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speaking your language

Providing a communication system for an Indian airport with multiple local languages is no mean feat

Netherlands-based AviaVox BV has recently won an order to deliver an intelligent artificial automatic announcement system at Mumbai Airport. Following the major installation in the prestigious Terminal 3 at New Delhi Airport, the delivery to Mumbai Airport will be the second largest implementation for AviaVox BV in India. And there are more projects to come as the company is steadily developing itself as a local language specialist for Indian airports and airlines. In the case of the Mumbai project, AviaVox has developed the Marathi local language.

In terms of local languages, India is a demanding but also challenging market. While Hindi is the main and official language in India, there are about 2,000 ethnic groups in the country and distinctions are found in many areas such as the 22 main local languages, which include Bengali, Punjabi, Malayalam, Tamil and Telugu. Over the years, Indian English has been the binding factor of all these language groups, enabling more than 1.2 billion Indians to communicate with each other across a country spanning 3,287,263km^2.

When it comes to supporting local languages at an airport, one cannot ignore nor neglect a population of about 72 million people speaking Marathi. To meet this requirement, AviaVox BV has started a development programme that will ultimately support all the major languages in India. However, the development of these languages is an intensely time- and energy-consuming effort, with AviaVox delivering artificial intelligence based on a state-of-the-art new phoneme technology.

This phoneme technology actually makes a computer speak, rather than reproducing strings of pre-recordings, which is an old-fashioned technology. In order to make a language that cannot be distinguished from a human speaker, the development team at AviaVox writes the software in close collaboration with linguists and native speakers. This is of vital importance when creating artificial speech in a specific language without accents and with the correct grammar.

Step by step, the computer is being taught how to speak a specific language as if one was teaching a child how to speak. The result is astonishing, and when hearing an AviaVox system speak, the listener will believe they are listening to a human being rather than a computer. Besides the audibility, an AviaVox system is designed to support the operational applications and procedures of airports and airlines.

AviaVox is steadily building a reputation in India, not only as a local language specialist, but also as having the ability to support the specific requirements of airports and airlines. The effectiveness of these systems is clear and results in less congestion during boarding processes and swift passenger throughput at constraining areas such as security checks.

ABOVE: AviaVox is developing itself as a local language specialist in India

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