



KONICA MINOLTA

News Release

Konica Minolta Launches KOTOBAL Multilingual Translation System in Japan

With Dictionary of Civil Service Terms to Accelerate Introduction to Government Offices

Tokyo (July 16, 2020) – Konica Minolta, Inc. (Konica Minolta) is pleased to announce that the company has launched KOTOBAL in Japan, a tablet-based multilingual translation system that assists communication with foreign nationals. The KOTOBAL service was introduced in October 2019 as a demonstration experiment for financial institutions, pharmacies and government offices. With the recent increase in foreign nationals living in Japan, personnel dealing with visitors are facing heavier workloads, especially at government offices. Konica Minolta has therefore launched a new KOTOBAL system that includes a dictionary of civil service terms to encourage such personnel at government offices to use the system.



Features

The KOTOBAL system has the following features.

High-accuracy Machine Translation

With the increasing foreign population in Japan, more foreign nationals visit government offices with various needs. This, coupled with the Covid-19 pandemic, places an excessive workload on personnel at government offices. In response, Konica Minolta has developed a dictionary of civil service terms and incorporated it in the KOTOBAL system, while using the optimal speech translation engine for each language to enable conversations involving specialized civil service terms to be machine-translated more accurately.

Secure, Reliable Handling of Personal Information

Government offices handle personal information. Therefore, if they are to use public cloud services, strict rules on the security and protection of such information, as well as a reliable system for handling it, must be in place. However, many local governments struggle to define security requirements and establish such a system. Backed by a wealth of know-how, Konica Minolta is helping government offices overcome these difficulties by building a reliable system.

Konica Minolta is a member of the “Investigative Commission on Guidelines for Use of Multilingual Machine Translation Systems at Government Agencies”^{*1} and is also

undertaking a research project of the Ministry of Public Management, Home Affairs, Posts and Telecommunications for “Establishing Guidelines for Introduction of Multilingual Machine Translation Systems to Local Public Organizations.” Konica Minolta not only offers the translation system but also assists government agencies to use cloud services and provide public services in a reliable manner.

Remote Interpretation

In cases where complicated explanations are required which cannot be properly machine-translated, then a remote interpretation service by human experts can be used. The cost can be reduced by using machine translation for routine conversations, combined with remote interpretation by humans when necessary.

The KOTOBAL system is also equipped with a Japanese speech recognition function, which assists communication with persons with disabilities and elderly people with impaired hearing. By launching the KOTOBAL system, Konica Minolta hopes to remove communication barriers for people in need of care as well as foreign nationals across all local government sections, thus contributing to a society where all people can live in comfort.

The KOTOBAL System to Date

Prior to its commercial launch, the KOTOBAL system has been installed and used in government agencies in all 47 prefectures of Japan, as well as the Nakano ward office and Meguro ward office in Tokyo and the Kameyama municipal office in Mie Prefecture, under the demonstration experiment that began in October 2019.



KOTOBAL assisting communication with a foreign visitor at the Meguro ward office

High-quality Remote Interpretation

Konica Minolta provides a remote interpretation service as part of the KOTOBAL system in cooperation with Language One Corporation (Language One), a Tokyo-based company that has a proven track record of offering interpretation services through its multilingual call center. Language One has been offering a one-stop multilingual support service*2 to ensure smooth communications between personnel at government offices and foreign nationals, and thus is capable of providing professional remote interpretation for government offices as part of the KOTOBAL system.

*1: This Commission discussed the “Technical requirements to be referred to in introducing multilingual machine translation systems to government agencies,” which were announced in March 2020 in the “Liaison Conference of Relevant Ministries and Agencies regarding Removal of Language Barriers” held

by the Ministry of Public Management, Home Affairs, Posts and Telecommunications. The Commission members are companies providing machine translation systems and security audit agencies.

*2: Japanese website for information on Language One Corporation's "one-stop multilingual support service" to assist desk personnel at local government offices and local international exchange associations in dealing with foreign nationals:

<https://www.languageone.qac.jp/20190612news/>

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