Google Translate Reflection

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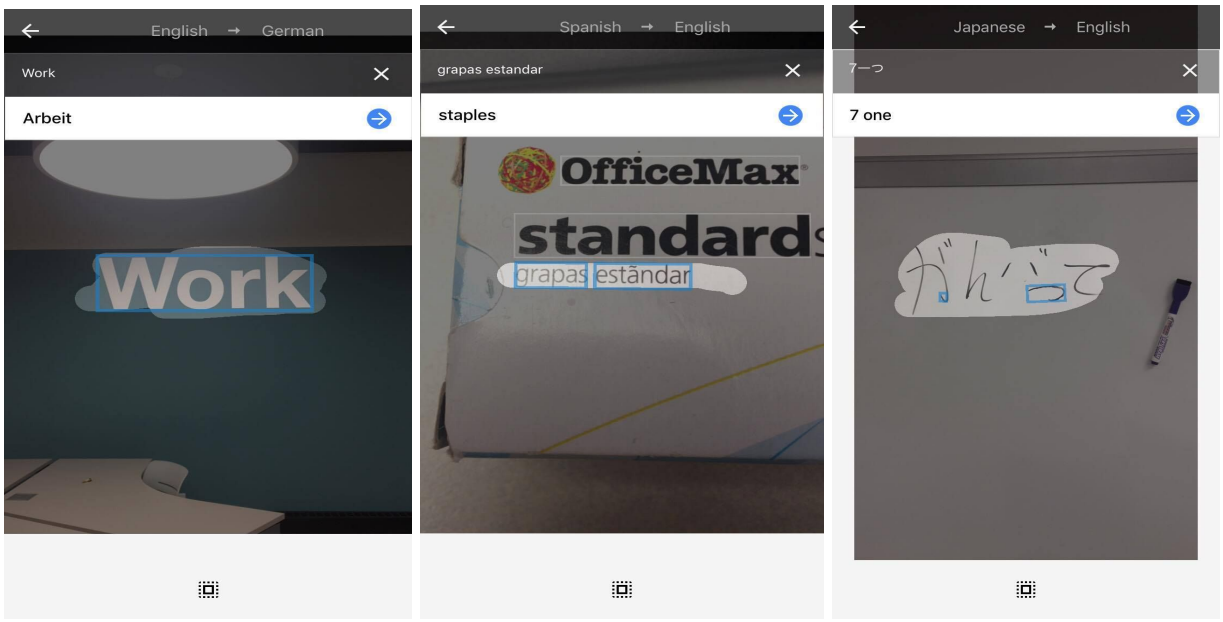
Ever since childhood, most kids are forced to learn a foreign language as part of their school curriculum; and for the late 90's generation of kids this involved looking up a lot of words on the internet. Google translate to be more specific. Today, Google Translate has more automated features such as language detection and even direct translation through a picture on your smartphone.



Above are three examples of testing the translate through picture feature on the Google App for IOS. The app worked fairly well for printed words and phrases, but heavily struggled with hand-written foreign languages. The third picture shows the japanese word "Ganbatte" written on a white board which should translate to "good luck" or something similar. However the app only recognized part of the word and translated it to "7 one".

In addition to not handling hand-written phrases correctly, there are a few other quirks which are holding back this technology. For example, the picture feature only works if you know what language is being translated. It cannot detect the language based solely on the picture taken.

I believe this feature would be very useful for international travel. Although it would be inconvenient to translate more than a street sign or a single line of text due to the design of the App, picture translation is still a useful tool. There were many times throughout my travels when reading a sign on a train platform was all I needed. Google Translate is always more effective when translating single words rather than complete sentences, and this feature is no different. If we ever want to get to a point where entire pages in a book are translated in real time in front of your eyes, we need to discover a more elegant way to translate sentences with proper grammar.

Following the trend of other VR and AR technologies being produced today, Google Translate is a strong step in the right direction of AR. Bugs need to be worked out, and some of the translations are still slightly inaccurate, but I can see it being used on a regular basis in the future.