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Google Search Engine: A Grammar and Spelling Check Technology

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## ABSTRACT

*This paper seeks to provide examples, demonstrations and illustrations on how Google search engine can be integrated to perform grammar and spelling check. In addition, the author strongly hopes that this study serves as a useful reference for learners and teachers of English to take advantage of this already available technology namely Google search engine.*

## GOOGLE SEARCH ENGINE: A GRAMMAR AND SPELLING CHECK TECHNOLOGY

### *Introduction*

It is universally accepted that technology has changed the way we learn and teach. In addition, it is safe to state that Microsoft Word has probably been the most popular [if not, one of the most popular] word processing technologies around up to this point.

However, Harry McCracken, Editor in Chief of PC World, envisioned the use of browser-based word processors in the future by stating that:

Microsoft Office is doomed. Eventually. Maybe. The prediction may be vague, tentative, and subject to dispute, but you hear it more and more. The reason is simple: Web-based services are duplicating--and, in some cases, surpassing--many of the features that have been the domain of desktop productivity applications. (PC World, 2006, ¶ 1)

Moreover, Krishnamurthy (as cited in Bishop, 2005) did not believe that Microsoft is doing everything it can to improve its Word's grammar checking features. Christopher Manning, assistant professor of linguistics and computer science at Stanford University (as cited in Bishop, 2005) stated that "there is room for Microsoft to make incremental improvements in Word's grammar checker" (Seattle Post, ¶ 12) and "it appears possible for Word's grammar checker to improve" (Seattle Post, ¶ 14). Karen Jensen, a retired Microsoft researcher who led the company's Natural Language Processing research group as it developed the underlying technology for the grammar checker (as cited in Bishop, 2005) voiced that it is very difficult, yet the grammar checker technology offers the users

“all kinds of respect for a human being's native ability to learn and understand in natural language” (Seattle Post, ¶ 7). Responding to the inquiry related to Krishnamurthy's concern, the Microsoft Office group said (as cited in Bishop, 2005) in a statement that the grammar checker “was created to be a guide and a tool, not a perfect proofreader” (Seattle Post, ¶ 15). Therefore, the purpose of this study is to present another alternative technology or way to check for grammar and spelling errors.

### Illustrations and Examples

#### *Illustration and Example of Preposition*

Person A wrote, “I'd like to shop on/in 7<sup>th</sup> Street”. She was not sure if she was supposed to use “on” or “in” in this sentence. As shown Figure 1.1, the correct preposition can be determined by using Google search engine. In this case, Person A could just type phrase like “shop in 7<sup>th</sup> Street” or “shop on 7<sup>th</sup> Street” to determine the correct preposition in the Google search engine.

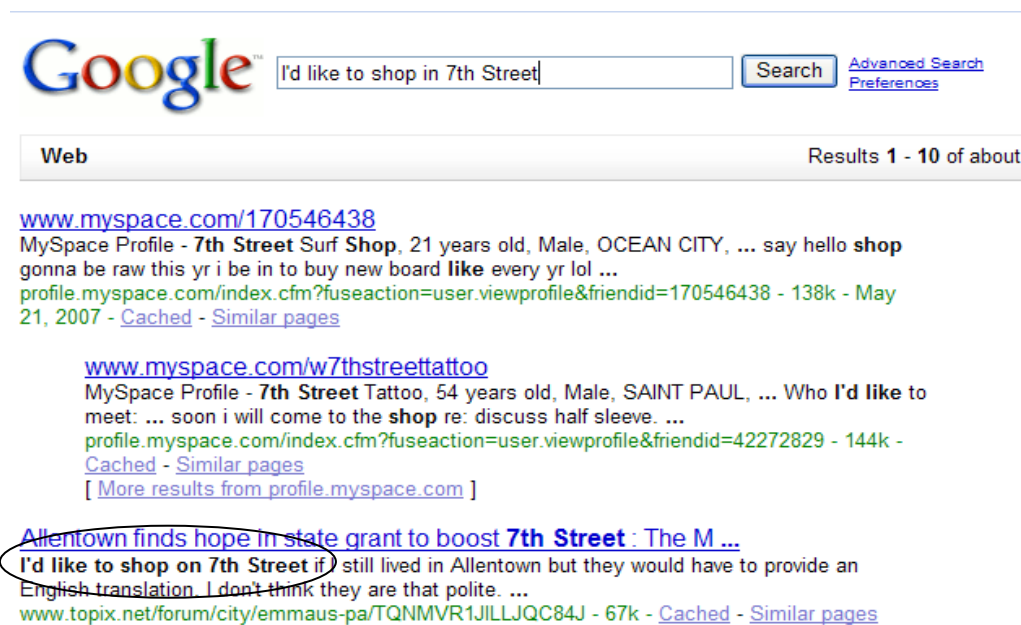


Figure 1.1 Illustration and example of preposition

### *Illustration and Example of Correct Subject-Verb Agreement*

Person B wrote, “She has/have no time”. He was not sure if he was supposed to use “has” or “have” in this sentence. As shown Figure 1.2, the correct subject-verb agreement can be determined by using Google search engine. Person B typed “She have no time” in the Google search engine, and “She has no time” appears in the result section.

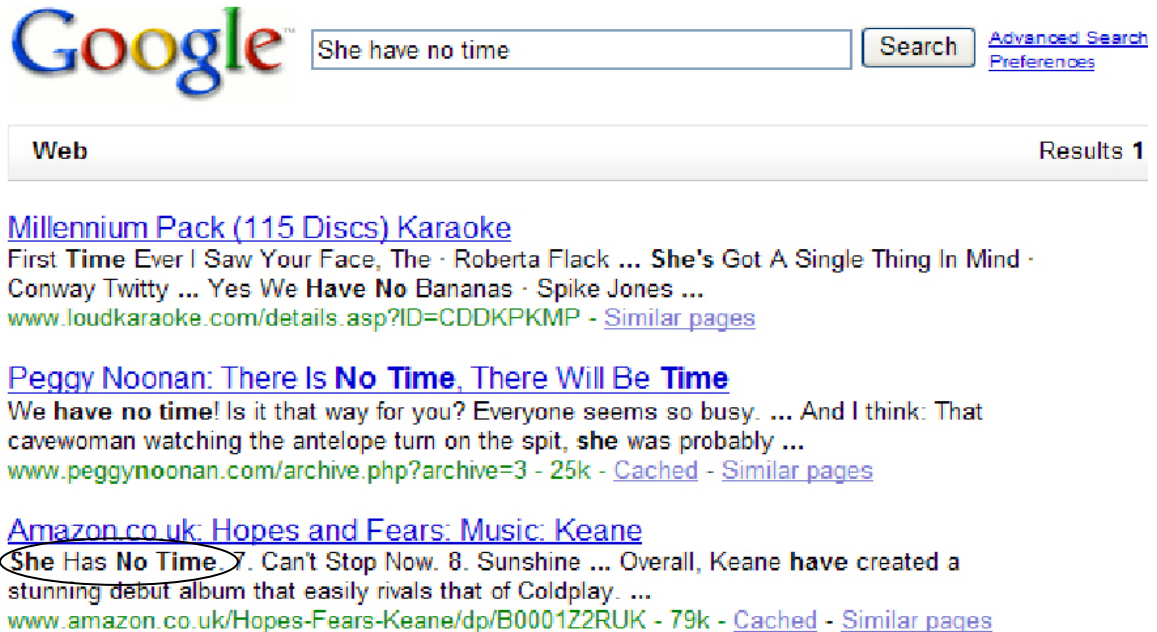


Figure 1.2 Illustration and example of correct subject-verb agreement

### *Illustration and Example of Correct Tense Usage*

Person C wrote, “She did/does it yesterday”. She was not sure if she was supposed to use “does” or “did” in this sentence. As shown Figure 1.3 and 1.4, the correct verb can be determined by using Google search engine. Person C typed “She does it yesterday” in the Google search engine, and “She does it yesterday” did not appear in the result section as shown in Figure 1.3. However when she typed “She did it yesterday”, “She did it yesterday” appeared, as seen in Figure 1.4.

Google "she does it yesterday" Search [Advanced Search](#) [Preferences](#)

Web Results

Tip: Try removing quotes from your search to get more results.

[She cant help it -- LiveWire Teen Forums](#)  
 And there is this other girl that she constantly leaves out and I don't even know if she realizes that **she does it. Yesterday** she said come eat lunch with ...  
[www.golive.com/forums/peer-nbotny-support-a.html](http://www.golive.com/forums/peer-nbotny-support-a.html) - 48k - May 24, 2007 -  
[Cached](#) - [Similar pages](#)

[kelly](#)  
 She thinks this is fun and laughs everytime **she does it. Yesterday** at nap time I spent an hour and a half getting her to take a nap because every time I ...  
[halls.lug-nut.com/kelly](http://halls.lug-nut.com/kelly) - 14k - [Cached](#) - [Similar pages](#)

*In order to show you the most relevant results, we have omitted some entries very similar to if you like, you can [repeat the search with the omitted results included](#).*

Figure 1.3 Illustration and example of correct tense usage

Google "she did it yesterday" Search [Advanced Search](#) [Preferences](#)

Web Results 1 - 10 of

[Rachel's Place II - rec music dylan | Google Groups](#)  
 she was resentful or something. **she did it yesterday**. Also, I only > > have these 7-11 sweetners (she went down there, took my card, without ...  
[groups.google.com/group/rec.music.dylan/msg/d640a9c07eabb436](http://groups.google.com/group/rec.music.dylan/msg/d640a9c07eabb436) - 33k -  
[Cached](#) - [Similar pages](#)

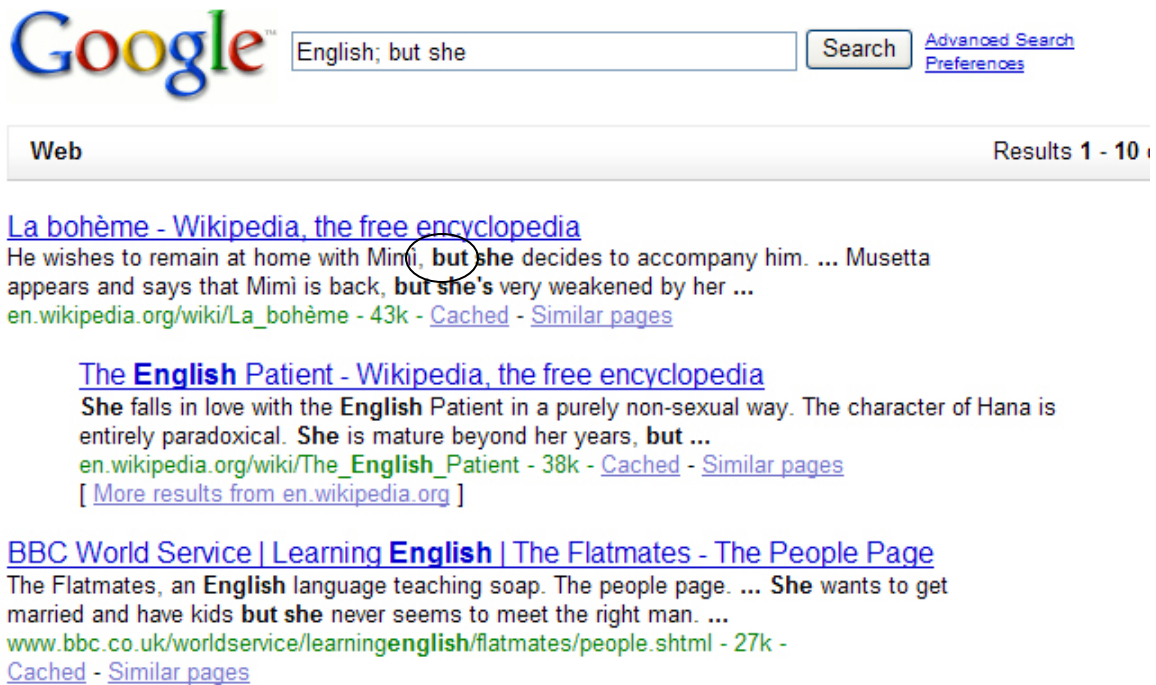
[Mascot Manor: February 2006 Archives](#)  
 The two times **she did it yesterday**, she was already sitting there. Oh well. We will see. She did do one funny thing (okay, several, but this is the only one ...  
[www.mascotmanor.org/archives/2006/02/index.html](http://www.mascotmanor.org/archives/2006/02/index.html) - 12k - [Cached](#) - [Similar pages](#)

[the truth about black and white and the things in between: used to ...](#)  
 i know she just getting wasted. she did it today, **she did it yesterday**. she'll do it tomorrow, and the day after that, until she dies or something scares ...  
[fromfate.blogspot.com/2005/11/used-to-be-reason-to-breathe.html](http://fromfate.blogspot.com/2005/11/used-to-be-reason-to-breathe.html) - 31k -  
[Cached](#) - [Similar pages](#)

Figure 1.4 Illustration and example of correct tense usage

*Illustration and Example of Correct Usage of Punctuation*

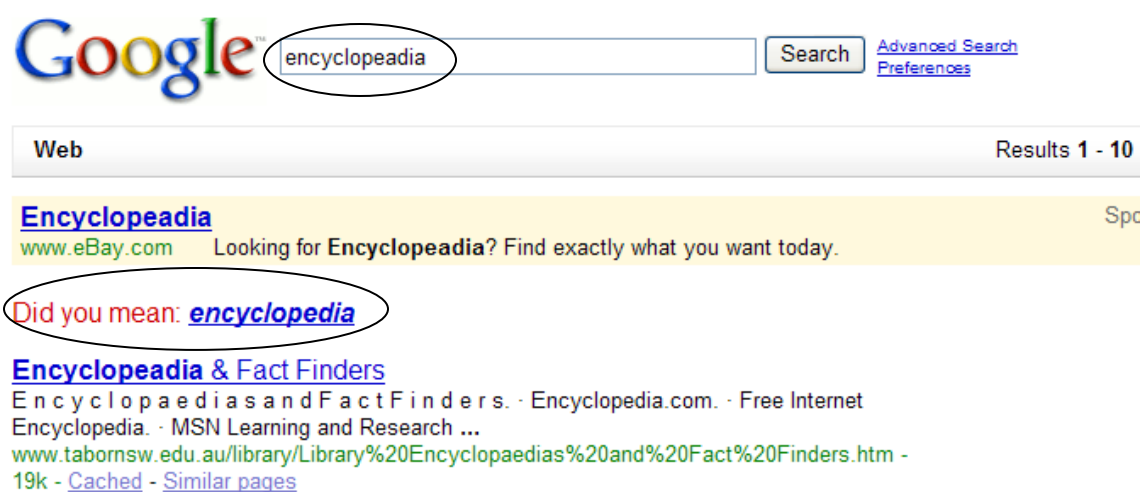
Person D wrote, “Her brother studies English, but she studies German,” and “Her brother studies English; but she studies German.” She was not sure if she was supposed to use “,” or “;” before “but” in this sentence. As shown Figure 1.5, the correct verb may be determined by using Google search engine. Person D typed “English; but she” in the Google search engine, and “; but” did not appear, but “, but” did in the result section as shown in Figure 1.5.



*Figure 1.5* Illustration and example of correct usage of punctuation

### *Illustration and Example of Spelling Check*

As shown Figure 1.6, a correct spelling can be determined by using Google search engine. Person E typed “encyclopeadia” in the Google search engine, and the correct spelling “encyclopedia” was suggested as seen in Figure 1.6.



*Figure 1.6* Illustration and example of spelling check

### *Discussion*

This section provides tips and suggestions in using Google search engine to check for grammar and spelling errors. First of all, users need to keep in mind that, in respect to using Google search engine to check for grammatical errors, Google search engine matches the phrase or sentence which is typed in the search engine to the phrases or sentences composed on the existing web pages worldwide. There are phrases or sentences in those web pages composed by non-English speakers, and even they are composed by native English speakers, there is no guarantee that the phrases or sentences composed on the existing web pages around the world are grammatically correct. This presents a limitation. Consequently, while checking for grammatical errors, users need to check if the phrases or sentences were composed on legitimate/professional web pages. Usually

legitimate/professional web pages contain phrases or sentences that are grammatically correct to reflect their organizational legitimacy and professionalism.

Noticeably, users need to be more cautious when the search engine matches phrases or sentences composed on web forums, blogs, comments posed to the web forums or blogs, or any other informal/unprofessional web pages. Figure 1.7 illustrates the limitation mentioned above. For instance, Person F typed “she have no time” which is grammatically wrong in the Google search engine, and the “she have no time” appeared. In this case, the first “she have no time” was posted as a comment to a legitimate website; the second “she have no time” was composed in the web page of a professional organization.

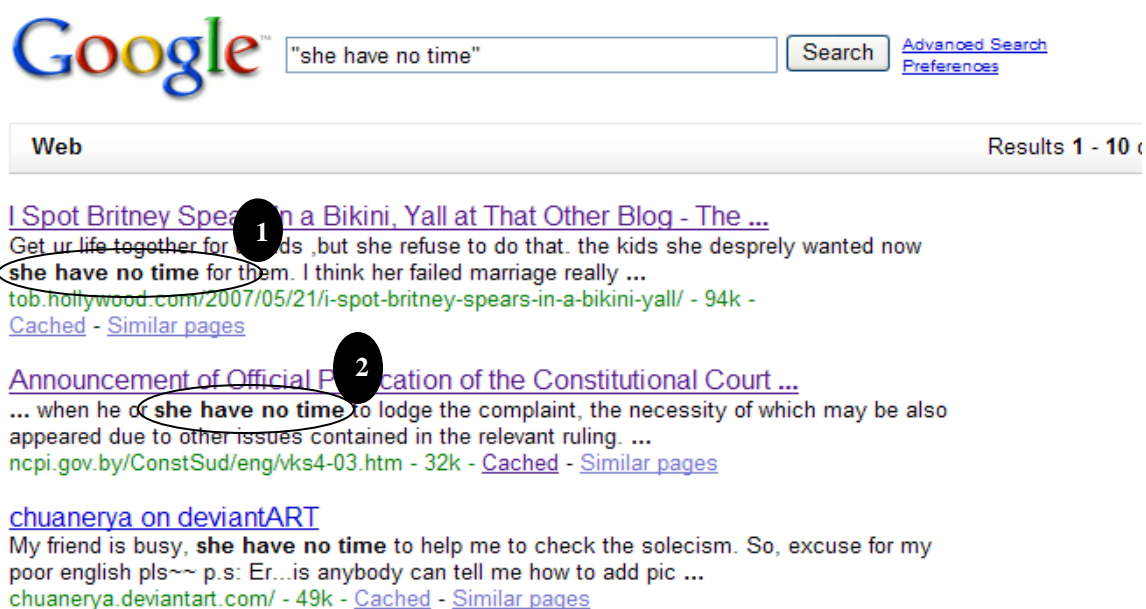


Figure 1.7 Illustration and example of the limitation of grammar check using Google

Furthermore, phrases, when typed in the Google search engine, should be typed within the parentheses, and sentences should be typed in the Google search engine without the parentheses.

*Conclusion*

It is likely that web-based processing is going to replace desktop word processing such as Microsoft Word in the future. This occurrence is due to the fact that people, especially young people, are spending more and more time interacting with one another online compared to the past. Likewise, people may prefer web-based processing to desktop word processing since they mostly work online. This study seeks to contribute to this phenomenon. In addition, the author strongly hopes that this study serves as a useful reference for learners and teachers of English to take advantage of this already available technology namely Google search engine.

## References

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