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New Technology Helps Bridge Language Barriers

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PITTSBURGH -- Imagine you're stuck in a foreign land and want to find the nearest hotel, but don't speak the language. No problem.

You simply speak into your Personal Digital Assistant and it promptly translates your English into the native language.

That's one of the advancements in human speech translation demonstrated Thursday at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh.

CMU Professor Alexander Waibel said the translation program can now narrowly be used on some PDAs for medical and tourism purposes to help humanitarian relief workers. But he expects it to be in wider circulation in about a year or so.

Waibel also unveiled a speech-to-speech translator in a lecture that was simultaneously translated from English to Spanish and German.

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