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App lets visually impaired in India hear books in their native language

Posted Aug 4, 2016 by [Devin Coldewey](#), Contributor

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For the millions upon millions of visually impaired people in India, it can be difficult getting hold of the audiobook they want in the language they need it in. A project from Carnegie Mellon University and partners aims to fix that with a free, easily extensible Android app that can be quickly trained to read texts aloud in local languages.

The app, [Hear2Read](#), had its first release today, supporting Tamil, with Hindi, Bengali,

Punjabi, and other languages and dialects coming over the course of the year. A few hours of talking from a native speaker is the raw data, which is then fed into a machine learning system.

“Each language is different and historically TTS systems have been done one at a time. We looked at commonalities of Indian languages and developed tools to apply the same technology to multiple languages,” said Suresh Bazaj, founder of the project, [in a CMU blog post](#).

Hear2Read	Hear2Read Tamil
<div data-bbox="203 1018 389 1207"> <p>Tamil Demo</p> </div> <div data-bbox="544 1018 730 1207"> <p>About Hear2Read Tamil</p> </div>	<div data-bbox="836 640 1477 693">Tamil(IND,female;sxv) ▼</div> <div data-bbox="836 735 1477 787">Normal Speed ▼</div> <hr/> <div data-bbox="836 1186 1477 1239">வணக்கம், உலக!</div> <div data-bbox="836 1249 1477 1354">நவீன ஓவியங்கள் பற்றி உங்கள் கருத்து என்ன?</div> <div data-bbox="836 1365 1477 1459">அந்தத் தொடர் ஓவியம் நல்ல வரவேற்பைப் பெற்றது.</div> <div data-bbox="836 1470 1477 1564">அவர்தான் உங்களுக்கு இதுபோன்ற விஷயங்களில் ஈடுபாடு இல்லை</div> <div data-bbox="1421 1606 1477 1669">▶</div>

The resulting language database is small enough that it can be stored on the phone, meaning no internet connection is needed to translate texts. It'll run on low-end phones, as well, an important factor in a country where budget devices and spotty connectivity

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are the rule. (You'll need Android 4.1 or higher, though.)

The Hear2Read software also integrates with Android's built-in accessibility functions, letting browsers, email apps, and others integrate text to speech.

More info on Hear2Read, the app, and the partners that helped make it possible can be found at the company's [website](#).

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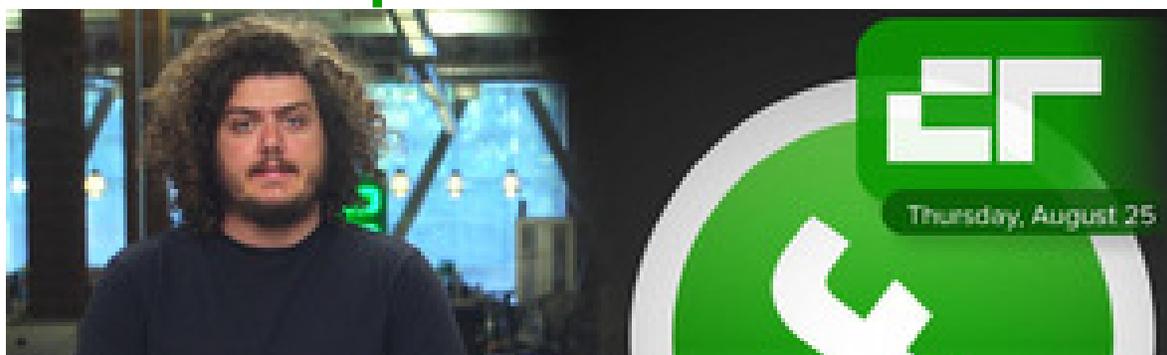
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