

AI-Generated Voices for Diversity in ASL Materials

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ESL materials are often improved with the inclusion of high-quality recordings. Unfortunately, producing such recordings can be expensive, time-consuming, and complicated. Moreover, when recordings are included, they have typically been limited to Standard accents, even though non-Standard English is a natural part of ESL listening (Major et al., 2002). Not only does this limit the students' familiarity with non-Standard accents, but it also promotes the idea that some accents are preferable to others, perpetuating accent discrimination (Munro, 2003).

AI speech models have improved dramatically, and though they are still unlikely to fool many into thinking that the speech is natural, models with many expressive and naturalistic features are quite common. Moreover, these are now available in a wide range of voices and languages with fine grained control over speed and other speech features. One generally unrecognized aspect of such models is their ability to produce English speech in typical foreign-accented voices. Finally, all of this is generally available to anyone producing language materials.

In this presentation, I introduce a set of these models, demonstrating what they can do and what we can do with them in ways that promote not only equity, diversity, and inclusion but also good language learning.

References

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- Munro, M. J. (2003). A primer on accent discrimination in the Canadian context. *TESL Canada Journal*, 20(2), 38. <https://doi.org/10.18806/tesl.v20i2.947>

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