CIICA CONVERSATION: YOUNG ADULTS: Increasing Accessibility in Education

3 March 2026   Facilitators: Qais Khan – CIICA/UK; Melis Durmaz Yildris, Turkey, Ava Bullis, USA

Observers: Sue Archbold, CIICA/UK; Robert Mandara, CI user, Finland

In addition to this summary, a video is available from [Young People on Accessibility in Education – CIICA](#)

Introduction:

CI users shared their thoughts on Increasing Accessibility in Education for this CONVERSATION for young adults with cochlear implants on World Hearing Day 2026. There were 22 attendees, including approximately 17 CI users from 16 countries: Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Denmark, Finland, India, Latvia, Libya, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sri Lanka, Turkey, UK, USA, Vietnam. Attendees also included audiologists, teachers of the deaf, university lecturers, researchers.

Live captioning was provided, with Spanish and Turkish available.

Melis welcomed everyone and provided Housekeeping advice re captioning and introduced Qais and Ava, encouraging attendees to introduce themselves in the chat room. This summary is taken from the transcript and the chat room which was very interactive.

The conversation focussed on experiences in higher education and the transition to higher education

Choosing which university or college: looking at the accommodations available?

Ava explained that she was bilateral CI user from USA, and currently in second year of university. She shared that at high school she didn't really use the resources available because

I was very stubborn and some of you might relate to that. I didn't really want to use my resources, just because I was confident that I could do it myself. That I didn't need them. But once I realised how important it was for me to be on a level playing field with my peers, I started embracing how important they were.

So, what that means is when I went into college I had to make a decision of where I wanted to go based on how well they provided the accommodations I needed.

Ava decided to ask universities what was available, having decided what she preferred:

Something that was really important to me was I wanted captioning in my classes and I wasn't sure how that was going to look being in a giant lecture hall. There was a lot of noises, very echoey. So, after talking with disability services, I really fought for closed captioning to be a resource I needed.

And then I also wanted the option to have a notetaker and priority seating in the classroom. So kind with all of those resources in place I was able to be a successful student in the classroom.

Gargi had also explored which university to go to:

A year in advance, before going to university, I attended all of the open days at the university or contacted the university, requested for a virtual meeting, and asked what kind of support for me. I also spoke to disabled supporting, spoke to the course leaders, the modules, I mean the professor, to ask them the same question to figure out whether they are aware of support... and you can get an idea of the course you are going to study which is where you will need supporting because you are speaking to your cohort, your peers and you are directly speaking to tutors, professors. So, if I get a sense that they are aware, that will be my top university choice. That is how I end up being at my university because when they saw in their system that I am deaf, they immediately contacted me and asked for a meeting. With all other universities I had to contact them. This is what makes this university so impressive and it makes you feel important. It makes you feel part of the university community. You don't really feel left out. You don't really have to try hard all the time. And I wish that would change for every other university. Even schools, if possible.

Ava argued for flexibility in resources and choice, as different people prefer different things, and that the most important thing was:

to know what the resources are. And how to use them.

What resources are the most helpful?

She invited comments on what resources others had found helpful in education: Gargi (in final university year) responded with a variety of resources she used:

*I think the top one is **definitely notetaker**. At the start I didn't utilise notetaker fully. Later I tried having notetaker for everything, whether that's in workshop, seminar, tutorial session, whether in a one to one meeting with a supervisor or anywhere. I never thought I needed a notetaker for one-to-one, but I realised that my notetaker actually noted down all of the feedback and it was much easier for me to look back because when I hear things it doesn't register fully into my brain and then I tend to forget at the end of the day.*

For really noisy workshops because I can't hear what the lecturers were saying in the noisy background, I have a sign language interpreter in front of me to interpret in real time.

Further comments on the value of notetaking:

Another CI user who also provides audiology support in schools in the USA:

One of the biggest accommodations that I advocate for with parents is to ask for the teacher's notes and education information. Ask for copies of the notes made or even the teacher's slides. The student (and parent) can have the material to catch up or prepare.

Ava described how notetaking can be delivered *:*

The way it works in my school is that there's a student in the class that actually gets paid to provide notes and it is through an anonymous service so the students don't know who I am and I don't know who the notetaker student is. We both sign on a platform. One student uploads their notes and I am able to later sign on to that platform and access the notes but that suggestion is great, asking the teacher for their slides or their notes is something which is really helpful and can be a really beneficial resource.

It became clear that a range of technology was used – and that it was growing. This was of interest to participants who were researchers in the field of accessibility and those who were in programmes for teacher training.

Lora, from Canada, working with students from kindergarten to grade 12 who are deaf or hard of hearing and provides consultation for students who use cochlear implants. She asked about the experience of the attendees of managing live captioning, and what technology they used for the best accuracy.

Ava responded about her use of closed captioning:

I rely on closed captioning, primarily. I don't personally use anything that hooks up to my devices just because a lot of my classes require me to engage with my peers and so for the professor to have to turn the mic off and on, it is just a really difficult for me to go back and forth, I have tried it a few times but it becomes overstimulating at certain points. In the US what my school uses is a platform called live captioning. The student signs into the captioning service and then the captioner also signs in on their end and we use a platform like Google Meet or Zoom, where the captioner receives their audio. Sometimes it is successful. Other times if I am in a larger lecture hall the microphone is next to me on the desk. The professor doesn't wear it unfortunately. The accuracy dwindles but what I also have in combination with closed captioning is priority seating. I ask that I be placed in the front of the classroom or I will sit in the front of the classroom.

The next generation of Bluetooth – Auracast

It was mentioned that Auracast can provide the opportunity to hear with CI and get autocaptions too. This is becoming more available.

The use of AI – is it allowed in the classroom?

Ava: *some professors do allow me to have my phone next to me at my seat and it connects to my cochlear implants. So all the audio can be streamed in that way.*

Lora: *To get approval for our project using captioning and speech-to-text, there are a lot of hoops to jump through and so in Canada, we have had to choose AI options that are Canadian developed and where the data is stored in Canada. So, very limited options. There are a lot of really great American software options with AI included. And I know from speaking with some American counterparts, they've had a lot of success with those. And the accuracy is just so much better with the AI integrated. However, we've only found one option in Canada that does have the AI developed and stored in Canada.*

Another attendee was a CI user who worked as a technician:

I use AI captions to help me to understand what other people are saying, or doing in meetings, you know about work projects and stuff like that. Before that, In high school I used to have an notetaker helped me a lot. Where there's no interpreter or notetaker, in a group of discussion they talked at the same time and I couldn't understand the words they were saying. So, I used my phone. Having AI captions is really, really helpful to help me understand what they are saying.

The use of technology to improve listening in the classroom

A comment in the chat room from Libya again mentions the Roger Pen:

From my experience at university, one of the most helpful accommodations when using the Roger pen system. It made a huge difference in understanding lectures especially in a large classroom or

with background noise. When the professor used it, the sound became much clearer, which helped me focus and participate more confidently. This supported me to understand better and helped me more included in a learning environment.

Ava commented *on the use of equipment: And I use equipment, I use, have you heard of Roger On equipment? I use the receiver in my cochlear implant and I have Roger On the microphone through my lecturer or the people that are going to speak about content or whatever. It amplifies sound and is very clear to understand, to hear what they say. And sometimes on my laptop I have this feature with captioning. I use windows. They have this live captioning feature. And I put in microphone settings and it just tells me whatever everybody was saying in the room. It just tells me... in education and honestly using all of those I have found it easier to actually learn more effectively.*

 This was also mentioned by others, including Melis.

There was more in the chat room about the Roger Pen, including from Libya:

The Roger pen made a huge difference in understanding lectures, especially in large classrooms or background noise. When professors used it, the sound became clearer, which helped me focus and participate more confidently. This support didn't just help me to hear better, it helped me feel more included in the learning environment.

Other technology developments – eg AI glasses

Another attendee introduced the concept of the AI glasses which produce captioning..

The AI glasses, they are like captioning glasses you can get. There are loads of different people doing AI glasses that you put on your glasses and they bring up the words of what people are saying. And there are lots of different brands and variations you can get. Basically they just bring up the text as you are looking at someone. You can read everything that is being said, it has made my life so much easier because I was able to have a conversation with someone and be able to understand them.

Qais commented*: I actually found them quite helpful but it is quite difficult for me to see the captions as the glasses are quite tinted. You are not able to see the person at the same time of reading the captions.*

A researcher explained that his students were experimenting with the glasses, to be possiblye used in labs and surgical training and operating theatres.

Access to the technology:

Brian Lamb asked whether

 the amazing technology you have spoken about, is this a luxury which just exists in some countries and whether there are examples of where people cannot easily get access to that? I know certainly for the UK, in theory we have rights for most of this but sometimes even then especially sometimes at the school stage but also at university sometimes difficulty in actually accessing it.

 Transcription sounds so cool, but in my country (Latvia) it is far from implemented. Transcription apps are pretty much non existent in Latvia so there's no accommodations like this available.

What about where Bluetooth or Wi-Fi is not available?

Outside of the classroom, in the schools, like gym or sports after school or even extra curricular activities like student Government clubs, or when travelling, access to Bluetooth or WI-Fi may not be possible.

Ava responded that in those situations it is really important to advocate for oneself, and that we are another resource:

*When I sit in on my student Government meetings, we call it the University Senate. I feel a little bit more vulnerable about the fact that I do have a hearing loss and I wear cochlear implants. It was a little hard for me in the beginning to say, hey, I cannot hear you right now, can you repeat that? It has made me more successful in doing and completing my role as a member of the student Senate. We are all focussed on is the importance of technology and while that stuff is really helpful, I think **another resource we don't realise is ourselves. We can benefit tremendously by advocating**.*

Qais then went on to talk about the Agenda for Change, launched by the young adults group and some of the recommendations made about education which should be used for advocacy work. available from: YOUNG-ADULTS-WITH-CI-AGENDA-WEB_SPREADS-1.pdf

In Education there must be training of professionals to provide:

- good listening conditions,
- daily functioning of the CI technology,
- assistive listening devices.
- Specialised individuals and educational programmes, supported by specialist teachers.
- In higher education, communication aids, such as captioning or note taking.
- Peer group and family support.

Qais asked if there was anything missing and what changes would make better experiences better? What changes would the group like to see within education?

Jess responded about the need to train school personnel:

*….people do not truly understand what listening environment is for us and that is where you've got to train the educator too. **Hearing is not about what you have heard it is about what you don't understand.** The majority of education is hearing. One of the things that for improvements and changes is one of the things that we do here is we actually train school personnel about how to work*

with our students in the classroom, about what type of hearing environments and why do we do what we do? Your educators who genuinely care and support us are the ones that listen.

There were many comments in the chat room about training of teachers:

The teachers overall should be more thoroughly educated about what hearing loss means, guidelines on what to do and what not to do when a deaf student is in the classroom. Such as less walking around the class, and talking at the same time. (Latvia)

I believe the most important improvements are increasing awareness among both teachers and students about hearing devices and sometimes the problem is not the technology but how it is used in the classroom. Teachers should speak clearly, face students, and student should also be more aware and supportive for example by speaking clearly, not talking over each other, and being understanding so that most importantly, students with hearing loss should feel included, not different. (Libya)

As Lora, a trainer of teachers said: *one of the biggest parts of our role is working with teachers and school teams to modify teaching practices to improve access for DHH students. Simple things like making sure the students can see their face, or muting microphones, or a non-verbal check to see that equipment is working are not always intuitive.*

From Turkey:

Euducation of personnel/ teachers is so important - I know some parents who tell us their children's teachers won't wear a mini mic because they think it's a recording device.

The group agreed that good teaching practices benefitted everyone.

Captions not only help you but everyone else.

Mention was made that for some students, sign support can be helpful too, with an interpreter in the classroom. There are different ways in which this can be provided, including in the UK, BSL or Spoken English with Sign Support.

Summary

There was a really interesting mix of countries and people on this conversation all with the same focus on improving education for deaf children with CI - and maybe for all children! Clearly the technology is moving rapidly and it was really useful for attendees to discuss their experiences and benefit from each other.   It was really helpful to have teachers, audiologists and researchers together with the CI users sharing their experiences to learn from each other.

Whatever technology is used it was not just the technology but training educational staff was key to improve accessibility to learning:

Changing the culture of teaching is as important as the tech.

Hearing is not about what you have heard it is about what you don't understand.

Suggestions were made to:

- Share guidance that is available for teachers and school personnel
- Produce simple practical guidance based on experience

We look forward to next discussion!