Speech Center Plugin

Version 2.0.4

Copyright © 2012-2014, Gilad Shaham.

The Speech Center plugin enables management of the game speech within Adventure Game Studio (AGS) Editor. It provides a view view your game text and play the speech files, fully integrated within the editor.

Handling speech for short games is relatively simple, however, in large projects this becomes difficult over time. It's easy to make mistakes, especially when correlating between speech files and the text lines. Furthermore, during the development of the game, text may change as some of the conversations are being reevaluated. This plugin is aimed towards assisting with these cases.

Even if your game is text only, you may still find this plugin useful since it enables easy navigation of the game text, thus easier to review.

Features

- Display script lines with their corresponding speech number in an easy to use GUI
- Process AGS built in speech functions and custom speech functions
- Playback speech files within AGS
- Enable the user to mark speech and text as correct or incorrect
- Filter and sort the results
- A player window with the ability to play a single file or a list
- Export voice acting scripts
- Edit text directly from the plugin
- Add missing speech line numbers
- Display translations
- Detect changes in text lines and speech files upon refresh
- Find specific text
- Jump to location in the script

Installation

Copy 'AGS.Plugin.SpeechCenter.dll' to your AGS installation directory (not the game directory) and start AGS Editor. When you open a game, you should now have the following option in the editor tree:
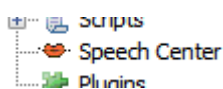
If you are creating a game with several developers, make sure all developers install this plugin. AGS Editor saves plugin information in the .agf file, but if a plugin is missing, it will not copy the previously saved plugin information.

Usage guide

Double click on the Speech Center item and the following screen should open:
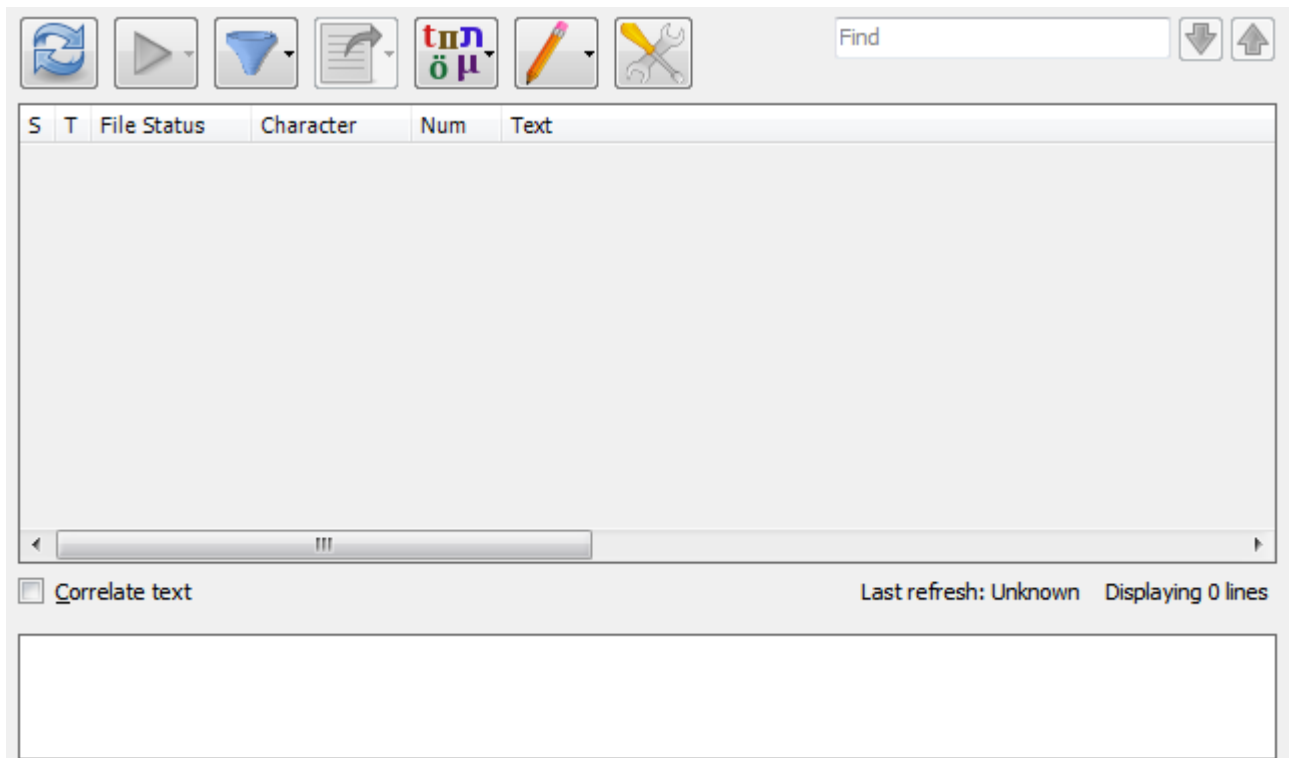
It is empty because the plugin is designed to be as non-intrusive as possible. To update the information, click the Refresh button.

This process may take a few seconds, depending on the size of your game. Whenever you would like to update the results to view the latest text and speech in the game, click this button. When you click on refresh, the last refresh time at the bottom will be updated.

Main information

Here is an example to illustrate the type of data this plugin provides:

S	T	File Status	Character	Num	Text	Location	Function	Line
☐ ☐	N/A		<Narrator>		& 11He had made one careless blunder though, because he had skimped a bit on his preparatory research. The information he had gathered had led him to choose the name "Ford Prefect" as being nicely inconspicuous.	Characters.asc	LookCharacter	6
☐ ☐	N/A		<Narrator>		By a curious coincidence, None at all is exactly how much suspicion the ape-descendant Arthur Dent had that one of his closest friends was not descended from an ape, but was in fact from a small planet in the vicinity of Betelgeuse and not from Guildford as…	room1.asc	Prosser_Talk	21
☑ ☑	Missing		<Narrator>	3	You are by no means a great warrior, in fact you are a nervous worried man	GlobalScript.asc	cEgo_Look	318
☑ ☑	Exists		<Narrator>	6	Ford had first arrived on the planet some fifteen Earth years previously, and he had worked hard to blend himself into Earth society - with, it must be said, some success. For instance he had spent those fifteen years pretending to be an out of work actor, which was plausible enough.	Characters.asc	LookCharacter	5
☑ ☑	Exists		<Narrator>	6	You stick your hand into your ear to verify the Babel fish is still in there.	GlobalScript.asc	cEgo_Interact	323
☑ ☑	Exists		<Narrator>	7	Talking to yourself is a sign of madness!	GlobalScript.asc	cEgo_Talk	328
☑ ☑	Exists		<Narrator>	8	Speech Center demo game.	GlobalScript.asc	btnAbout_OnClick	348
☑ ☑	Exists		cEgo	1	I'm game, we'll see who rusts first.	room1.asc	room_FirstLoad	6
☑ ☑	Missing		cEgo	2	Hello? Yes?	room1.asc	Prosser_Talk	17
☑ ☑	Exists		cEgo	3	How much?	room1.asc	Prosser_Talk	19
☑ ☑	Missing		cProsser	1	Come off it, Mr Dent, you can't win you know. You can't lie in front of the bulldozer indefinitely.	room1.asc	room_FirstLoad	5
☑ ☑	Missing		cProsser	2	Mr Dent	room1.asc	Prosser_Talk	16
☑ ☑	Exists		cProsser	3	Some factual information for you. Have you any idea how much damage that bulldozer would suffer if I just let it roll straight over you?	room1.asc	Prosser_Talk	18
☑ ☑	Missing		cProsser	4	None at all	room1.asc	Prosser_Talk	20

We can clearly see which lines have numbering and which don't. Furthermore, we can also evaluate which lines have a speech file and what lines do not have it.

Upon closer examination, several problems are illustrated in this example. Narrator's line #6 appears in 2 different locations, but it has a different text. At least one of them is definitely wrong. We can also see an error in Narrator's line #11, we added a space character between the "&" and the line number which is a mistake. The premise of the plugin is that a central view assists in reviewing the game text and speech.

If you select a line, you can view the corresponding script at the bottom part of the plugin window. This allows you to review the text line without having to jump back and forth between the script and the Speech Center plugin.

The voice player

Speech Center features an inline voice player window that opens at the bottom right corner of your screen a soon as you start playing.
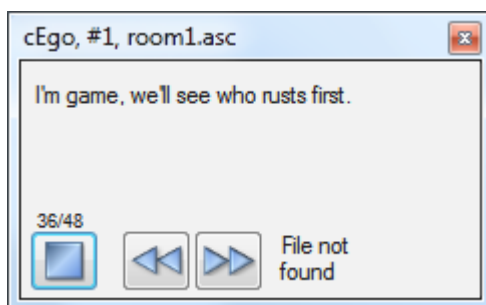
Use the main Play button to start playback.

There are 2 playback modes:

1. Auto-play – When selecting a row, the corresponding speech is played
2. Play-all – Plays all the visible lines in sequence

In auto-play mode, the play button would appear pressed, click on the button again to exit this mode.

The voice player interface is quite trivial. The title shows the character script name, the speech line number and the location. The character's text is displayed and there is an option to play/stop the speech as well as move between the different speech lines.

If the line has no speech file, the text is still displayed and plays based on the sentence length. If you don't want text-only lines, and would just like to focus on the actual voice files, you can filter those lines (more on that later).

The voice player window stays on top even if you go to other screens and other applications. The reasoning is that you may want to play out the speech and not necessarily view/edit information in Speech Center. For example, you may decide to play all speech of a room and edit the script during playback. You can change the size and position the player window to be in the place most suitable to what you are doing, or close it if it's not required anymore.

Another nice feature is that if the character has a talking view, a small animation of this view will be visible.

Reviewing

The plugin is designed to assist with detecting errors and quickly fix them. The plugin will not directly edit your text or change your files, this is to prevent cases which the plugin causes data loss.

To fix the text, double click on the line, and the AGS editor would go to that specific line in your script. There you can change the content, including the line number as you normally do. You should also fix the relevant speech files if there is a mistake Once you are satisfied with your changes, click the refresh button to see an updated view in Speech Center.

You may have noticed that each row has 2 check-boxes. The first check-box is to specify whether or not the speech file is correct. The second check-box applies to the text. The default is not set, meaning it wasn't reviewed. After refreshing, Speech Center detects text changes and voice changes. If speech of text has changed, the corresponding check-box will reset to default, indicating the new speech and/or text were not reviewed.

You may notice that some of the check-boxes are grayed out. This is for text lines that don't have number. This is due to the fact that the line number is a key when comparing between previous and current state. Furthermore, if two or more lines share the same speech file, the speech file status would always be the same for these lines. You can set the text status to different values, thus if the speech file is correct, but one text line is incorrect, you should mark the speech as correct for both lines, and the line with incorrect text should be marked in the corresponding text check-box.

There is also a check-box at the bottom left that enables you to correlate speech lines status. This means that if you mark a line as correct, all lines of the character with the same number will be marked either as correct (in case their text is the same as the line you marked), or incorrect (if the text is different).

Note that it's possible that some of this may sound confusing, it's recommended you try using this feature to better get a grasp and please ask any questions if it remains unclear.

Sorting, finding and filtering

Click on the header whose column you would like to use to sort. Clicking once will sort in ascending order, clicking another time will sort in descending order.

To find a line, type in the find text box the string you would like to search and press enter. You will see how many lines were found. You can also move jump to the next and previous results by clicking the right buttons. There are convenient keyboard shortcuts for this. Press Ctrl+F to go to the find text box, F3 to find the next result and Shift+F3 to find the previous result.

Finally, filtering is also straightforward, by default all text is displayed. You can filter based the text and speech review status, file status (for example, check whether a file exists), by character or by location. Just click on the value, remove the check mark to filter out a value. When filter is enabled then the filter button would appear as pressed, and the column header will have a blue color.
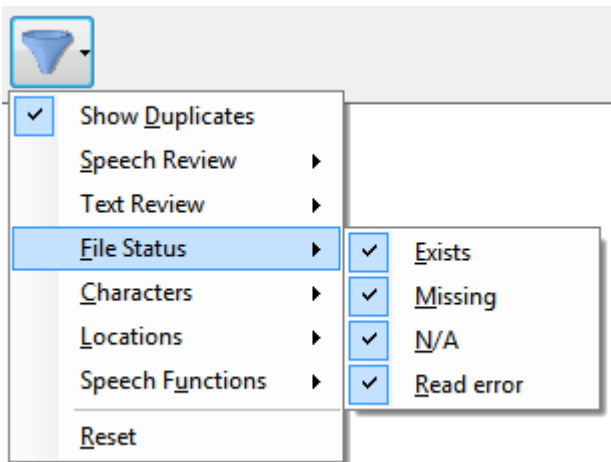
Click on the filter button to disable the filter and click on it again to apply the last filter.

Custom functions

Sometimes it's convenient to use custom speech functions to display text. You can specify which functions to parse by pressing the preferences button:

Within the preferences window you can see the list of the game's custom speech functions:

Add a new function, or double click on an existing one to edit it. Consider the following example:
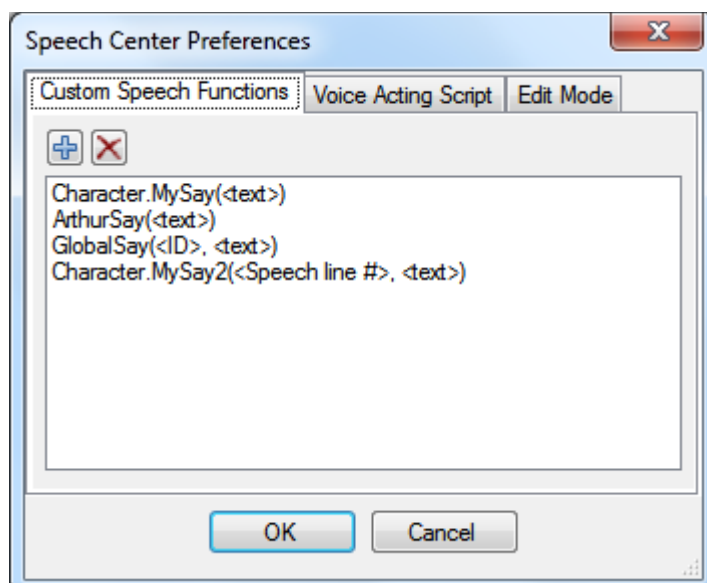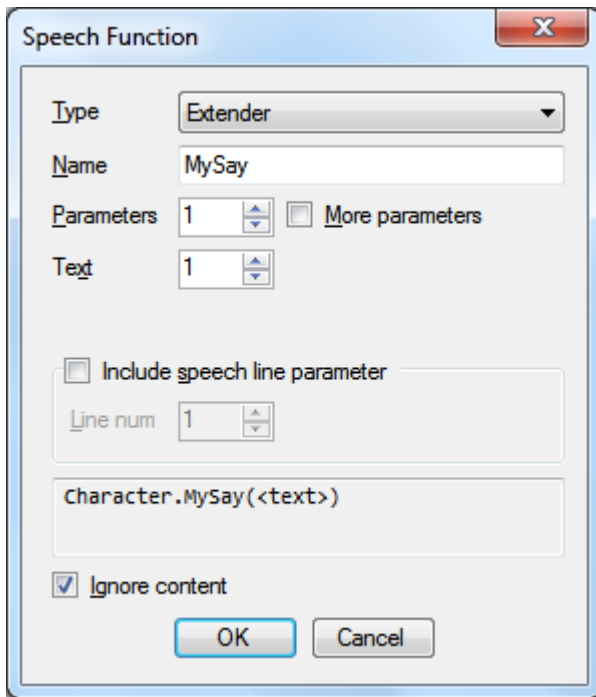

In this case, we are adding a global function, called "`MySay`". It has 2 parameters, the first parameter is the character ID, the second is the text. You can also specify Extender functions as well as fixed character functions, for which the function always displays text for a specified character.

The 'More parameters' check-box, specifies the function has additional parameters, this should be unchecked in most cases, since it's much more common for AGS Editor to have such functions (for example, `Character.Say` accepts more parameters).

One can define custom functions that are similar to AGS' speech functions and use the '&' character at the beginning to define the speech line number. Select the option to include speech line parameter in order to define this in a separate parameter.

The 'Ignore content' specifies that any calls to other speech functions within the custom function should be ignored. This is in order to prevent unnecessary "<<<unknown>>>" text in the results.

Once a custom speech function is used its name will appear in the 'Speech Function' column and filter option.

Voice acting scripts

For a game that supports speech, it is a common practice to get voice actors to record the phrases without giving them access to the full game source. Speech Center allows exporting the speech lines into individual files, one for each character.

The file format is standard HTML, each character file contains all the lines as well as the other character lines in the same conversation. The other characters are marked with a different color so it would be obvious for the actor which lines should be recorded.

Press the export button to immediately export the voice acting script files.

All files will be saved in a sub-directory named 'VoiceScripts' under the game directory.
You may also choose to export only the lines that are currently visible by the filter, in which case they will be exported to a sub-directory named 'VoiceScripts_Partial'.

Here is an example output of the voice script:

Room 1

Mr. L Prosser: Come off it, Mr Dent, you can't win you know. You can't lie in front of the bulldozer indefinitely.
[EGO1] **Arthur:** I'm game, we'll see who rusts first.

Mr. L Prosser: Mr Dent
[EGO2] **Arthur:** Hello? Yes?
Mr. L Prosser: Some factual information for you. Have you any idea how much damage that bulldozer would suffer if I just let it roll straight over you?
[EGO3] **Arthur:** How much?
Mr. L Prosser: None at all
Narrator: By a curious coincidence, None at all is exactly how much suspicion the ape-descendant Arthur Dent had that one of his closest friends was not descended from an ape, but was in fact from a small planet in the vicinity of Betelgeuse and not from Guildford as he usually claimed
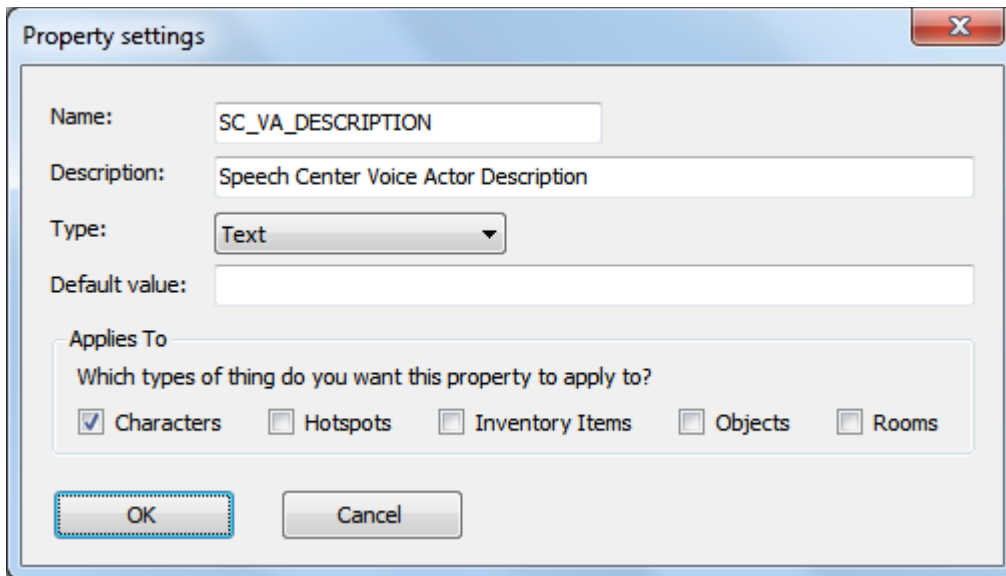
You may change the default output style but going to the "Voice Acting Script" tab in the settings dialog.
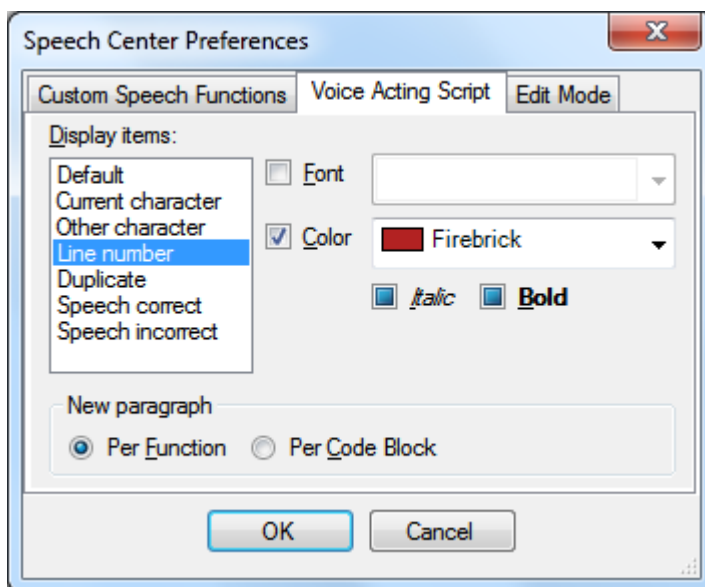
The styles of the different output types can be changed. In addition, you may set the way a new paragraph is created. By default, a new paragraph is created for each new function. However, you may choose to set a new paragraph per code block (for example, different lines within different if-else blocks would have a separate paragraph.
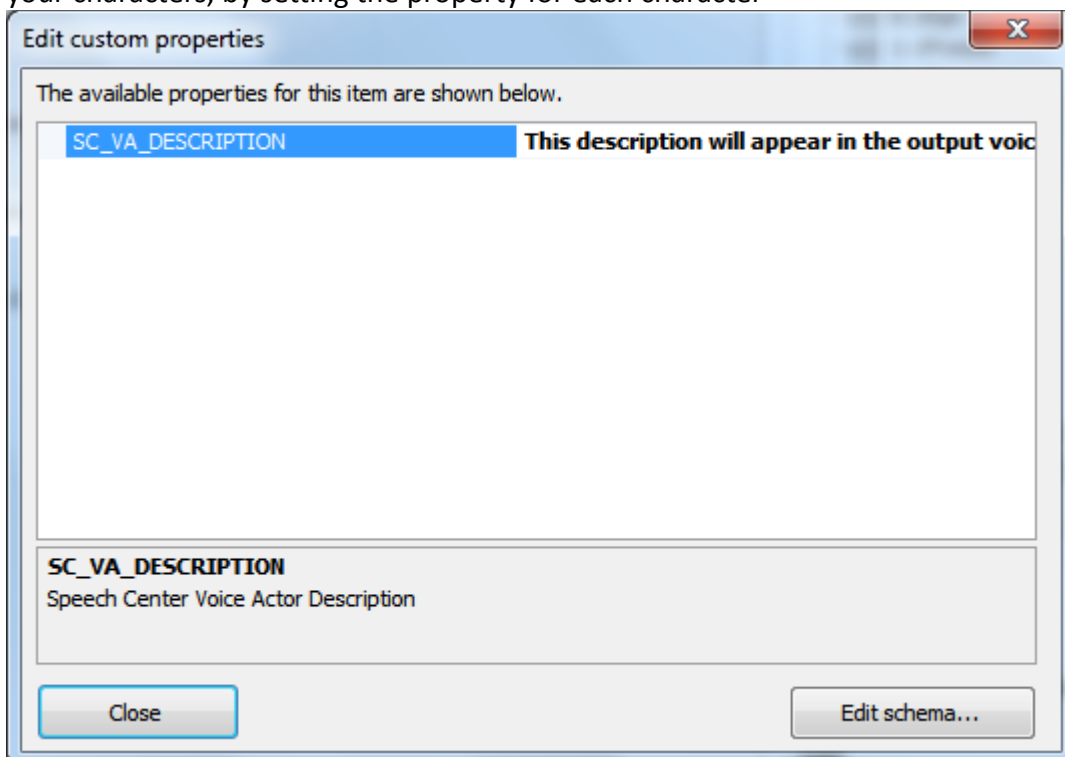
You also have the ability to add a description of the character for the voice actor. To do that, in AGS editor, go to the character and in the properties window, open the character properties. Make sure that the characters in your game support the 'SC_VA_DESCRIPTION' property. If the property does not exist, add it, for example:

After adding the property to the schema (you only need to do this once), provide a description for your characters, by setting the property for each character

Translations

If you add translations to your game you can view the result in Speech Center. Once the translation is part of the game project, click the refresh button and the translation would be added to the list. Click the translation button to choose the displayed translation.

The interface and capabilities remain the same. Text lines that do not have a translations would be marked as incorrect by default. Furthermore, once you choose a specific translation, the script text still appears at the bottom of the screen. This allows you to review the translation and mark text as correct or incorrect as before.
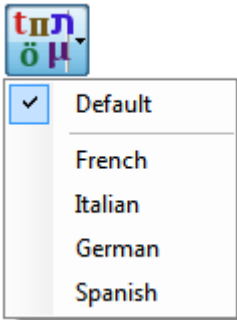
You can also edit translations directly from the plugin, by either going to edit mode or by enabling translation text editing in the preferences.

When you save your game the new translation file will also be saved. If you have more than 1 line with the same original text, changing one of the lines will also change the others. The reason is that the translations use the source text as key and it's not possible to translate the same text differently for different locations. If you have external translators doing work for you, check out my translation editor which was released separately. The tool provides an easy to use GUI with direct view of the file content.

Although AGS does not support speech files for translations, the plugin assumes the folder name is "Speech_" followed by the translation name. For example, if the game is translated to Hebrew, the folder name would be Speech_Hebrew. If you don't intend to record speech files in the translated language simply ignore the fact that the files are marked as missing.

Translation work flow

When refreshing the plugin information, it is vital to understand that the plugin reads the translation information as last read by the AGS Editor. This means that if you change the source translation file and don't recompile the translation or reload the project before clicking refresh, the changes would not be visible.

In addition, if you change any line in your code, you must first update your translation files, edit them with the new translation and then compile the translations or reload the project, in order to make sure AGS editor is up to date with the changes, and finally refresh the plugin data. If you have an existing translation, change the source line and refresh the plugin without the steps above, the old translation won't be retained. This means that for that case you can't use Speech Center to edit translations.

If you intend to change the translation with Speech Center, make sure you don't change the files outside the editor when you have the game open and take special care to refresh the plugin data if you did change any text in the game scripts, dialogs or the translation files.

Edit mode

To change text of your game from the plugin, you have the option to go to edit mode by clicking the edit button

When you go to edit mode, a warning will appear, this is because there are several limitations that are, for the most part, imposed by the AGS Editor. Before beginning to edit, you must make sure you save your game, this is because the plugin cannot read any pending changes that were not saved. Furthermore, the plugin will refresh the data before going to edit mode to ensure it has the most up-to-date information.

In addition, it is recommended that you close all scripts that are being edited while changing them from Speech Center. The reason is that AGS Editor does not detect those changes and it's quite possible that after you make changes in the plugin and save them, you will overwrite them in the script editor which holds a previous copy of the code.

While in edit mode, you'll be able to see the changes you made from the plugin, but not from any other window To apply your changes you must save your game. You may choose to revert your changes in which case the plugin will not save the changes, and will simply reload the information from the game files. Once you save the game, the plugin will exit edit mode. To maintain consistency with other editor dialogs all other editor windows will be closed upon saving changes done via the plugin. You can change this behavior from the plugin preferences.

Another option available in edit mode is auto-numbering lines with missing line numbers. If a specific line doesn't have a number in one place, but has a number in another, Speech Center will detect that and will assign to it the correct line number. For all other cases, the lowest unused line number will be assigned to that line.

> **Note**:
> This is a feature that directly changes the script code. Make sure to backup your game before turning on edit mode.

Known limitations

This release has the following limitations, some may change in future versions:

- Using the check-boxes to mark lines requires having a number for that line. The reason is that for the current implementation, the number is one of the key values when refreshing information

- Loading and saving a game with an AGS Editor that doesn't have the plugin installed deletes previously saved plugin information. This is a limitation of the AGS Editor itself which would hopefully be fixed in future version. For now, make sure that all your game developers have this plugin. In the future I may add an ability to export/import data to help manage this case

- Processing global messages and room messages – If you are using the `'DisplayMessage'` command (instead of `'Display'` and character `'Say'` functions), it will not be processed at the moment. Global messages have been deprecated from AGS 3, but room messages still exist. If most of your text comes from room messages, please contact me about it so I'll know there are people waiting for this feature

- If `'player'` or your own variable is used to display text, it would be shown as "<Player>" and its file cannot be played. The reason is that currently AGS does not provide the plugin the interface to get the current game player. Using things like `'cEgo'` or `'character[EGO]'` should work

- If a variable is used to display text, its value is not known to the plugin. For example, if you use `'Display(Message)'` where `'Message'` is a string variable, the text would appear as "<<<unknown>>>". If you use `'Display("text")'` or a custom function, that should work

- Commands within `ifdef/ifndef/ifver/ifnver` are processed based on the actual definition. For example, if you define `'SOMETHING'` and then display text within an `'ifndef SOMETHING'` block, that text would not appear. I believe this shouldn't affect most games, these commands are probably mostly used by modules which are rarely relevant for this plugin

Legal

The use of this plugin is free for the development of games with AGS (commercial or non-commercial). I have put a lot of effort in this plugin usability, all I ask in return is that you give me credit for the plugin as part of your game credits.

For more information please refer to the license file included with this plugin. In any case where there is a conflict between anything stated here and the license file, the license file text is the right way to interpret this package's legal aspect correctly.

If you need a different license or have any questions or comments, please feel free to contact me.

Contact details

For any questions, comments, bug reports, feature requests, or if you just want to say something important, please contact Gilad Shaham at SpeechCenter@live.com