

NEW LANGUAGE CONVERSION APP OPENS  
A WORLD OF COMMUNICATION



Singer Anthony Callea was raised in an Italian speaking household. Picture: Sam D'Agostino

TECHNOLOGY

PATRICK TADROS

Social media and translation apps are helping to break the language barrier for younger Australians who struggle to communicate with non-English speaking relatives.

With more than 5.5 million Australian residents who speak a language other than English at home – an uptick of 800,000 from 2016 – the need to understand one another is more important than ever.

Optus' latest Living Network feature, Call Translate (launching next week), will allow customers to translate phone conversations between different language speakers in real-time.

"It is a game-changer and there's really no excuse for me or any of us not to spend more time speaking to family and friends overseas," says Australian singer Anthony Callea.

"If there's one thing Covid-19 taught me, the connection we have with each other is key and we need to reach out to family and friends more often."

Growing up in an Italian household, Callea sometimes struggled to learn the language.

"It can be difficult and I wish I were able to speak Italian more fluently," he says. "For me it's

always been picking up on words and depending on how fast they speak."

The app has 19 available languages, including Arabic, Hindi, Italian, Spanish and Vietnamese.

"It enables our customers to break through language barriers – making two languages become one conversation," says Matt Williams, Optus' managing director of marketing and revenue.

As more people continue to want to connect with loved ones or learn new languages, translation apps are essential.

Here, we look at some of the options available and benefits:

LOST IN TRANSLATION

Many Australians had to rely on devices to stay connected during the pandemic.

Alex Anania, 22, used social media apps to translate foreign words into English.

"We use Instagram because it's easier to keep in touch, or start a conversation via Facebook Messenger as it can be translated into the language of your choice," she says.

Apple services such as FaceTime and Messages set new records for daily volume between January and March in 2020, while Zoom reports there were 300 million daily participants on calls globally in April 2020.

Language experts hope translation apps will encourage younger generations to learn a new language in the process.

"Australians remain behind the ball in terms of language development, with just 8 per cent

of students saying they learn a second language at school ... whilst it's not rocket science to learn another language, many don't make the effort," body language and communication expert Dr Louise Mahler says.

"We miss the incredible bonus of widening horizons with extra language knowledge and even the loss of studying grammar."

POWER OF TRANSLATION

Technology commentator Geoff Quattromani says the benefits of translation apps are endless.

"It allows individuals to connect with non-English speaking loved ones with real-time translation, enabling real relationships to be built, improved connections and more meaningful conversations that would otherwise not take place," he says.

"Many Australians have parents and grandparents who are non-English speaking and this allows connections to continue without learning a new language."

Experts say maintaining social bonds is important for physical and mental health.

"As human beings, we are wired for connection ... it's in our biology," counsellor Justine Campbell says. "One of the many impacts of Covid-19 was that we had to lean into more virtual connections than ever. We need connections in our lives as they show us that we belong, that we are valued and that we are seen. We are on somebody's radar."

How to use the app

CUSTOMERS can access the Call Translate service via the My Optus app from next week. They will be prompted with a pre-call voice message to say the call will be translated and they are then welcome to proceed to make phone calls in real time, just like normal.

The translations work best when customers speak in full sentences, avoiding talking over one another or pause too often.

As the feature needs to filter

out background noise, it's best that customers avoid using speakerphone during Call Translate conversations.

It combines the power of the Optus network and Google's call translation algorithms by integrating those two things together in a way that has never been done.

The service is available to postpaid mobile customers for \$5 a month, or try free for one week.

For more, visit [optus.com.au](http://optus.com.au)

BEHIND THE SCENES



WITH JONATHON MORAN

JULIAN MOURAN

The Aftertaste actor on his fear of infinity and why he'd love to fly ...

What three things would be at the top of your bucket list?

Take my younger brother Luke to the Oscars, buy Mum and Dad a house, and travel to the Adriatic Sea with my partner.

What is your guilty pleasure in life?

I maintain a pretty voracious appetite, and realised in my early 20s that I had a penchant for pancakes. Sorry about the alliteration.

What was your first casual job?

A sports-themed retail store, in the era of Raben flat shoes selling like wildfire. I was banned from working next to my cousin – we couldn't stop making each other laugh.

What was the first place you visited overseas and your memory of the trip?

Paris, in a terrified manner, shielding and ensuring every member of my family made it on to the metro!

Most relatable Disney character?

I absolutely love Hercules, he's so lacking in self awareness, and realises the insignificance of his physical strength compared to that of love and sacrifice.

Favourite movie and why?

Porco Rosso – hand-drawn animation, endless seas, and flying through the '30s in a beautiful red plane.

What would you tell your 10-year-old self today?

Don't worry too much about all the rejection, and about feeling like you aren't worthy, or you're weird, or you're made whole by doing or succeeding. Also, stop feeling guilt and shame for the boredom and frustration of the mundane, the silly and the madness are where it all happens, and that is okay!

They say what happens on the set stays on the set. Break that rule for us.

Any break, without fail, if you listen closely, you can hear the sound of coffee.

If you had a super power, what would it be and why?

If I could fly, I could cover so much more of the distance that I do when I walk, and appreciate the grandeur and beauty of this planet.

Do you have any irrational fears?

Infinity! The concept, that we can't necessarily grasp, some phenomena are just perpetual, circular with no beginning or end. I reconciled this when I surrendered and accepted that this could equally be my greatest motivation, an infinite amount of possibilities.

Aftertaste airs on ABC, Wednesdays 9.10pm.

