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Lang Attribute on <html> for Screen Readers

I wanted to understand how users of screen reader software can benefit, if at all, from `<html lang="xx">`.

by  Adrian Roselli 3 years ago 330 Views ▾



Adrian Roselli 
@aardrian



Dear screen reader users: does having a lang attr on `<html>` (versus not) affect the experience? WCAG H57 says use, but want real-world info.

8:06 PM - Nov 19, 2014



I got plenty of responses from users and implementors:

**James Craig**

@cookiecrook



Replying to @aardrian

[@aardrian](#) VO on iOS auto-switches voices. @ lang is important b/c speech voices are usually language-specific or are tri-lingual at best.

9:51 PM - Nov 19, 2014

1 1

**Paul J. Adam**

@pauljadam



Replying to @aardrian

[@aardrian](#) VoiceOver for iOS will respect both examples and speak english in spanish accent and speak german in english or "default language"

9:51 PM - Nov 19, 2014

1 See Paul J. Adam's other Tweets

**Paul J. Adam**

@pauljadam



Replying to @aardrian

[@aardrian](#) if you leave out the lang attribute the VO user would have to manually switch to the correct language or it pronounces it wrong

9:54 PM - Nov 19, 2014

2 1



**James Craig**

@cookiecrook



Replying to @pauljadam

[@pauljadam](#) [@aardrian](#) That's not always true, but suffice it to say, it's best to have accurate language data provided.

9:58 PM - Nov 19, 2014

4 1 1

**James Craig**

@cookiecrook



Replying to @aardrian

[@aardrian](#) [@pauljadam](#) Language heuristics are a possibility, but accurate language metadata is most useful.

10:34 PM - Nov 19, 2014

1 1 1

**Stéphane Deschamps**

notabene

[@aardrian](#) It does change the phonetic engine loaded. For instance in [previous company] some pages were in english and some in french. 1/2



3 YEARS AGO

**Stéphane Deschamps**

notabene

[@aardrian](#) Jaws was installed with both french and english and the attr was used by it to trigger the right phonologic dictionary. 2/2



3 YEARS AGO



Alicia Jarvis 
@AJarvis728



Replying to @aardrian

[@aardrian](#) Yes it does, to my understanding it will change the accent of the screenreader, ie. Spanish with english accent sounds funny

10:17 AM - Nov 20, 2014



Marco Zehe 
@MarcoInEnglish



Replying to @aardrian

[@aardrian](#) Yes it does! VoiceOver/iOS, JAWS & NVDA (Windows) use that to apply a global language to use.

10:18 AM - Nov 20, 2014



Marco Zehe 
@MarcoInEnglish



Replying to @aardrian

[@aardrian](#) Moreover, used in HTML that will form an ePub or Apple iBooks document also affects how VoiceOver will read the resulting book.

10:19 AM - Nov 20, 2014



**Brass Cupcake**

@cmdfv



Replying to @aardrian

[@pauljadam](#) [@aardrian](#) If lang exists and is set correctly, the screen reader will switch its TTS to that language if available.

12:00 PM - Nov 20, 2014

**Brass Cupcake**

@cmdfv



Replying to @aardrian

[@aardrian](#) [@pauljadam](#) JAWS, NVDA, VoiceOver on iOS. Not certain about any others.

12:02 PM - Nov 20, 2014

**Jeremy Bock**

@jbockcet



Replying to @aardrian

[.@aardrian](#) [@pauljadam](#) My SR user contacts say that it's really a internationalization issue for `<html lang="en">`

8:34 AM - Nov 24, 2014



**Jeremy Bock**

@jbockcet



Replying to @aardrian

.@aardrian @pauljadam If set to anything but en", they don't bother to translate with browser/whatever. If blank, they assume English.

8:36 AM - Nov 24, 2014

**Jeremy Bock**

@jbockcet



Replying to @aardrian

@aardrian @pauljadam If blank, they assume English. If the reader starts speaking another language, they bounce.

10:12 AM - Nov 24, 2014

**Jeremy Bock**

@jbockcet



Replying to @jbockcet

@aardrian @pauljadam They are native English speakers so that's their default.

10:14 AM - Nov 24, 2014





वैभव || vaibhav

@da_vaibhav



Replying to @aardrian

@aardrian quirky addition => spellcheck attribute for textarea requires lang attribute, otherwise it won't check for spellings

2:13 PM - Jan 28, 2015



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