ReadSpeaker
pioneering voice technology

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Written Text and Text to Speech - Best Practices

Introduction

Text to Speech (TTS) can have different purposes. Most of the TTS solutions that ReadSpeaker offers are designed to read out loud texts of arbitrary length and with arbitrary content. Sometimes text content can be either ambiguous or too complex for TTS to interpret correctly and this affects the quality of the reading.

How the author can help the TTSs along

Different TTS solutions have different ways to interpret ambiguities in texts. Here are some general tips that will help authors to write content that will be properly read aloud by most of the voices and languages ReadSpeaker offers.

- Make sure sentences are grammatically correct.
- Check the spelling: misspelled words are likely to be mispronounced.
- Avoid long sentences.
- Use commas where appropriate; commas often help to improve the reading.
- Avoid colloquial language.

- Avoid using ambiguous words and symbols if possible. Heteronyms, i.e., words that are written identically but have different meanings and pronunciations, are challenging for TTS. An example: I *read* a book yesterday. I will *read* a book every day.
  TTS can sometimes decide from the context which meaning a word has and pronounce it correctly. In the example, "yesterday" and "every day" help to determine how to pronounce *read*. If the TTS mispronounces, it is best to choose a different wording.
- Avoid using special characters (e.g., emojis and other non-text characters). The "cleaner" the text, the less the risk of mispronunciation.
- TTS can read data such as dates, telephone numbers, acronyms, and currency expressions, pronouncing them the same way as you would. For example, reading "2012-06-24" as "June 6, two thousand and twelve". However, it is good to be as clear as possible and use the language's standards for dates, times, etc.
- If HTML code is to be read, use proper tags, e.g., header elements for headers and list elements for lists. Proper pauses will be inserted even if full stops are not present.
- For text that will not be visible to the end user, modifying the text is very useful. For instance, write "Alexander the First" instead of "Alexander I", or "Flicker" instead of "Flickr".
- Each digital voice used by a TTS solution is built for a specific language. Words and names foreign to that language might be mispronounced. If there is no convenient way to change the wording, the linguists at ReadSpeaker can help by creating normalization and pronunciation rules.