

Multilingual across multiple platforms: researching the role of language in the everyday

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1. Introduction

In April 2026, the top 10 queries worldwide, according to Google Trends, included Google, YouTube, AI, and ChatGPT (Google Trends, 2026). This illustrates the role of platforms, apps, and, increasingly, generative AI as infrastructures constitutive of everyday life. In this study, I examine how language use shapes the responses generated by chatbots and the AI overviews presented by search engines.

Previous research has demonstrated that infrastructures can reinforce particular worldviews (Beaulieu, 2026; Noble, 2018) and tend to remain invisible (Haider & Sundin, 2019). The rise of generative AI, together with increasing international political tensions during the Trump administration, has brought chatbots into the public spotlight. This has sparked debates about EU countries' reliance on the American big tech industry (Rose, 2026). At the same time, Europeans are increasingly using chatbots for a wide range of purposes. The latest Swedish national survey on Internet habits showed that four out of ten Swedes used an AI service (such as ChatGPT) during 2025. Chatbots are prompted on a wide range of topics, with health-related issues being one prominent area (Andersson & Blomdahl, 2025). Search engine results have been found to be more extensively moderated in English than in smaller languages (Sundin et al., 2023; Rogers, 2023). This raises questions about the impact of language on chatbot responses. I am interested in how answers to prompts are influenced by the language in which they are written, particularly the differences between prompting in a smaller European language or in English. Thus, the aim of this study is to elucidate the role of language in prompting chatbots, as well as its impact on AI overviews generated by search engines.

2. Probing through prompting and searching

To achieve the aim of this study, and account for the dynamic and interactive capacities of chatbots (Jarrahi, 2025), search engines and chatbots are approached in several ways. The study follows a qualitative approach. Content provided by search engines' AI overviews, as well as chatbot responses to prompts, is analysed and compared. Holding conversations with chatbots (Mathieu & Tosca, 2026), together with familiarising myself with the interactive environment of AI systems through exploratory use (Jarrahi, 2025), serves as the starting point for the study. This exploratory phase enables the identification of relevant topics for comparison. Thereafter, a more focused phase of prompting on specific issues, such as health, begins. This includes comparisons of responses across different languages. Similarly, material for analysing search engine AI overviews on related topics is collected. The exploratory phase began in April 2026, and structured data collection will be conducted between June and August 2026.

3. Tentative results

Initial probing of ChatGPT suggests that differences in search results depending on the language used may be more pronounced than differences in chatbot responses. Importantly, this observation is based on preliminary exploration rather than systematic data collection. Nevertheless, it may indicate a

distinction between how chatbots are trained to generate responses and how search engines are designed to retrieve and rank information. This distinction will be explored further during the project.

4. Acknowledgements

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