Technical Aspects of Information Accessibility During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Initiatives at the Institute of Ars Vivendi

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Purpose of this Report

・To report on activities of the Institute of Ars Vivendi's Online Office in academic years 2020 and 2021.

・To discuss increasingly prevalent video conferencing systems with a focus on the technical aspects of information accessibility and improvements that can be made in the future.

What is the Institute of Ars Vivendi Online Office?

・Created to facilitate the online streaming of Saturday Seminar replacement program “With Corona/After Corona” on July 5th, 2020, and the East Asia Disability Studies Forum on July 18th, 2020.

Members: Shōji Hashiguchi, Tomohiro Yasuda, and Ryōhei Nakai.

Academic Year 2020

■East Asia Disability Studies Forum 2020 (July 18th, 2020)

・Streaming of video from the forum conducted using Skype in real time using Zoom.

■17th Japan Society for Disability Studies General Meeting Symposium (September 19th, 2020).

・Utilizing a Zoom webinar.

■East Asia Disability Studies Forum / Special Online Forum (February 27th, 2021)

・Streaming of video from the forum conducted using Webex in real time using Zoom.

Academic Year 2021

■18th Japan Society for Disability Studies General Meeting Symposium (September 25th, 2021).

・Utilizing a Zoom webinar.

■East Asia Disability Studies Forum 2022 (February 26th, 2022).

・Utilizing a ZOOM Events.

Tomohiro
Yasuda

Structure of this Report

- 17th Japan Society for Disability Studies General Meeting/2020 Online Symposium.

  ——Inadequate understanding of information accessibility and discrepancies from the aims of the plan.

- 18th Japan Society for Disability Studies General Meeting/2021 Online Symposium.

  ——Initiatives based on a review of the 17th general meeting.

- Issues to be addressed going forward.

17th Japan Society for Disability Studies General Meeting/2020 Online Symposium ①

■Supporting information accessibility

・Sign Language interpretation (two interpreters) and text interpretation (multiple interpreters/captiOnline).

■Barriers to accessing information that arose in practice

・Participants forgot to state their name before speaking during discussions.

・Maintaining the size of the sign language interpretation screen and fixing its position.

・Discrepancies between information accessibility and the decisions of organizers seeking to set up a venue where it is easy for presenters to speak.

17th Japan Society for Disability Studies General Meeting/2020 Online Symposium ②

■Importance of screen priority assumptions, timekeepers, and moderators

・Making screen changes according to the situation.

・Considering the burden on participants in the case of long events.

・Having presenters state their name when they forget to do so.

18th Japan Society for Disability Studies General Meeting/2021 Online Symposium ①

■Thorough preparations (meetings and rehearsals).

・Insisting that speakers state their name before talking

⇒Having the moderator make an announcement.

・Cooperation with multiple participants (or accounts) is needed to become proficient in onscreen settings and usage methods.

⇒On the basis of cooperation with persons with visual or hearing impairments, find the factors that create barriers to access to information.

18th Japan Society for Disability Studies General Meeting/2021 Online Symposium ②

■The importance of a coordinating role at the center of operations and the assigning of roles

・Timekeeper and coordinating roles, recording and proxy operator roles, fixing of operational guidance slides and video projection.

・Distinguishing the use of a dedicated mail address for the general meeting, chat field, and Q&A function.

・The person at the center of operations coordinated information sharing and requests to collaborators.

18th Japan Society for Disability Studies General Meeting/2021 Online Symposium ③

■User interface perspective

・Text interpretation (captiOnline and text interpretation projection on Zoom screens) and sign language interpretation (two interpreters).

・Fixing the order of video streams

⇒Fixing sign language interpretation and text interpretation screens.

⇒Keeping the spotlight on the two sign language interpreters, and having the interpreters themselves toggle their video and mic on and off when taking over from each other.

18th Japan Society for Disability Studies General Meeting/2021 Online Symposium ③

⇒Next, keeping the video for text interpretation on (※ without spotlighting it).

⇒Having presenters turn their video and mic on and off when they begin and finish speaking, making sure multiple participants are not shown at the same time.

⇒The order of video streams is ① sign language interpretation (two interpreters) ② text interpretation ③ presenter ④ (depending on the situation) moderator.

⇒Method of use differs between webinar and meeting functions (differences in settings and benefits of each).

Ryōhei Nakai

Structure of this Report

- Information accessibility at the 2020 and 2021 East Asia Disability Studies Forums

  ——What was done and what remains to be addressed.

- Reliably reducing obstacles in these situations and increasing the situations in which obstacles are reduced.

  ——Technology, cost, and reliability.

- Organization and proposals of this report

  ——Situational flexibility and specialization.

Information accessibility at the 2020 and 2021 East Asia Disability Studies Forums – What was done and what remains to be addressed ①

- July 2020: “Persons with Disabilities and the COVID-19 Pandemic in East Asia”

・Sign language interpretation, text interpretation, and Japanese language spoken interpretation (all intended for Japanese viewers/listeners).

→Institute staff ran the operation, but there were major restrictions on movement and gathering caused by the pandemic, and the burdens were so great it was determined that further such operations would be difficult under the same circumstances.

Information accessibility at the 2020 and 2021 East Asia Disability Studies Forums – What was done and what remains to be addressed ②

- February 2021: “East Asian Persons with Disabilities and the COVID-19 Pandemic”

・Spoken interpretation for viewers and listeners from participating nations, sign language and text interpretation for viewers and listeners in Japan.

→The budget was increased and the operational system was outsourced, but issues with spoken interpretation occurred and the problems were not resolved.

Information accessibility at the 2020 and 2021 East Asia Disability Studies Forums – What was done and what remains to be addressed ③

- February 2022: “Persons with Disabilities Living Independently in Their Local Communities”

・Spoken interpretation for viewers and listeners from participating nations, sign language and text interpretation for viewers and listeners in Japan.

→In addition to expanding the budget and outsourcing operations, institute staff also took part in running things on site.

The event was held without any major issues.

Reliably Reducing Obstacles in these Situations and Increasing the Situations in which Obstacles Are Reduced – Technology, Cost, and Reliability ①

- When interpretation and systems were outsourced (February 2021, February 2022)
  - ・Reliability increased, but so did cost →Situations in which this approach can be taken are limited.

- When only interpretation was outsourced (July 2020)
  - ・Reliability may decrease, but cost is greatly reduced → Situations in which this approach is possible increase.

How should we think about cases like this in which if digital technology that has not yet been widely adopted is used and experts are employed the cost is high, but there is also significant room for management by non-experts (although reliability may decrease)?

Reliably Reducing Obstacles in these Situations and Increasing the Situations in which Obstacles Are Reduced – Technology, Cost, and Reliability ②

●Undertakings by non-experts.

・Mitigation of barriers incorporating failures can function as a pretext for implementers.

・If undertakings by non-experts succeed, mitigation of barriers can be conducted at a lower cost (which means the area of barrier mitigation can expand).

Organization and Proposals ①
Situational Flexibility and Specialization

- Information accessibility failures at the February 2021 forum.
  - The forum continued while voice audio issues persisted.

    →The fact that the forum was not stopped until the problem could be resolved will inevitably be seen as a lack of regard for persons requiring information.

Organization and Proposals ②
Situational Flexibility and Specialization

- What kinds of factors were present (from the point of view of situational flexibility and specialization)?

・An international forum is a situation with a high degree of specialization→Changing plans is difficult

"Inflexibility of the situation itself"

・Outsourcing the system to experts

→Difficulty in sharing information between service providers and recipients

"Inflexibility of experts conducting barrier mitigation"

Whether or not barrier mitigation is possible is affected by the framework and flexibility of the situation.

Organization and Proposals ③
Situational Flexibility and Specialization

●Proposal for future action

・We need to think about things like “flexible situations” and “specialization compatible with flexibility” from the perspective of barrier mitigation. To this end, organizations such as universities with a social duty of barrier mitigation must more initiatively engage in research and efforts concerning barrier mitigation using information devices and online environments.

This concludes our report.
Thank you for your attention.