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Google’s ChromeVox screen reader, which describes unlabeled images to those with impaired vision, now supports 16 languages. As a result, ChromeVox is more accessible to a larger, multicultural audience. This is an example of how artificial intelligence (AI) can be more mindful as well as localized.

More about the Announcement

Google said that an ChromeVox has expanded to include the following languages: Croatian, Czech, Dutch, Finnish, Indonesian, Norwegian, Portuguese, Russian, Swedish, and Turkish. These 10 languages build upon functionality in English, French, German, Hindi, Italian, and Spanish.

Screen readers such as ChromeVox are software programs that allow blind or visually impaired users to read the text that is displayed on the computer screen with a speech synthesizer or braille display. Labeling images online is essential to make them accessible to the visual impaired through

screen readers. As Google noted, screen readers rely on content creators and developers who manually label images in order to make them accessible through spoken feedback or braille. But, billions of web images remain unlabeled, which makes them inaccessible for these users.

To help overcome this problem, Google's Chrome Accessibility and Google Research teams developed a feature that automatically describes unlabeled images using AI. The featured was launched in 2019 to support ChromeVox. According to Google, a single machine learning model generates descriptions in each of the supported languages. This enables a more equitable user experience across languages because generated image descriptions in any two languages can often be regarded as translations that respect the image details.

And developing the program in more languages makes it more applicable to populations around the world.

Why the News Matters

The language translation feature is an example of mindful AI, that is human-centered, responsible, and trustworthy. Being human centered and responsible means that a business keeps the needs of people at the forefront of every decision from the inception to completion of development a product that uses AI. To be human centered, an AI product needs to solve real problems people encounter every day, be user friendly, and not feel impersonal. Responsible AI ensures that AI systems are free of biases and that they are grounded in ethics. It is about being mindful of how, why, and where data is created, how it is synthesized by AI systems, and how it is used in decision making. AI is trustworthy when people are comfortable using it.

Trust is not necessarily a question of whether one trusts technology to do good, but whether one trusts technology to do its job reliably. This is why businesses are paying more attention to capabilities such as AI localization, defined as training AI-based products and services to adapt to local cultures and languages. For instance, a voice-based product, e-commerce site, or streaming service must understand the differences between Canadian French and French; or that in China, red is considered to be an attractive color because it symbolizes good luck. AI-based products and services don't know these things unless people train them using fair, unbiased, and locally relevant data. Similarly, Google's AI tool for the visually impaired needs to properly support multiple languages correctly to ensure uptake. Language in and of itself does not localize an AI product, but it is an important part.

What Businesses Should Do

It's essential that more businesses embrace mindful AI to make AI more useful and pervasive. As part of that, it is important that organizations learn how to localize content correctly to ensure trust. For instance, a global team of people with intimate knowledge of local cultures and languages needs to be involved in training AI models with the right data for each culture and each type of user. Our blog post "AI Localization: What It Is and How to Do It Right" contains more detail. The post was based on a white paper published recently by Centific and Nimdzi to identify the critical success factors for global organizations to create lovable experiences in every market.

To learn more about mindful AI and how Centific helps businesses create human-centered AI products and experiences, please read our post "Why Artificial Intelligence Must Be Mindful to Innovate." Contact us to get started.

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