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

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

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

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
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

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

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
Replying to @aardrian

@AJarvis728 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

Replying to @aardrian

@MarcoInEnglish Yes it does! VoiceOver/iOS, JAWS & NVDA (Windows) use that to apply a global language to use.
10:18 AM - Nov 20, 2014

Replying to @aardrian

@MarcoInEnglish 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
@aardrian @pauljadam 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 an 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
@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