

Speak 105 Languages At The Touch Of A Button

Difficulties in communication while crossing the globe for business and travel could be a thing of the past, thanks to a European startup harnessing the power of AI to tear down language barriers.

Pocket-size Travis translators, launched in 2017, make it possible for users to instantly translate text and/or audio from one language into another by speaking directly into the device—105 languages are supported in online mode and 20 languages offline.

More than 200,000 devices have now been sold, with Europe being the main market for the Netherlands-based business. But with 13 Arabic regional variants available on the device, the team now have the Middle East firmly in their sights as they make plans for expansion.

The Travis Touch was set up by a team of five and an Indiegogo crowdfunding campaign. With that first round they raised over \$1.8 million and fulfilled over 10,000 pre-orders. Over the next two years they ran two more campaigns and launched three main products.

In February, the startup launched new editions for travel and business at the Mobile World Congress 2019 in Barcelona. The new travel edition includes a global sim card that creates a VPN hotspot, includes a language learning mode that allows you to check your pronunciation, and incorporates a voice assistant for weather forecasts, currency and time-zone conversions. The latest business edition uses live subtitling to enable users to follow everything that is being said during business meetings and presentations.

Originally the founders were keen to ease communication for holiday and business travelers—but today, they have seen the handheld devices also being used by foreign students in schools, as well as in hospitals by doctors and nurses that need to quickly communicate with foreign patients.

Travis uses AI to keep its technology up-to-date. “We currently pull from over 20 different translation engines, and our own layer of AI technology constantly searches for the best translator engine for the language pair the user is using,” says Lennart van der Ziel, CEO at Travis. “Developments in AI have rapidly evolved in the last few years and this is an area we are constantly working on to stay on top.”

Forbes Middle East’s multilingual IT Manager, Ziyad Kallitta Valappil, took home a Travis Touch to try it out. This was his tried-and-tested feedback:

- Compact and easy to carry.
- Good battery capacity.
- Multiple Connectivity options through Wi-Fi as well 4G/3G/2G through SIM card.
- Can be charged through a USB cable or wireless charger (not included in the package).
- Setting up the device and making it work was almost instant—ready to go out-of-the-

box.

- Works online and also offline with limited functionality.
- The languages to translate can be chosen through audio input or by touch screen.
- Translation is quick and results are provided in text and audio for most languages, although it only supports text for a few others.
- Translation accuracy was impressively good even with rarely used words.
- It was very easy to use. There are only four physical buttons, so not much confusion for users. One button on the side to turn the device on, three buttons on the front and one in the middle to choose languages through audio, and two buttons on left and right for translation.
- Overall, simple and easy to use and does its job well.

<https://forbesmiddleeast.com/travis-touch-speak-105-languages>