**News Release**

Konica Minolta Develops a Multilingual Interpretation Service for Financial Institutions and Government Offices in Japan

Assisting Services that Require Professional Knowledge through Hybrid Interpretation by Artificial Intelligence and Human Interpreters

Tokyo (October 8, 2019) – Konica Minolta, Inc. (Konica Minolta) is pleased to announce that its Business Innovation Center (BIC) Japan, which develops new businesses that meet the needs of respective regions and markets, has developed "KOTOBAL", a multilingual interpretation service that assists communication between front desk personnel at financial institutions or government offices and foreign nationals who live in Japan. BIC Japan will officially launch the service by the end of this year. The service aims to facilitate communication in situations where technical terms are often used by combining the results of machine interpretation displayed on a tablet screen with video interpretation by an operator. KOTOBAL has been developed so that it can be used at the front desk of financial institutions, government offices, real estate agencies, and dispensing pharmacies by applying the operational know-how and technologies of "MELON", a multilingual communication assistance service for medical institutions that started in November 2016 in Japan.
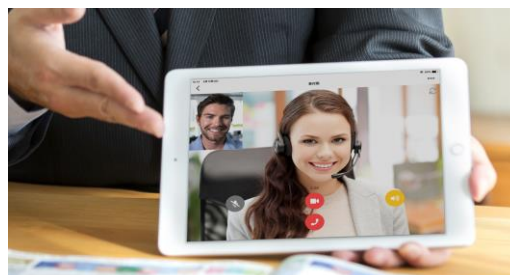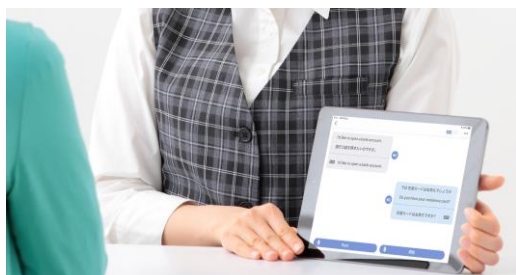
Background

According to the statistics of the Ministry of Justice, the number of foreign nationals living in Japan exceeded 2.73 million at the end of 2018, a record high. The number is expected to increase by 340,000 in the next five years due to the revision of the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act in April 2019. Accordingly, the number of foreign nationals visiting financial institutions and government offices is expected to increase.

Against this backdrop, any communication difficulties due to language barriers will increase the workload of front desk personnel such as more time required to follow procedures. Meanwhile, financial institutions are obliged to monitor and investigate

suspicious transactions to prevent money laundering. Language barriers hinder in-depth verification. A system for accepting foreign nationals in various fields needs to be built to achieve a safe and secure society in harmony with foreign nationals.

Value Offered by KOTOBAL

KOTOBAL enables quick and accurate communication between individuals who speak different languages through artificial intelligence (AI)-based machine interpretation and video interpretation by an operator. It can handle 13 languages[*1] including those required under the "Comprehensive Measures for the Acceptance and Inclusion of Foreign Human Resources" formulated by the Ministry of Justice. In addition to helping increase the efficiency of front desk services at financial institutions and government offices that require interpretation with professional knowledge, KOTOBAL also eases the concerns of foreign residents and tourists who visit to follow procedures. Konica Minolta aims to achieve a society where everyone can live with peace of mind without language barriers by minimizing communication difficulties.

Features

KOTOBAL's machine interpretation uses the speech translation engine developed by the National Institute of Information and Communications Technology (NICT).[*2] NICT's speech translation engine was developed based on R&D in Japan and produces high-quality translations. A user-friendly, quick-response application has also been developed by utilizing Konica Minolta's know-how accumulated through providing services for medical institutions.

The chat screen displayed on tablet devices has a function to save conversation logs, which can be checked afterwards to help prevent troubles. When in-depth communication is required, the user can talk with an interpretation operator available 24/7[*3] through the monitor. In combination with the chat function, this feature ensures mutual communication based on correct information.
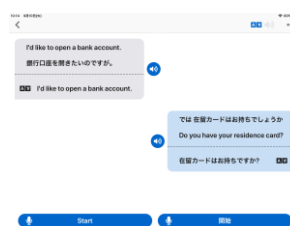
Machine interpretation screen
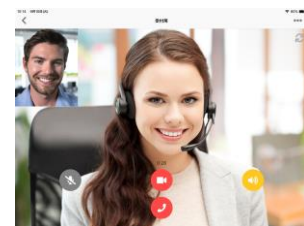
Video interpretation screen

Future Deployment

KOTOBAL is an interpretation solution suitable for various businesses. It was initially developed for the front desks of financial institutions and government offices, and has been used by Japan Post Co., Ltd. and major financial institutions in the early introduction program, which aims to identify additional needs and improvements through actual usage. The service will be officially launched by the end of this year. A dictionary function, which registers unique technical terms in respective industries, will also be implemented, which will improve the interpretation accuracy.

Exhibitions

Konica Minolta will exhibit KOTOBAL at the following exhibitions in Japan:
1. CEATEC 2019*4 (October 15 to 18) (at Makuhari Messe)
2. Tourism EXPO Japan 2019 (October 24 and 25) (at Intex Osaka)

*1 English, Chinese (simplified, traditional), Korean, Portuguese, and Spanish are available as the standard languages. Vietnamese, Thai, Russian, Tagalog, Nepali, Indonesian, Hindi, and French are available as optional languages.

*2 NICT's speech translation engine covers part of the available languages.

*3 The service hours vary depending on the plan and language used.

*4 A seminar will be held jointly with the Toranomon Chuo Law Firm on October 18.

"Need for Financial Institutions to Offer Multilingual Services to Customers — In Response to the Revision of the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act and the Developments at Government Offices"

For More Information

Business Innovation Center   https://bic.konicaminolta.com/

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