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## **Lingo Voyager 4**

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The joy of traveling to foreign countries is seeing new things that would expand our horizons and understanding of humanity. The challenge, of course, is the language. And instead of cramming all those common phrases in your head or bringing a phrase book that can't help you with pronunciation, why not bring along Lingo's Voyager 4? Details available at : <http://lingotranslators.com/store/customer/product.php?productid=36&cat=0&page=1>.

I have seen these gadgets at the airport stores in the past but have not really taken a closer look because I'm always in a rush to catch my flight. But now that I've slowed down a bit to stay stationary for a while, I've finally gotten a chance to try one out. The Voyager 4 is a 14 language talking translator which covers English, Spanish, French, Italian, German, Dutch, Portuguese, Russian, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Hebrew, Arabic and Greek. And not only that, it does it both ways so if you should choose your default language to be a non-English one (by default it is English), you can proceed to find phrases and translate to the other 13 languages.

Powered by the included 2 AAA batteries, this palm-sized device comes with a carrying case and earphones. I suppose the earphones are so you can listen to the translated words or phrases privately and impress the person you're talking with. Searching for words is a matter of typing it in and selecting a match of the listed words that is based on the letters you've entered so far. Phrases are categorized conveniently according to Communication, Accommodation, Meals, Sightseeing, etc. Under each category are sub-categories which make it convenient to find a phrase you need.

I tried this out with my Chinese, Japanese and Korean friends and I also checked Spanish and French since I have some basic knowledge of those languages. Overall, the spoken words and phrases are pretty good (as good as synthesized voice can possibly do) and understandable. And it shows the words in the two languages you are working with (default and translation) including the accents. For the languages like Chinese that don't use English alphabets, Voyager 4 provides both the native characters and Romanized letters with accents. So, if you happen to meet a person who speaks a dialect other than Mandarin in China, you're still able to communicate through the written words.

One thing that I did notice is that the translated phrases are more formal such that my friends teased I'd certainly give away my foreigner status even if I used the earphones to hide the fact I was being coached by the Voyager 4. I guess it's better to be formal than too informal.

The Voyager 4 not only does translations, it also converts currencies (up to 8), measurements (metric and English units); local time and world time; clothes (m:14-17.5, f:8-20) and shoe sizes (m:6.5-10, f:5.5-8). It also has an alarm clock, a calendar, a 12-digit calculator and an Oxford dictionary. And of course 8 games to keep you entertained of which my favorites are Sudoku and Mines. The last features are a databank to store contact info and a voice/memo recorder. The databank is a bit difficult to search through because it doesn't list out the entries stored. I put in two entries that started with a "T" and when I clicked Find, it only found the first T entry. So, you may need to know what you put in to find it again.

Overall, I'd say this is a pretty good traveling companion especially if you don't know the language at your destination. It claims to have tens of thousands of words and phrases. I'm sure these would cover your travel needs if not teach you a new language in the process. I've found it for \$199.95 online but if you're ever in a hurry at the airport and need one, I'm sure the airport store would have one handy for you. Voyage on with Lingo.