

Lady in the cafe using Talkitt

TALKITT

2014 Nominet Trust 100 Winner

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2014

A DIFFERENT KIND OF FREEDOM OF SPEECH

By Voiceitt

Project URL: talkitt.com

Project Twitter: [@Voice_Itt](https://twitter.com/Voice_Itt)

- Health
- Social Exclusion
- Mobile

Talkitt translates the communications of people with speech impediments into comprehensible words and phrases.

1.5% of the developed world live with speech problems, which range from stutters through to the speech impediments caused by cerebral palsy, brain damage, autism or Parkinson's. Talkitt takes these utterances and uses a real-time 'intonation engine' to turn these words into intelligible, computerised output.

'We don't do speech recognition,' says the Israeli startup's CEO Danny Weissberg. 'We do pattern recognition.' Meaning, for example, that the patient and a caregiver can together build a dictionary of the sounds the patient makes, then link these to their meanings, and extrapolate subsequent words from these roots. Unlike speech-to-text it is set up to handle nonstandard speech, can make sense of the verbal shortcuts small children commonly use, as well as work with heavy accents and disabilities, including hearing disabilities.

The app, which has already won two development grants from Israel's Office of the Chief Scientist, is still in development phase, with a working demo, but the team aims to have an Android version ready soon, with an iOS app also in the pipeline. The app could be particularly valuable to those who have the motor speech disorder cerebral palsy: whose diagnosis, often at a very early age, can put children off using their voice forever because they find it so hard to control and coordinate the facial muscles in a way that allows speech.

Talkitt founders hope by 'feeling free to speak their mind' early these children will build confidence and resilience and not rely on intermediaries or boards, pictures or eyetracking techniques to communicate. Israel, although known as a 'start-up' nation, lags behind the USA and the UK in terms of philanthropic technology: making Talkitt a welcome innovator in this space.

Image 'Little J makes big strides with the help of private-duty nurse' courtesy of Christiana Care

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