COVID-19 and Information Accessibility:
The Activities of UNI, a Non-Profit Organisation

Masayuki Yasuda
Visiting Researcher, Institute of Ars Vivendi
Ritsumeikan University
27th Feb 2021
1. About “UNI”

- A non-profit organisation supporting the academic and daily life of disabled students
- Mission: To help disabled students "do what they want to do" and "go where they want to go"
- Location: Kyoto, Japan
- Founder: Ken Sato (muscular dystrophy)
- Staff: Four office staff and about twenty part-time assistants
1. About “UNI”
Background of Establishment

• 2004: Ken Sato (our founder) entered Ritsumeikan University

• => "Support Net", a student group working to support disabled students, was established

• 2006: "Disability Resource Center", an office in charge of supporting disabled students in their classes, was established at the university

• => "Support Net" focused on supporting disabled students outside of their classes

• 2008: Sato and his allies, including some members of "Support Net", established "Support Ken", an organisation for the dispatching of personal assistants to homes of disabled users under a public social welfare scheme

• 2011: "Support Ken" was reorganized into "UNI" (a specified nonprofit corporation)
1. About “UNI”
Main Activities

- Supporting disabled students: Information accessibility, dispatching of personal assistants, consultation and training for creating an inclusive environment at universities, checking the accessibility of university facilities, etc.
- Dispatching and training personal assistants to support the lives of disabled students and disabled people in the local community
- Supporting disabled students visiting Kyoto on school excursions
- Other activities: Acceptance of internships, hosting international exchange events, etc.
2. Our Captioning (1) Overview of Captioning

- Objective: To enable the participation of people with hearing impairments in classes, events, etc.

- Method: Multiple captioners work together to convert aural information (lectures, questions and answers, start and end chimes, etc.) into text using a computer

- Result: Conversion of spoken language into written language

An example of conversion

**Spoken language**
- “This shows …”

**Conversion by captioning**
- What is ‘This’?
- Who is speaking?

**Written language**
- “Yasuda: The left table shows …”
2. Our Captioning (2)

Main Targets of Our Captioning

• Classes and events at universities across Japan
• Classes and events at high schools in Kyoto Prefecture
• Events related to the welfare of disabled people in various regions
• Internal events at companies where employees with hearing impairments work, etc.
2. Our Captioning (3)
Method 1: On-site Captioning

- Captioners go to the site (classroom, event venue, etc.)
- Several PCs for captioners and devices for users (laptop PCs, tablets, smartphones, etc.) are set up at the site and connected via LAN.
- Multiple captioners use a dedicated application to type aural information as text for captioning
- Users can view captions on their devices
2. Our Captioning (4)
Method 2: Remote Captioning

- Users and captioners are connected to a dedicated web-based system
- A user's microphone collects audio and sends it to the captioners
- Multiple captioners type aural information as text for captioning
- Users can view captions on the website
## 2. Our Captioning Comparison: On-site & Remote

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Points of comparison</th>
<th>On-site captioning</th>
<th>Remote captioning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Captioning location</td>
<td>Limited (can be difficult especially in rural areas)</td>
<td>Not limited (anywhere with internet access)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seats, desks and power sockets for captioners on-site</td>
<td>Necessary</td>
<td>Not necessary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet connection</td>
<td>Not necessary</td>
<td>Necessary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Captioners' workplace</td>
<td>On-site</td>
<td>Anywhere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel time for captioners</td>
<td>Necessary</td>
<td>Not necessary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation fees for captioners</td>
<td>Necessary</td>
<td>Not necessary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Captioners' detailed understanding of speaker's situation</td>
<td>Possible</td>
<td>Sometimes difficult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Captioning of a class with writing on the board, pointing, etc.</td>
<td>Possible</td>
<td>Sometimes difficult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Captioning of discussions</td>
<td>Possible</td>
<td>Sometimes difficult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Captioning of science, math, foreign language, and practical classes</td>
<td>Possible (with assistance by handwriting, pointing, etc.)</td>
<td>Sometimes difficult</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. Our Captioning During the COVID-19 Epidemic

(1) March to mid-April 2020

- Studies of methods for captioning online classes / events
  => Published on our website
- Hosting online events using Zoom and verifying these findings in practice

Tips for remote captioning published on our website
3. Our Captioning During the COVID-19 Epidemic

(2) Late April 2020 ~ Onward

- Implementation of captioning for online classes and events: many requests from all over Japan
- Provision of technical support for remote captioning in classes and events
- Online training for new captioners
4. Results and Issues

(1) Results

1) Any location is possible
   - Can be implemented in places where human resources are often in short supply such as rural areas
   - Dispatching of skilled captioners to the right place at the right time

2) Hurdles to using online services can be lowered
4. Results and Issues

(2) Challenges

1) Accessibility depends on the ability to use ICT
2) Only a few organisations are capable of captioning online events
3) Online approach is a given
   • Remote captioning is just one option
=> Information accessibility based on users' needs
UNI
(Specified Nonprofit Corporation)

60-10 Tojiin Nishi-machi, Kita-ku, Kyoto-shi, Kyoto, 603-8354, Japan
Email: info@unikyoto.com
URL: https://www.unikyoto.com/

* The images and case studies used in this presentation have been approved for use and publication by the parties concerned and have been modified to protect personal information.