Google demonstrates phone that translates text

(AP) -- Stumped by foreign languages when you're traveling? Google Inc. is working on software that translates text captured by a phone camera.

At a demonstration Tuesday at Mobile World Congress, a cell phone trade show in Barcelona, an engineer shot a picture of a German dinner menu with a phone running Google Inc.'s Android software. An application on the phone sent the shot to Google's servers, which sent a translation back to the phone.

It translated "Fruhlingssalat mit Wildkrautern" as "Spring salad with wild herbs."

There was no word on when the software would be available.

Software that translates text from pictures is already available for some phones, but generally does the processing on the phone. By sending the image to its servers for processing, Google can apply a lot more computing power, for faster, more accurate results. The phone still won't order for you, though - you'll have to point at the menu.

The demonstration was part of Google CEO Eric Schmidt's keynote speech at the trade show, the largest for the wireless industry. He said phone applications that take advantage of "cloud computing" - servers accessible through the wireless network - will bring powerful changes to the industry.

Schmidt's speech also featured a demonstration of videos and a game running on an Android phone using Flash, a format that's ubiquitous on Web pages intended for PCs, but hasn't worked on many phones, including the iPhone. Support for Flash in Android and a few other smart phone operating systems is expected later this year.

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