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Mobile Total Conversation – Communication for All, Everywhere

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Abstract. This paper describes a demonstration of an open source Total Conversation client for the Android mobile phone platform. It also explains the rationale for Total Conversation and gives a brief overview of the open standards on which Total Conversation is based.

Keywords: Total Conversation, mobile, Deaf, Sign language, Video conference, Android, disabilities

1 Introduction

Mobile phones have been a natural part of our life for, at least, the last 15 years. Mobile phones allow everyone the convenience to communicate with anyone anywhere, well not quite everyone after all. For those whose native language is a sign language this has not been the case. These individuals have been confined to using SMS or in some cases 3G video telephony. Not having equal access to telephony is clearly in violation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities [1], still the convention has been ratified by 99 countries [2]. This demonstration intends to showcase how mobile Total Conversation enables equal access to mobile telephony.

2 Total Conversation

The purpose of Total Conversation is to enable communication for all. Mobile phones and modern telecommunication networks have advanced to the point where it is now possible to deploy Total Conversation on most high end phones. The simultaneous use of audio, video and real-time text allows all users to find a suitable method for communication.

Video can be used for sign language or lip-reading for those who are deaf, hard of hearing, deaf-blind or late deafened.

Audio can be used for voice conversation according to the user's capabilities.

Real-time text can be used by everyone to convey information that is tedious to convey in other media. It can also be used to support other media in the call for

example; through a captioned telephony service or in some cases to type a word instead of speaking it for someone with a speech impairment. For deaf blind users it could be used to receive text while the response may be sent in sign language.

Total Conversation is based on open standards and is defined in [3]. As in most open IP telephony systems today the Session Initiation Protocol (SIP) [4] and RTP [5] is used. H.263 [6] and H.264 [7] should be supported for video. H.263 is widely implemented and the newer H.264 offers better video quality with less bandwidth. G.711 [8] is recommended for audio since it is widely supported and offers good quality. Real-time text should be implemented by T.140 [9]. It provides character by character transmission, giving the user a sense of a real conversation.

For good communication in sign language the video resolution should not be below QCIF (176×144) and 20 frames per second (fps) is recommended [10].

3 Demonstration Description

The demonstration will showcase the benefits of Total Conversation being added to the open source mobile Total Conversation client linphone [11] running on Android mobile phones. Calls to and from this client to other proprietary and open source clients Total Conversation will demonstrate the importance of open standards for interoperability.

During the demonstration lessons learned will be presented, for example regarding CPU and network requirements.

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