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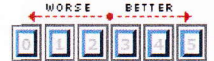


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# Facebook Gets Vocal with Jibbigo Voice Recognition Buy

By Jennifer LeClaire  
August 13, 2013 10:03AM

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This is a smart grab for Facebook. The Jibbigo app works without a network connection, which isn't always true of translation apps. But the deal is at least as much about getting the team and the developers as the core translation technology, said Greg Sterling, principal analyst at Sterling Market Intelligence.

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Facebook is getting in on the voice recognition momentum Apple started with Siri. The social networking giant has agreed to acquire speech recognition toolmaker Mobile Technologies. Financial terms of the deal were not disclosed.

Mobile Technologies' flagship product is Jibbigo, which is billed as a speech-to-speech translator on a phone that runs online and even offline, whether or not you've got an Internet connection. Travelers use Jibbigo to communicate in foreign countries and healthcare workers overcome the language challenge in humanitarian missions.

"Facebook, with its mission to make the world more open and connected, provides the perfect platform to apply our technology at a truly global scale," Mobile Technologies wrote in the acquisition announcement. "We look forward to continuing to develop our technology at Facebook and finding new and interesting ways to apply it to Facebook's long-term product roadmap."

## Facebook Vocalizes Plans

Tom Stocky, director of product management at Facebook, wrote about the deal on his web page. He said the company has an "amazing team" and some of the world's leading speech recognition and machine translation technology.

"It has always been our mission to make the world more open and connected. Although more than a billion people around the world already use Facebook every month, we are always looking for ways to help connect the rest of the world as well," Stocky said.

"Voice technology has become an increasingly important way for people to navigate [mobile](#) devices and the web, and this technology will help us evolve our products to match that evolution," he said. "We believe this acquisition is an investment in our long-term product roadmap as we continue towards our company's mission."

## Competing With Google, Microsoft

We turned to Greg Sterling, principal analyst at Sterling Market Intelligence, to get his take on the acquisition. Given the international scope and scale of Facebook, he told us - machine translation of content, messages and communications would be useful.

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"Jibbiggo obviously also has direct application in mobile, 'on the go' travel and business scenarios," he said. "Google and Microsoft both offer machine language translation -- and are the big players here -- as do a few independent companies. None of them are great but the technology is making strides and will be much improved over time."

Although Sterling doesn't have any data on the accuracy of Jibbiggo versus Microsoft's or Google's technology, he sees the buy as a smart grab for Facebook. The app works without a network connection, he said, which isn't always true of translation apps. He figured the deal is at least as much about getting the team and the developers as the core translation technology.

The feedback from Facebook users is so far positive. One commenter on Stocky's post said, "How do we get more information about this merger? I work for a non-profit with lots of supporters in the Philippines but we feel very disconnected from them. How will this merger help us communicate with our members and students, affiliates and partners?"

Another commenter wrote, "This is REALLY cool stuff Tom! Voice tech is definitely becoming more important in terms of how we use our devices and ultimately connect with one another. Looking forward to following this merger and seeing how FB integrates it! Whoohoo!"

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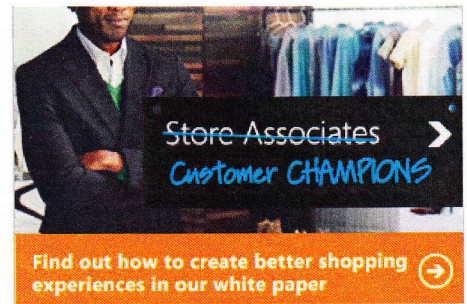
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