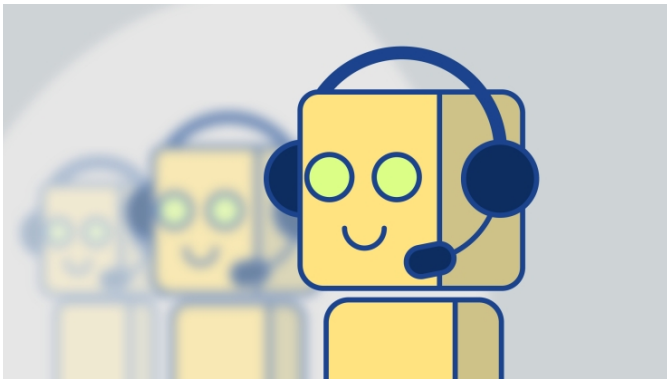


Microsoft Intros Azure Bot Service

Written by Frederick Douglas
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Developers wanting to build enterprise AI chatbots get a pair of cloud-based solutions from Microsoft-- the Azure Bot Service and Language Understanding (LUIS) as part of the Cognitive Service AI suite.



First released in preview form back in November 2016, Azure Bot Service is designed to enable the creation of "conversational interfaces on multiple channels." It allows developers to target a number of Microsoft and 3rd party apps and services, including Cortana, Skype, Slack and Facebook Messenger, without need to adapt code for each.

The official release includes Premium Channels, allowing customers to communicate directly with the website or app users and access to open-source software for custom chatbots. The service is available in 9 Azure regions, including Ireland, Hong Kong and Sao Paulo, Brazil.

Meanwhile LUIS is a means for developers to build bots able to accept natural language input and decipher what a user means. It can be used by developers with little experience in data science to create custom models tailored for specific verticals-- in other words custom chatbots able to handle organisation workflows and business objectives.

LUIS is available in 12 Azure regions, and features a set of 500 intents (a task or action a user wishes to complete when uttering a command) and 100 entities (the information extracted from an intent used to complete a task) for the creation of more conversational experiences in apps.

Go [Announcing the General Availability of Azure Bot Service and LUIS](#)