

Researchers produce first Iraqi-to-English speech-to-speech translation app

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Researchers at Jibbigo LLC and Carnegie Mellon University's International Center for Advanced Communication Technologies (interACT) have developed a new application for Apple's iPhone 3GS that performs speech-to-speech and speech-to-text translation between English and the Iraqi dialect of Arabic.

A user speaks either English or Iraqi Arabic into the [iPhone](#) and the Jibbigo app produces a spoken and text translation in the other [language](#). The software, now available from Jibbigo through the iPhone App Store, operates on the iPhone itself, so it can operate as a freestanding communicator without the need to be connected to the Web or a phone network.

"We're proud that this powerful [speech translation](#) tool can now provide critical communication support for humanitarian and government efforts in crisis zones," said Alex Waibel, director of interACT and founder of Jibbigo. "This Iraqi/English translation application is designed to help service personnel, whether their role is military, humanitarian aid or engineering, so they can overcome the confusion and misunderstanding that can occur when language is a barrier."

The Iraqi translator takes advantage of speech translation work by interACT that was sponsored by the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency's Spoken Language Communication and [Translation System](#) for Tactical Use (Transtac) Program. The goal of interACT and other Transtac contractors was to develop portable, two-way translation

systems for use in Iraq and other non-English-speaking nations where the military is or might be deployed.

"We have developed some very capable [translation software](#) during the course of the program, but with the exception of some field tests, a working system has never been fully deployed in Iraq," said Waibel, a professor of computer science and language technologies in Carnegie Mellon's School of Computer Science. "The iPhone and the iPhone App Store, however, now provide us with a means of rapidly making this software widely available for use by anybody."

The new system runs on a software engine for the iPhone that was developed by Jibbigo and, since last fall, has been the heart of a series of iPhone apps that translate between English and Spanish, Japanese and Chinese. "The Jibbigo engine makes it possible to create translation apps rapidly so that we can respond to humanitarian crises as they occur," Waibel said. "Too often, language tools have become available only after a crisis has passed."

A version of the Iraqi/English translator has been developed for Android, Google's open-source operating system for mobile devices, but is not yet available at Android Market. Jibbigo also is preparing systems for use in other crisis areas of the world.

Provided by Carnegie Mellon University

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