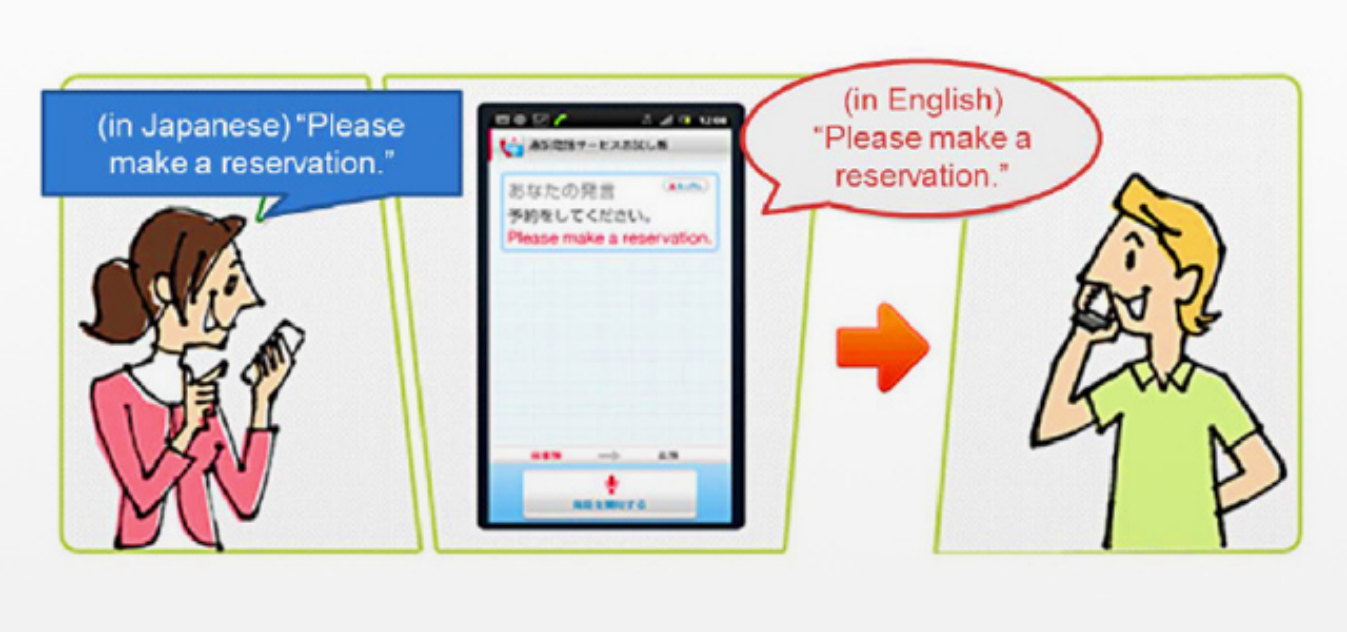
App translates languages during real-time phonecalls



Web users can already easily take advantage of translation services that convert text from one language to another, and we've also seen TransFire bring that capability to web-based instant messaging on smartphones. Providing a similar service for speech conversations, Japan-based NTT DOCOMO is launching its Hanashite Hon'yaku app, which offers real-time translation of phonecalls.

Rather than making a call through the standard phone app, users select a contact through Hanashite Hon'yaku if they will be talking to a foreign language speaker. The app then automatically detects what languages are being spoken before providing instant text translations. Users have the option to see on-screen text translations or have the voice engine provide an audio version. The app can also be used to translate speech in a face-to-face conversation by getting both parties to speak close to the phone. Hanashite Hon'yaku will be made available to Android users on 1 November as a free download. Upon release, the app will be able to translate between those speaking Japanese, English, Chinese or Korean, although the company hopes to add French, German, Indonesian, Italian, Portuguese, Spanish and Thai by the end of November.

In a hyper-connected world, one of the main difficulties is communication between those of a different tongue and the Hanashite Hon'yaku app aims to provide a solution to this problem. How else can technology help break down language barriers to global conversation?

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