

## **“Why don’t white people have thin lips?”: Stereotypes in Google autocomplete revisited**

Since Google is the most popular search engine, there is a huge amount of questions asked behind it. Thanks to the autocomplete search tool we can get a clue of what do web users frequently ask and/or what is frequently represented on the web. Within this frame, it has been found that certain identity groups tend to attract particular stereotypes or implicit judgements and value attributions (Baker & Potts 2013). For instance, particular question fragment such as “should black people” induces a completion like “should black people be allowed to vote”. This study follows the article by Paul Baker and Amanda Potts (2013). The aim is to replicate the original survey and to add two comparison dimensions: time and language/culture.

First of all, the study tries to replicate the original research as accurately as possible, so the only factors affecting the results be location and time distance. On the one hand, despite the same procedure, the study shows that there is a big variability in the output. On the other hand, some completions elicited by question fragments seem to be stable enough to be preserved even after three years.

In addition to the original design, the study provides even more controlled view on the time variability. It compares two identical input sets takes differing only in one-month interval between them. The second value added is a language/culture comparison. Compared to English, the original query fragments were transformed into Czech. The study discusses limits and problems associated with such application. The results from both languages are then compared, identifying a few similarities and interpreting them along with the differences, for instance the lower rate of completions gained in the case of Czech is discussed in connection to the richer morphology of the latter language. For that matter, the title of the study “Why don’t white people have thin lips?” is just a negated variant of the original article’s title, suggesting that particular stereotypes may remain strong in real world, but invisible in the data available.

The discussion of the findings in general addresses two major issues: 1. To what extent can we use and rely on such a data source when discussing the stereotypes’ reproduction, and 2. What methodological questions it brings.

### References:

Baker, P. – Potts, A. (2013): “Why do white people have thin lips?”: Google and the perpetuation of stereotypes via auto-complete search forms. *Critical Discourse Studies*, Vol. 10, No. 2, p. 187–204.

Ondřej Dufek

Institute of the Czech Language of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic

dufek@ujc.cas.cz