

Voice Recognition Newsletter

I think voice recognition software works very well once the user has been trained how to use the program and when to use the program. Probably the most important thing about voice recognition software is to make sure the user is properly trained on how to use the program. I often see people who have dictated using voice recognition software who save the voice file even though it may have made many mistakes, especially initially when it is learning how the user speaks. This is called getting your voice file corrupted and you will start seeing more and more errors. If you get less than 90% accuracy most users will get very frustrated with the program and quit using it. I find that as I dictate this newsletter it helps if I speak slowly and enunciate my words. I find it is very important that when the user gets the voice recognition software he or she is trained how to create a good voice file. The user must make sure that the words they say are properly recognized. Only then should the voice file be saved after they have made the corrections.

Voice recognition software works best when you are saying words that are in a standard dictionary. By this I mean that when you are dictating reports and e-mails voice-recognition should work very well. It has a harder time when you are dealing with proper names and addresses. The reason for this is the voice-recognition program looks in its dictionary to find the most appropriate match for the utterance that it heard. Last names and addresses are often words that are not in a standard dictionary, but they can be added. First names can also be difficult because, for example, the name Kathy, Cathy, Kathi is said exactly the same way but can be spelled a number of different ways. The voice-recognition program may have difficulty selecting the desired spelling of Kathy the user wants. You can add words and train the program for frequently used names.

Voice recognition software is also not particularly good when used for graphic arts or drawing programs and even surfing the Internet can be difficult. You can use voice recognition software for these applications but it may take longer than if the user could operate a mouse. Another application that can be difficult for voice recognition software is accounting. While the voice-recognition software does well at recognizing numbers, you have to realize that nobody gets

100% accuracy and the typical range is 95% to 98% accuracy once the person has been well trained. This is approximately 1 out of every 20 words that is misrecognized. While this is good when dealing with numbers a misrecognized number can be a big problem in the accounting. In addition, when we say 145.37 we may think of that as one number but in order to say that number I had to say six words. So if I say 50 numbers I may have two or three errors and in certain accounting applications that may not be acceptable.

Two other questions I get a lot about voice recognition software are can you use it if you are on the telephone a lot and can I use it to record lectures or meetings. You can toggle between using the telephone and voice recognition software but it does not work well if you have to enter information while talking on the phone at the same time. You can either talk on the phone or to the computer but not both simultaneously. Voice recognition software is speaker dependent which means you must train it for an individual's voice. Trying to record a lecture can be very difficult if you want to use voice recognition software because the person doing the lecture would have to have their voice trained and also have to wear a headset. In addition, if questions are asked it will be difficult for the voice-recognition program to interpret these. It is also not practical to use voice recognition software in a classroom to take notes because speaking in class would be disruptive to others. Many people tape the lecture and use voice recognition afterwards to dictate the notes.

There are also a lot of commands to remember with voice recognition software that have to be said the proper way in order for the software to recognize the command. Within word processing applications there are easy ways to move around the document and even file, save and print documents by voice.

If a person has a speech impairment, voice recognition software may have difficulty understanding them as it is looking for consistent speech and needs the user to say the words approximately the same way each time. Voice recognition software also has a harder time with shorter words than longer words. The reason for this is that in longer words there is a lot more for the program to hear. Often with shorter words we say them very fast and there is not much for the voice recognition software to grab onto and distinguish between such

words as “and” or “an”. I have dictated this entire newsletter and can dictate at about 100 words per minute with about 98% accuracy (which is much better than I can type) and when I get done I can have the voice recognition software read back what I have written to correct any errors.

I thought you might enjoy these voice misrecognitions (not all from me):

My favorite memory was working with a 10 year old boy, mom right next to him. He said "I have to learn about the constitution" and it came up "I have to learn about prostitution"

The most memorable one was when I was doing a conference trainings on speech recognition. After the usual preliminaries, which included some technical difficulties. I turned on the mic and said my usual, "This is a demonstration" Laughs all around when up on the screen popped, "This is a big frustration"

My personal best... The original statement was "Mozart was an innovative composer." The Dragon recognition was "Moe's farts was an in and eighties controller."

As I was teaching a class in Dragon, I tried to dictate something like "Dragon will get a misrecognition". What we got was "anus recognition". In front of a class mind you... :-)

The moral of the story is if using voice recognition software make sure you poopread your documents and be wary when using it in front of others.