



Before translation



Translation (1)



Translation (2)

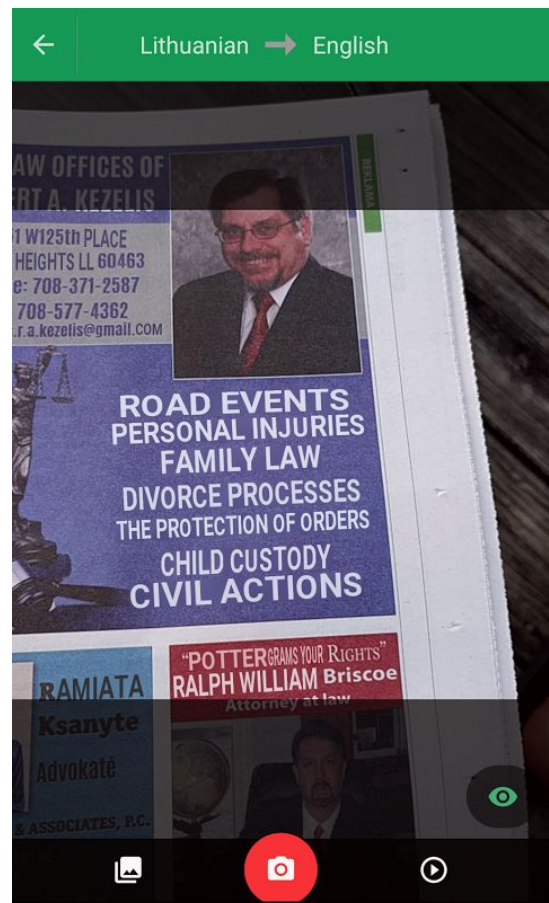


Translation (3)





Before Translation



Translation (1)



Translation (2)

First of all, Augmented Reality (AR) is amazing and super powerful! It is “a technology that superimposes a computer-generated image on a user’s view of the real world, thus providing a composite view (Google Dictionary).” This has a lot of potential, because it allows the user to interact with the real world while simultaneously viewing relative digital information. Consider that your environment is filled with potential problem spaces. AR has the ability to extend your knowledge of the environment and solve those problems in an efficient way. This is when AR is most effectively used.

A very good example is Google Translate. The problem space is created when someone is trying to understand text written in a foreign language. Google Translate modifies the text captured by the phone’s camera to a language the user understands, extending their knowledge of the physical space. The phone becomes your third eye. Another example is an AR navigation application that overlays directions and points of interest. The problem space is created when someone is in a location that they have never been and do not know how to navigate. The directions and other bits of information extend the user’s knowledge of the environment. A third example is an AR application that overlays repair instructions/media on industrial machine components. Again, by extending the knowledge of the user, the problem of a broken machine can be solved. The list goes on and on.

What about the future? What if AR glasses or contact lenses automatically translated everything it saw to the language of your choice and hid the original text from the real world, without error? That sounds kind of scary. I believe AR is most effective when you are aware of the physical world and the potential problem spaces it contains. Only then can AR be used to extend your knowledge of the environment, and the collective knowledge of your pure and virtual realities. By automatically translating the text around the user, there is a greater disconnect from the physical world, impairing the collective knowledge of the user. The user does not know how the text looked in its native language, and cannot map the relationship between the two sets of text (original and translated). Next time when faced with a similar set of text, the user has to rely on AR instead of the collective knowledge of how certain words translate. When we have to rely on AR and it does not help us grow our understanding of the world, it stops becoming effective. The only pro I see is convenience, which does not outweigh the cons. The user should have full control over their augmented reality.

For my last thought... I hope advertisements are not targeted towards AR platforms. Imagine a virtual bottle of Coca Cola appear on your desk, perfectly placed. It looks so real it makes your thirst quench. Ads will be unstoppable with consumers. Ads will control everything.