

Abstract.

In this article, we explored the capabilities of search engines for non-English languages. As a test case, we considered four languages: Russian, French, Hungarian and Hebrew. For each of these languages we tested three general search engines: AltaVista, FAST and Google and some local search engines. Our results indicate that in the examined cases the general search engines ignore the special characteristics of non-English languages, and sometimes they do not even handle diacritics well. These findings are rather disturbing, since for example Google is very popular in non-English speaking countries as well, and users are either not aware of what they miss when using search tools that do not take into account the structure and the special characteristics of the specific language or have no alternatives but to use these search engines.

Keywords: diacritics; inflections; morphological analysis; non-English languages; pre- and postfixes; search engines