

Research examines how technology can break down barriers

June 17 2013

A small, pilot study is examining how mobile technology might support deaf and hard-of-hearing college students when an interpreter can't physically be present at the time the services are requested. The University of Cincinnati research will be presented on June 19, at the Critical Link 7 International Conference in Toronto. The conference is themed, "Global Awakening: Leading Practices in Interpreting."

The first phase of the UC research project involved a college student taking a course in a large, auditorium-style classroom. The student used an [iPad](#) to gain the services of an interpreter – also using an iPad – who was off site (but nearby initially, in case of any disruption). In the second half of the pilot study, the technology was tested as the student took part in a cooperative education experience off campus and out of state.

The interpreter was able to listen through the iPad in order to interpret the conversations heard from where the student was located. The student used the iPad to receive the lectures, conversations, meetings, etc., from the signed language interpreter.

Katherine Vance, the interpreter coordinator with UC's Disability Services Office, says she provided the remote interpreting services using Apple's [FaceTime](#) video calling technology. "This could also be considered for possible use by colleges in remote areas that lack a network of [interpreters](#) to hire from," adds Vance.

"We're examining how technology can be used when an interpreter is

available, but physically can't be where the student needs them and at the moment they need them," explains Suzanne Ehrlich, the study's principal investigator and assistant professor and director of the UC Signed Language Interpreting Program.

Findings for the Toronto presentation, "Innovative Interpreting: iPad Technology as a Bridge to Services," will be reported by Ehrlich and Vance. Greg Crase, IT coordinator for Disability Services, also was a researcher on the project.

The student's co-op employer gave the test project a positive review, say the researchers. The employer reported that while using the iPad to communicate with colleagues, the student was perceived to have been more engaged in meetings where the iPad was used for interpreting services.

Challenges, say the researchers, included running into connectivity issues that can result with inconsistencies in using Wi-Fi technology. However, the researchers also emphasize that those challenges did not detract from the student's co-op experience.

The researchers say they plan to expand the project beyond the first phase of the [pilot study](#) to test the technology on additional students, as well as examine which [technology](#) is best, user perception and frequency/type of use for on-demand services.

Other services such as Communication Access Real-Time Translation (CART), C-Print, note-taking and text messaging have opened information to sign language users, in addition to the more recent, fee-for-service Video Remote Interpreting (VRI) and Video Relay Services (VRS) which uses video conferencing equipment.

Ehrlich says the increasing need for interpreters and professionalism in

the field has resulted in the development of a bachelor's degree at UC in signed language interpreting, including a distance learning program.

She says that more than 1,000 students are involved in taking American Sign Language (ASL) classes at UC.

Provided by University of Cincinnati

Citation: Research examines how technology can break down barriers (2013, June 17) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2013-06-technology-barriers.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.