Own a Pair of AirPods? Listen to This — New Apple Tech Will Translate Languages During Conversations in Real Time

Say you want to have a conversation with a Spanish speaker, but you only speak English. If you both have a pair of Apple AirPods linked to iPhones, you could tap into a new feature set to arrive later this year that makes talking back and forth seamless: live translation.

According to a *Bloomberg* report from earlier this week, Apple is planning to bring live translation to its popular $99 to $250 earbuds through a new AirPods software update this year. The update will allow two in-person AirPods users to talk to each other in different languages, with translation happening on the spot.

It works like this: One person speaks in a language, such as Spanish. The listener's iPhone translates the speech into English and sends the translation in audio form through their AirPods. The listener can then respond in English to have the process go the other way.

Apple AirPods on display. Photo by Michael M. Santiago/Getty Images

Apple is lagging behind its competitors in bringing live translation to its earbuds. Google introduced the feature with its first pair of Pixel Buds released in 2017, later bringing it to the Pixel Buds Pro in 2022.

Related: Apple Is Hiring for 20,000 New Jobs in the Next Four Years. Here Are the Departments Expected to Have the Most Open Roles.

The Pixel feature works identically to the reported AirPods feature, but multilingual conversation can still be “awkward,” one user wrote on Reddit. Another person noted on the platform that live translation on Pixel is “not flawless and might sometimes generate inaccurate translations.”

Live translation has also reached wearables, like Meta’s Ray-Ban Meta smart glasses and Humane’s discontinued Ai Pin, though these devices struggle with slang, experience delays, and are limited to a few languages, according to reviews from

CNET, *The Verge*, and *Wired*.

The difference with Apple's AirPods is that many people already have a pair and simply need to download the software update when it comes out to activate live translation. On a global scale, Apple sold 75 million pairs of AirPods in 2023 and 82 million in 2022, according to Statista estimates.

AirPods are a booming part of Apple's business. *Bloomberg* found that Apple made over $18 billion in revenue from AirPods alone in 2023, more than the $10 billion in annual revenue for 2023 reported by Airbnb for its whole business. The outlet predicted that AirPods will outsell iPads before 2030, becoming Apple's third most profitable offering after iPhones and Macs.

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