent 4 shares a personal example of seeking psychological advice from AI. Respondent 2 shares about their positive experience in using it as legal and compliance assistance (however, in this particular case Gemini in Bulgarian was more useful and gave more detailed information about the necessary actions compared to ChatGPT / BgGPT which produced more scarce and inaccurate information).

It should be noted that all respondents used the adverb "critically" when they describe their own use of AI tools, mostly with reference to the reliability of the responses they get, emphasizing that the validity and correctness of the information has to be carefully checked before using it further. (Respondent 7

even shared an instance of the bot inventing a non-existent scholarly publication on a topic).

This is best captured by Respondent 5:

“…A teacher must always take it not with one grain of salt but with one hundred[4] *and must look very critically at everything that a language model generates for him...”* (R5)

However, they mention negotiating meaning in their communication with the bot by refining the used question until reaching a satisfactory result.

4.2. Perceptions and emotional response to using AI

The specialists we interviewed have a generally positive attitude towards using AI - they point out several advantages but also raise some concerns.

With regard to the benefits of using AI, the interviewees mentioned the following facts. Firstly, it **saves a lot of time** especially in initial information search (*“It is absolutely and simply invaluable… its productivity saves a lot of time”* – R2; *“Huge benefit and time saver”* – R3). So, it reduces anxiety in time management in today’s dynamic everyday life. Secondly, it can be **beneficial to language learning** *(“very useful for developing intercultural skills – it is much more memorable for students to look up something connected to a culture themselves using such an app than me writing on the white board”* (R2). Thirdly, it can be **useful in interpersonal communication** by boosting the user’s confidence to interact in a foreign language – *“on an interpersonal level… communication related to work relationships… I think it improves in terms of expression because it [AI] is very good at generating emails and so on”* (R8). Next, AI **fosters multilingualism** in general – *“I think it has a positive influence on people's ability to use languages well”* (R1); *“because school students don’t usually use only their mother tongue and English… they also use the second foreign language they study – German, French, Russian…”* (R8) and in particular, to learn other languages - *“my son uses it when he studies Chinese and French”*; in classes where Erasmus[5] students mingle with Bulgarian ones because it is possible for a teacher to set up tasks and activities in which students should resort to their own language and then acquaint the rest of the group with the results (R2); in translation - *“the algorithm is excellent for translation”* (R4), *“colleagues… it is very often used as a translation agent”* (R8). All these practices prove the place of activating a person’s whole linguistic repertoire, expansion of translanguaging

[4] This is the closest idiomatic contextual translation in English of the Bulgarian idiom „да имаш едно наум“ used by the interviewee which means to be cautious and not to rush into something.

[5] The Erasmus programme was started in 1987 as an exchange programme for students and staff from European Union universities. In more recent years this programme encourages exchanges between EU and overseas universities all over the world. (European Commission, https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/about-erasmus/history-funding-and-future)

practices (Pennycook, 2010) and negotiation of meaning in the learning process which naturally occurs when interacting with AI.

The downsides of using AI mentioned by the respondents also fall in several groups. First, almost all have observed **perfunctory task performance** which most often is connected with presenting the answers generated by AI without checking for truthfulness of facts or quality of text. This is perceived by teachers as having a **negative effect on a student's style of expression** *("very often what we get from different students is almost 100% identical… in real life it is quite rare to have absolutely one and the same style of expression of students when they work independently"* (R6)). When, in the words of Respondent 4, students "outsource" task performance, the result is unsatisfactory, which is best captured by Respondent 9:

"… it [the result] is quite superficial and… generalizations and conclusions are made that are not based on collected facts after critical reading. This leads to overconfidence in available online resources on students' part and to failure to develop academic expression, style, language, to poor vocabulary and to [use of] a small number of terms and an incomplete conceptual apparatus." (R9).

Second, it can potentially be **detrimental to** various **skills** such as the skills to write their own short and long texts and this does not only concern students – *"However, in the long run, it can be detrimental to people's ability to write such emails themselves. I see it myself, if I use it too much to write emails, then I have a little difficulty writing them myself"* (R8). There is a concern that another group of important higher-order thinking skills – to analyze and to create – are also threatened by the overuse of AI in education because the AI performs these for students (R4), which finding is in unison with the recently published study of how university students use Claude (Anthropic, 2025).

Third, it **does not support development of students' critical thinking** – *"while in terms of language [grammatical correctness and richness of vocabulary] a text generated by AI can sound better than what the majority of students can produce, it lacks in quality and depth of logical connections"* (R7); *"it simply repeats something that it [the AI] has been taught... It does not in any way have any criticism of what is generated. There is no critical thinking… it is not capable..."* (R5).

Contrary to some popular beliefs that AI will threaten work places and will make a big number of employees redundant, our respondents have a more balanced attitude. They see AI as **a help tool** (*"the goal is not to eliminate the employee, but rather the opposite, to make the employee as efficient as possible with the help of AI"* (R2)); as **a necessity for the labor market** (*"It's good for people to know how to use it... but students need to realize that if they don't develop their own skills, if they just ask the machine for everything, it doesn't bring any value in the job market"* (R5)); a **reality in the world of business and industry**, which has to be taken into consideration and which educational institutions also have to embrace *("it is used extensively in business and in the industry… and that we at universities don't see it, it's our own oversight"* (R3)).

All in all, the participants in the study have mixed reactions towards the use of AI and swing from enthusiasm to cautiousness in their accounts.

4.3. Reported student use of AI

Seven out of nine respondents speak in great detail about the way their students use AI for study purposes. The tasks performed by employing AI range from “searching for information in various academic platforms, virtual libraries, online dictionaries and encyclopedias, identifying and defining specialized terms, editing lists of references” (R9) to making presentations (R1) or writing different texts on a given topic (R6). Again, the most often used adverb in relation to student use is “critically” – all our interviewees are of the opinion that students must be taught to be critical to what an AI tool generates for them. However, as Respondent 4 stresses, this cannot be achieved without teaching students to ask the right questions in the first place and thus learn how to be efficient in meaning negotiation, which is an important communication skill.

The respondents also point out several other issues connected with language use. One of them is the correct use of terminology in Bulgarian – since most LLMs are trained on English-language data, when they produce a text in Bulgarian, these texts must be carefully checked for correct use of terms, linguistic consistency and logical coherence – “*in order to preserve the [Bulgarian] language, introduce consistent terminology in it… and still, it is important for us to be literate”* (R5).

Teachers at both secondary and tertiary level find word-for-word repetition of AI-generated results unacceptable:

“I do not allow texts prepared by AI or chatbots to be presented literally, as this reduces critical thinking, does not [help] form an individual style, and shows no respect for previous scholarly publications”. (R9)

Our respondents identify the interaction with AI as enhancing problem-solving, comprehension and generating ideas. However, they think that over-relying on the use of AI in writing leads to inability to structure the necessary information according to the requirements of the respective genre (R9), poor acquisition of a variety of sentence patterns, use of monotonous syntactic means (R6). To compensate for this selectiveness of skills most often employed in the interaction with AI (reading / comprehension and writing), our interviewees try to employ various techniques, i.e. ask their students to talk through the results they have obtained, not simply hand in a text (R1). Sometimes students need to access texts written in very high-level, academic English and here they are encouraged to resort to accessing information in their mother tongue, which is an example of translanguaging in a new communication setting. As Alexandrov et al. (2024) point out, “a large portion of LLM users… are not native English speakers or require text generation in low-resource languages, and English-centric models do not always meet their needs.” (Alexandrov et al., 2024, p. 1). This then leads to activating mediation skills – analyzing, summarizing and interpreting or

translating texts.[6] To encourage fostering such skills, which are seen as key, teachers ask students to then share such interpretations with their classmates either in written – in a virtual environment (Google Classroom and its tools were mentioned) – or in class during group work (R1, R2, R6).

4.4. Difficulties and "hiccups" and their implications for the Bulgarian language. Impact on human knowledge, skills and communication

The most common "mistakes" when it comes to using AI in Bulgarian, reported in the interviews, are connected with scarce information on topics of national priority, i.e. historical events and their interpretations (R4), mixing Bulgarian and Russian, perhaps due to the Cyrillic alphabet which is used in both languages and some common vocabulary (R2, R3), use of formulaic language and lack of a variety of syntactic means and punctuation mistakes (R6), a low level of idiomatic language used in the AI-generated results (R8):

"I have specifically asked AI to use particular phraseology [idioms] and I think it doesn't use it well enough. I think there is a limitation in the use of phraseology… in a logically connected text… maybe because the database it is fed with is not so much literary but informative. Maybe if there were more data from literature…"

Asked about their perceptions of BgGPT, the respondents believe that it will gradually improve over time and the Bulgarian language output will be better and more sophisticated in the future, but it is really important what kind of data the models are fed.

"I have no concerns that it [BgGPT] will have any negative impact on the [Bulgarian] language. Language is changing… what we really need to talk about is national security and protecting the nation's potential…" (R4)

The latter refers to the scarce information on Bulgarian history and the potential for biased, incomplete and even incorrect data that the AI may generate. Potentially, they will then be reiterated thus leading to perpetuating a distorted, potentially stereotyped image of different culture-specific realia. This observation resonates with the concerns raised by Schneider (2022).

There is unanimity among the interviewees that AI tools can and will contribute to enriching knowledge but they warn against potential dangers. Humans are more creative in the way they would formulate a sentence, while AI is not and its mass use may backfire and impact the Bulgarian language negatively (R8). It is possible for students *"to build on their knowledge and to develop various skills – they will be better at structuring questions, at working on a text, at choosing the most appropriate sources of information"* (R6). Respondent 2 shares they are "very enthusiastic" and sees huge potential in AI as a facilitator of learning languages. Respondent 5 believes that it can be used to support

[6] Mediation is "conceptualized as access to new knowledge and concepts and the importance of working with others in a process of co-construction" (North, 2021).

personalized learning, especially when it comes to large classrooms, limited classroom time and complex notions.

Respondent 8 best summarizes the above:

“Students quickly master apps, software and AI, chatbots… [but] …too many terms are directly borrowed without understanding them fully; the syntax is according to the English language and not according to the rules of the modern Bulgarian standard language. Secondly, figurative language and metaphors are not presented with an accurate translation and in context… there are mechanical translations or even ridiculous results if AI is used literally. Thirdly, no difference is made in historical terms and at an intercultural level, on the one hand, there is unification; on the other hand, it is quite superficially presented and, thirdly, generalizations and conclusions are [sometimes] made not based on collected facts after critical reading…” (R8)

4.5. Policy implications

When asked about the policies at play with regard to the use of AI in educational settings, our interviewees talk about three policy levels – institutional, national and European Union – and also dwell on certain policy implications concerning multilingualism.

With regard to institutional policies, most of them mention that currently, there is a lack of explicitly formulated procedures, e.g. – “*I don’t think I have seen anything about ethical use [of AI] or any other policy... Neither prohibition nor encouragement of it on the institutional level…”* (R3). The respondents feel it is important to be clear about the official institutional policy regarding the use of AI, e.g. – *“I hope I’m not uneducated on the subject, but I don’t think there is one for our University. I specifically searched whether it is ethical to use it in research, but I didn’t find one”* (R8). This is best summarized by Respondent 9:

“There should be managerial decisions at the academic level and guidelines prepared with the participation of AI specialists, linguists, philosophers, semioticians, librarians, etc.” (R9)

On the national level, however, there has been an attempt at introducing official guidelines about using AI in school education and both our interviewees who are secondary school teachers are aware of them but mention that it is of an advisory rather than binding character. These guidelines contain practical tips about creating lesson plans, evaluating students’ work, suggested AI tools which can be of help at school, etc. Respondent 1 even shares that they have started consciously looking for ways to implement AI in their classroom as a result of becoming aware of the guidelines.[7]

[7] At the time when the interviews were carried out, these guidelines were published on the website of the Bulgarian Ministry of Education and Science but they are no longer available. In the meantime, a “Vision for the introduction and use of artificial intelligence in Bulgarian school education” has been published and is now available for public discussion here: https://www.mon.bg/nfs/2026/01/pr27012026_vizia-ai-strategy-education.pdf

When it comes to the EU level, our respondents' opinions are split. On the one hand, some of them consider the EU-level attempts to regulate the use of AI as positive despite the EU being "a bit slow" at adopting such policies (R1, R4) because the 'US approach' is unacceptable *("I am absolutely against this drive of the United States, who say 'we have nothing to regulate"* (R4). On the other hand, *"AI is developing as we speak"* (R3) and *"it [using AI] needs a vision… it also needs some actions and here in the EU we are a little behind with the actions, because America and China are doing quite a bit there… And there needs to be some balance between regulations and development"* (R5).

Our interviewees also speak about the implications of using AI for multilingualism and language policies. In Respondent 9's words:

"AI contributes to multilingualism, but the main language remains English… and knowledge is achieved through translation. Small languages still remain at the so-called second gear, much slower than English in managing to use AI in education." (R9)

All respondents believe that the existence of BgGPT is very positive and definitely contributes to upkeeping the status of the Bulgarian language:

"…It is important to have such a chatbot in Bulgarian both as a national language and as educational policy. It is also accessible to representatives of the Bulgarian diaspora around the world, to Bulgarian schools in different countries, to researchers and people interested in the Bulgarian language, to representatives of mixed marriages with one member from Bulgaria…" (R9)

BgGPT is perceived as "not yet very good", "still using limited information" (R4), in need of more input data on Bulgarian history, geography, culture (R5) but our respondents feel its very existence is excellent – *"It's great that they did it. I'm an absolute enthusiast… It's very important to have a national model that is truly trained on a national basis, yes, national sources with national databases"* (R4). Respondent 5 summarizes this by pointing out the natural connection between language and culture which should be represented:

"In a way, it won't just be the dominant point of view of, let's say, American values, because that's where the models that we use are mainly developed, but there should be representation of both the language and the local culture, the local history, the local geography, because language alone is not enough." (R5)

Last but not least, there is a general consensus among the interviewees that AI tools in Bulgarian can be beneficial for preserving the varieties of the language and a great support in teaching the language to members of Bulgarian communities abroad. There is a huge potential in being able to interact with AI in your own language combined with activating proficiency in other languages.

4.6. Ethical aspects

Another aspect of using AI our interviewees discuss is its ethical side. In this respect, their views are very similar. On the one hand, they are worried about infringing exclusive copyrights and protection of user data (R8) and state that "*unethical use occurs when creating structural models for scientific texts without*

citing authors" (R8). On the other, they consider it malpractice when students use AI to generate texts but also when researchers do it or when reviewers of scholarly papers simply use AI to analyze a paper and "copy-paste" this as their own review – *"unfortunately, in my opinion, this is quite compromising for research work in general and for the development of science"* (R5).

These concerns are shared by both specialists from secondary and from tertiary education. They point out that the lack of sufficient regulation especially at institutional level actually supports such unethical practices and that the access to plagiarism detection tools is not enough as the latter are still not very good at detecting AI-generated content (R5) and also share that perhaps in certain disciplines the teachers themselves tolerate what they call the "copy-paste" approach to task completion. To counter such practices, they propose careful and systematic development of critical thinking not only for students but also for teachers – *"[it is necessary] to have clear criteria and standards for all students, faculty, and administration"* (R9).

5. Discussion

The data collected via the conducted interviews help to outline several important trends as regards implementing generative AI tools and the latter's impact on communication, small languages and multilingualism. In the first place, our respondents testify to the potential AI tools have in terms of activating the whole linguistic repertoire one has and this holds true for both educators and learners – they combine their, sometimes partial, skills in more than one language in order to perform specific tasks. Secondly, in the course of interacting with the tool, users constantly negotiate meaning and switch from one language to another. This process of solving problems and identifying relevant information, leverages the capabilities of the mother tongue. Despite English being the dominant language LLMs are trained on, other language resources also have their place and both teachers and students resort to all the languages from their own linguistic repertoire while they navigate between contexts in different languages.

Secondly, the process of communicating with AI is seen as conductive of developing online writing and mediation skills. AI being able to respond to various languages and especially the existence of LLMs such as BgGPT specifically trained on data from a vital yet small language can be of immense support in this respect. Educators are already designing tasks which can further enhance these skills acknowledging the fact that most contemporary learners in our country are multilingual and in their multilingual competence both the dominant foreign language (usually English) and their mother tongue (Bulgarian in most cases) are used in a constant interplay resorting to one or the other adding the other languages they can speak in order to complete a particular task. In relation to this, our interviewees share the expectation that BgGPT will continue developing and will become competitive to other products, at least nation-wide thus contributing to preserving and developing the Bulgarian language, culture, history, etc.

In the third place, the quickness of the prompt (question) – response exchange enhances communicating with AI and creates certain confidence, whose positive side is the use of various linguistic means to achieve one's purpose. This reduces anxiety and can have very positive results for advancing in a particular language or acquiring a new one.

Along with these beneficial aspects of using AI, Bulgarian educators express certain concerns mostly related to critical understanding of the information obtained and unethical practices of presenting an AI-generated output as one's own. While regulations about using AI are still insufficient and even lacking, especially at an institutional level, teachers are already implementing practices which compensate for what they perceive as the downsides of generative AI tools. Instances of such practices fall mainly in two categories. One is fostering thinking capabilities through training in critical thinking, looking for relevant information sources and acknowledging them according to the accepted standards. The second is connected with multilingual competences and they include developing learners' skills to reformulate the prompts they use with AI, tasks encouraging the activation of the whole linguistic and cultural repertoire, tasks which add to understanding and writing by employing different analytical and mediation skills.

6. Conclusion

The study presented in the paper reveals important aspects of the way Bulgarian educators perceive the use of generative AI tools, their mixed feelings arising in the course of using AI in personal and professional settings. The results can serve as the basis of further qualitative (observations, participant-observations, cyber ethnographies, critical incidents, personal stories, etc.) and quantitative (via different kinds of surveys) studies encompassing educators and students from all levels of school and university education. To gain a more detailed picture it is also necessary to include more AI developers, policy-makers and representatives of the civil society in the future and compare their views to educators' and students' views.

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