1 Automatic Text-To-Speech synthesis

- Introduction
- Computer Speech
- Text preprocessing
- Grapheme to Phoneme conversion
- Morphological decomposition
- Lexical stress and sentence accent
- Duration
- Intonation
- Acoustic realization, PSOLA, MBROLA
- Controlling TTS systems
- Assignment
- Bibliography
Introduction

Uses of speech synthesis by computer

- Read aloud existing text, eg, news, email and stories
- Communicate volatile data as speech, eg, weather reports, query results
- The computer part of interactive dialogs

The building block is a Text-to-Speech system that can handle standard text with a Speech Synthesis (XML) markup. The TTS system has to be able to generate acceptable speech from plain text, but can improve the quality using the markup tags
Speech Synthesizers can be classified on the way they generate speech sounds. This determines the type, and amount, of data that have to be collected.

Speech Synthesis

- Articulatory models
- Rules (formant synthesis)
- Diphone concatenation
- Unit selection
Characteristics (/ɛɾə/ from Praat) [Boersma(1998)]

- Quantitative Source-Filter model of vocal tract
- Solve Navier-Stokes equations for air-flow
- Needs hard-to-get articulatory data
Computer Speech: Rule, or formant, based synthesis

Klatt synthesizer [Sproat(), SRL()]

Characteristics (YorkTalk [Möhler(2005)])

- Recreate sounds using source and resonances
- Model formant tracks by rules
- Endless tuning, no data driven modelling possible
Automatic Text-To-Speech synthesis

Computer Speech: Diphone synthesis

Characteristics (Spengi, Philips/IPO [Möhler(2005)])
- Concatenative synthesis: Glue phoneme-phoneme transitions
- Good quality, but requires all phoneme combinations to be present
- Sound encoding must allow intonation changes
Computer Speech: Nextens diphone synthesis

‘Nederlandse Extensie voor Tekst naar Spraak’ or ‘Dutch Extension for Text to Speech’ example

Nextens runs on top of Festival [Nextens(2003), Festvox(2005)]

- New Dutch voices in Festival
- Nintens GUI (io, commandline in Festival)
- Available for non-commercial use (not Open Source)
- Developed at the Radboud University and the University of Tilburg (Joop Kerkhof, Erwin Marsi, and others)
Automatic Text-To-Speech synthesis

Computer Speech

Computer Speech: Non-uniform unit selection

Generalize diphone synthesis to use larger, non-uniform, units like: diphones, multiphones (clusters), demi-syllables, syllables, words, and short phrases

Characteristics (Festival [Black and Lenzo(2003a)])

- Requires large annotated speech corpora (∼ GByte range)
- Corpus must be well annotated and searchable
- Efficient statistical search algorithms to optimize unit selection based on prosody and concatenation costs
- More speech in corpus ⇒ Better synthesis
- But also ⇒ More work to find the best combination
Computer Speech: Text-to-Speech

Text in Speech out: Processing “steps”
- Text normalization
- Grapheme Phoneme conversion
- Accent placement
- Duration generation
- Intonation generation
- Speech Generation
Text preprocessing: Normalize texts

Text should contain only pronounceable tokens

- Abbreviations
- Dates
- Times
- Telephone numbers
- Money
- Street Addresses
- General numbers
- Special characters

Join Kerry Stratton & his guest chamber orchestra as they bring the music of the Italian Maestro to life on our stage. Tickets $46.00

5 Easy Ways to Order Tickets
A Visit our Box Office (map) Mon through Sat, 11:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Summer Hours: July 4 to Sept 2, 2005 - 11:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
B Call our Box Office at 905-305-SHOW (7469) or Toll Free at 1-866-768-8801 (not available in 416/647 area codes).
C Fax your order form to 905-415-7538.
D Return your completed order form with payment to: Markham Theatre, 171 Town Centre Blvd., Markham, ON, L3R 8G5.
E Online ticket sales are currently only available for Single Tickets beginning September 13, 2005.
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Automatic Text-To-Speech synthesis

Grapheme to Phoneme conversion: By dictionary and rules

Dictionary entries: ("dictionary" nil (d ih1 k sh ax n eh1 r iy0))

Rules: ( LC [ alpha ] RC => beta )
  ( # [ c h ] r => k ) “ch” word initially in English
  ( # [ c h ] => ch ) “ch” word initially in English
  ( [ c ] => k ) default rule for “c”

After all words have been converted, there is a second pass to catch changes at word boundaries and general effects of running speech.
Compound words and other words not in the dictionary are common

- Compound words are common in many languages, eg, German, Dutch, Finnish, Turkish
- Compound word consist of lexical words that are connected with infixes, eg, -s- and surrounded by affixes, eg, a-, in-, -ed
- Compounding or affixes can change the pronunciation and orthography of a word component, eg, $Kunst \rightarrow K"{u}nst+ler$
- Parse complex words with a statistical weighted finite-state transducer (WFST) [M"obius(1998)]
Morphological decomposition: German examples

Unerfindlichkeitsunterstellung
“allegation of incomprehensibility”

WFST states: START PREFIX ROOT INFIX SUFFIX END

German decompositions [Möbius(1998)]

- gener+ator “generator”
- honor+ar “fee”
- Schwind+sucht “consumption”
- Arbeit+s+amt “employment agency”
- Sonne+n+schein “sunshine”
- Un+er+find+lich+keit+s+unter+stel+lung “allegation of incomprehensibility”
Use a dictionary and include a morphological compound list with pronunciations. [Möbius(1998)]

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Lexical stress and sentence accent: Prominence

Some words are more prominent than others. They are:

- Accented, i.e. carry a pitch movement
- Longer
- Louder
- Less reduced

Prominence is determined by

- Word type, function words are almost never prominent
- Word frequency, rare words are prominent more often
- New information is prominent, given is not
- Not too many prominent words in a row

There are rules for assigning prominence, but they need good POS tagging. Just accenting every content words works too.
Lexical stress and sentence accent: Syllable stress

Some syllables are more prominent than others. They are:

- Longer
- Louder
- Less reduced

Syllable stress is determined by

- The lexicon or language (lexical/fixed stress positions)
- Syllable weight, “heavy” syllables are stressed
- No stressed syllables in a row
- Informative syllables are stressed

Mostly, you can get away with either the lexicon, or fixed positions. Syllable stress shifts in compound words. Morphological decomposition gives rules for these shifts.
Intonation covers utterances of a few words at a time (around 5-7). Breaking up sentences at acceptable places is difficult

- Use punctuation
- Guess boundaries on POS tags (HMM style)
- Do a partial syntactic parse and use phrases

In general, it is difficult to go beyond punctuation and some simple heuristics without syntactic parsing
Automatic Text-To-Speech synthesis

Duration

Phoneme duration is determined by:

- Phoneme identity
- Surrounding phonemes
- Sentence accent/prominence
- Syllable stress
- Syllable length and position (Onset, Coda)
- Word length
- Phrase/sentence boundary position
- ...

These factors are used to construct statistical models from annotated speech corpora. Golden standard is Correlation and Regression Trees (CART). But many other statistical methods are used...
With the durations known, the pitch contour can be calculated

- Speaker and style determine the pitch range
- Give each accent a pitch movement shape and size
- Assign each vowel its target $F_0$ value
- Interpolate the values into a valid contour
- Assign each phoneme its $F_0$ values
Multi Band Excitation (Time Domain) Pitch Synchronous Overlap
Add [MBROLA(2005)]

- Mark all pitch periods (blue pulses in *Praat*)
- Fixed periods for voiceless speech
- Window speech around each mark
- To lengthen/shorten a sound, reduplicate/delete periods
- To increase/decrease $F_0$, shorten/lengthen times between periods
- Synthesize sound by summing windowed periods at their correct time position
## Controlling TTS systems: XML standards for speech synthesis

### VoiceXML: Control of web based dialog applications

- **SRGS**: Speech Recognition Grammar Specification
- **SSML**: Speech Synthesis ML
- **CCXML**: Call Control XML
- **NLSML**: Natural Language Semantics ML for the Speech Interface Framework
- **SISR**: Semantic Interpretation for Speech Recognition
- **SCXML**: State Chart XML, State Machine Notation for Control Abstraction
- **PLS**: Pronunciation Lexicon Specification
- **ECMAScript/JavaScript**
Controlling TTS systems: SSML

Speech Synthesis Markup Language

<speak version="1.0" xml:lang="en-GB">
  Hello, how are you?
  <prosody rate="x-fast">
    This sentence is spoken fast
  </prosody>
  <prosody pitch="x-low">
    This sentence is spoken low pitch
  </prosody>
  <prosody pitch="medium">
    This sentence is spoken medium pitch
  </prosody>
  <prosody pitch="x-high">
    This sentence is spoken high pitch
  </prosody>
  <prosody rate="fast">
    This sentence is spoken fast
  </prosody>
  <emphasis level="strong">
    This sentence is spoken with stress
  </emphasis>
</speak>
Controlling TTS systems: eSpeak formant synthesis

eSpeak can be used both for stand-alone formant synthesis and as a front end for Mbrola voices

- `espeak 'text to say' -w test.wav ⇒ standard example`
- `espeak -v mb-en1 'text to say' | mbrola -e /usr/share/mbrola/en1 - test.wav ⇒ Mbrola example`
- Free Software (GPL)
- Supports SSML (partially, eg, not `<emphasis>`)
Assignment: Week 5 TTS

Introduction to eSpeak

- Install eSpeak from http://espeak.sourceforge.net/
- Try out short texts using several voices and languages
- Inspect phoneme conversions with `espeak -x`
- Try to improve synthesis by hand-crafting phoneme input using, eg, `espeak -v en "[[D,ls lz sVm f@n’EtIk t’Ekst ’InpUt]]"`
- Try out SSML on eSpeak using, eg, `espeak -m -f example.ssml -w example.wav`
- Describe the differences in quality
- More on Blackboard...
Further Reading I

Christina L. Bennett.
Large Scale Evaluation of Corpus-based Synthesizers: Results and Lessons from the Blizzard Challenge 2005.
URL http://festvox.org/blizzard/bc2005/IS052023.PDF.

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The Blizzard Challenge 2005: Evaluating corpus-based speech synthesis on common datasets.
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*Praat 4.2: doing phonetics by computer.*

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*Functional Phonology: Formalizing the Interactions between Articulatory and Perceptual Drives.*

Murtaza Bulut, Shrikanth S. Narayanan, and Ann K. Syrdal.
Expressive speech synthesis using a concatenative synthesizer.

Ronald A. Cole, Joseph Mariani, Hans Uszkoreit, Annie Zaenen, and Victor Zue, editors.
*Survey of the State of the Art in Human Language Technology.*
URL http://cslu.cse.ogi.edu/HLTsurvey/.

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GNU General Public License.

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URL http://tcts.fpms.ac.be/synthesis/.

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In Mike Edgington, editor, Third ESCA/COCOSDA Workshop on SPEECH SYNTHESIS, 26 November 1998.
URL http://www.slt.atr.co.jp/cocosda/jenolan/Proc/r06/r06.pdf.

Gregor Mühler.
Examples of Synthesized Speech.
Web, 2005.
URL http://www.ims.uni-stuttgart.de/~moehler/synthspeech/.
Good web-site with many examples.

Nextens.
NeXTeNS: Open Source Text-to-Speech for Dutch.


Appendix A: XML standards in Speech Technology
XML standards in Speech Technology

VoiceXML: Control of web based dialog applications

- SRGS: Speech Recognition Grammar Specification
- SSML: Speech Synthesis ML
- CCXML: Call Control XML
- NLSML: Natural Language Semantics ML for the Speech Interface Framework
- SISR: Semantic Interpretation for Speech Recognition
- SCXML: State Chart XML, State Machine Notation for Control Abstraction
- PLS: Pronunciation Lexicon Specification
- ECMAScript/JavaScript
XML standards in Speech Technology: VoiceXML

Application independent spoken dialog control

```xml
<?xml version="1.0"?>
<vxml version="2.0">
<menu>
  <prompt>
    Say one of: <enumerate/>
  </prompt>
  <choice next="http://www.sports.example/start.vxml">
    Sports
  </choice>
  <choice next="http://www.weather.example/intro.vxml">
    Weather
  </choice>
  <choice next="http://www.news.example/news.vxml">
    News
  </choice>
  <noinput>Please say one of <enumerate/></noinput>
</menu>
</vxml>
```
Speech Recognition Grammar Specification

```xml
<grammar root="buyShirt" xml:lang="en-US">
  <rule id="buyShirt" scope="public">
    <item>
      Get me a <ruleref uri="\#ruleColors" />
      shirt and a <ruleref uri="\#ruleColors"/>
      tie</item>
  </rule>

  <rule id="ruleColors" scope="public">
    <one-of>
      <item>red</item>
      <item>white</item>
      <item>green</item>
    </one-of>
  </rule>
</grammar>
```
Hello, how are you?

<prosody rate=“x-fast”>
    This sentence is spoken fast
</prosody>

<prosody pitch=“x-low”>
    This sentence is spoken low pitch
</prosody>

<prosody pitch=“medium”>
    This sentence is spoken medium pitch
</prosody>

<prosody pitch=“x-high”>
    This sentence is spoken high pitch
</prosody>

<prosody rate=“fast”>
    This sentence is spoken fast
</prosody>

<emphasis level=“strong”>
    This sentence is spoken with stress
</emphasis>
Pronunciation Lexicon Specification

```xml
<?xml version="1.0" encoding="UTF-8"?>
<lexicon version="1.0"
    xmlns="http://www.w3.org/2005/01/pronunciation-lexicon"
    alphabet="ipa" xml:lang="en-US">
    <lexeme>
        <grapheme>lead</grapheme>
        <alias>led</alias>
        <phoneme prefer="true">li:d</phoneme>
    </lexeme>
    <lexeme>
        <grapheme>lead</grapheme>
        <phoneme>led</phoneme>
        <phoneme>li:d</phoneme>
    </lexeme>
</lexicon>
```
Voice Browser Call Control

```xml
<ccxml version="1.0">
  <eventhandler>
    <transition event="connection.CONNECTION_ALERTING"
                name="evt">
      <log expr="'The caller ID is ' + evt.callerid + '.'"/>
      <if cond="evt.callerid == '8315551234'"> 
        <accept/>
      </if>
      <else/>
      <reject/>
    </if>
  </transition>
  <transition event="connection.CONNECTION_CONNECTED">
    <log expr="'Call was answered. We are going to start a dialog.'"/>
    <dialogstart src="'start.vxml'"/>
  </transition>
</eventhandler>
</ccxml>
```
XML standards in Speech Technology: NLSML

Natural Language Semantics Markup Language for the Speech Interface Framework

```xml
<interpretation grammar="http://generalCommandsGrammar"
xmlns:xf="http://www.w3.org/2000/xforms">
  <xf:model>
    <group name="command">
      <string name="action"/>
      <string name="doer"/>
    </group>
  </xf:model>
  <xf:instance>
    <myApp:command>
      <action>reduce speech rate</action>
      <doer>system</doer>
    </myApp:command>
  </xf:instance>
  <input mode="speech">slow down</input>
</interpretation>
```

Back to TTS control
XML standards in Speech Technology: SISR

Semantic Interpretation for Speech Recognition

```xml
<rule id="sub_hundred_thousand">
  <ruleref uri="#sub_hundred"/>
  <tag>out = (1000 * rules.sub_hundred)</tag>

  thousand
  <item repeat="0-1">
    <item repeat="0-1">and</item>
    <ruleref uri="#sub_thousand"/>
    <tag>out += rules.sub_thousand;</tag>
  </item>

</rule>
```
State Machine Notation for Control Abstraction

```xml
<scxml xmlns="http://www.w3.org/2005/07/scxml" version="1.0">
  <initialstate="S1">
    <state id="S1">
      <datamodel>
        <data name="rand">
      </datamodel>
      <onentry>
        <assign name="rand" expr="Math.random()"/>
      </onentry>
      <transition event="E1" cond="rand <= 0.3" target="S2"/>
      <transition event="E1" cond="rand > 0.3" target="S3"/>
    </state>
    <state id="S2"/>
    <state id="S3"/>
  </initialstate>
</scxml>
```
XML standards in Speech Technology:
ECMAScript/JavaScript

JavaScript is the procedural language of VoiceXML

```html
<script>
  var n = 0;
  for (var i = 0; i < 3; i++) {
    n += i;
    <prompt> You have <value expr="n"/> copies</prompt>
  }
</script>
```
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