Designing and Developing Multilingual E-learning Materials: TUFS Language Education Pronunciation Module
-Introduction of a System for Learning Japanese Language Pronunciation-

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Abstract

This paper discusses the design and the development of the multilingual e-learning materials covering 17 different languages. The project is now being carried out by the Graduate School of Tokyo University of Foreign Studies (TUFS) under the auspices of Japan’s Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology. The system covers four modules such as pronunciation, dialogue, grammar, and vocabulary module for 17 languages.

Taking P-module as an example, as the integration of language teaching and linguistics, the materials are based on two teaching methods mainly used in the classroom, and on the findings and theories of phonetics and phonology. As the utilization of informatics, we utilized high technologies in sound recordings and website designing. Such utilization and integration will enable us to accomplish to create the new domain of research, “Linguistic Informatics.”

1. Introduction: Outline of the System

In this paper, the design and the development of the multilingual e-learning system is introduced. The system is called “the TUFS Language Education Module System” (http://www.tufs.ac.jp/21coe/language/). This is the 5-year project carried out by the Graduate School of Tokyo University of Foreign Studies (TUFS) under the auspices of Japan’s Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology. The purpose is to create a new academic domain called Linguistic Informatics by integrating linguistics and language education with the utilisation of the achievement of informatics. In this system, we are constructing the e-learning system of 17 different languages including European and Asian languages. Each language version consists of four modules covering four areas of language learning: pronunciation, dialogue, grammar and vocabulary (each abbreviated as P-, D-, G-, and V-module). The P-module is now scheduled to be on WWW this mid-April. Such a large-scale multilingual e-learning system has hardly been developed.

2. Design and Development of the P-Module

Taking the P-module as an example, it consists of two sections: the theory section and the practice section. The former serves as an academic reference, reflecting phonetic and phonological theories. The later is the e-learning material itself centered on practical pronunciation exercises and explanations free from technical terms. The materials are based on 2 teaching methods; “Audio-Lingual Method”, and “Verbo-Tonal method”. Concerned with the Japanese language learning system, providing the curriculum for pronunciation is a rare attempt, and is worth introducing.

In the development of the system, the technologies based on informatics are highly utilized. The sounds and movies were digitally recorded. The contents are going to transcribed to the XML format.

3. Conclusion

In this paper, we discussed the design and the development of the multilingual e-learning materials. The P-Module will be revised based on feedbacks from classrooms and on the experiments evaluating the validity of the system. The further report on the evaluation of the system in the classroom should be waited in the near future. Those who are interested in the language education, linguistics, informatics, and other related areas should keep an eye on our system.