Asian Languages and Technology

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ISSUE OVERVIEW

Asian language education in English speaking countries has been expanding for over a decade, but CALL research and applications are more often aimed at ESL or European languages. This issue offers a unique collection of cutting edge CALL studies specializing in Asian languages. All systems introduced here run on the web and deal with Asian characters, a problem that has become considerably less daunting now that the English-language Macintosh and Windows operating systems come bundled with software for entering and displaying them. Although this CALICO issue focuses on learning and teaching Asian languages, the general concepts underlying the presented systems are applicable to all languages. A brief overview of the collection follows.

(1) Southeast Asian languages
George Henry and Robert Zerwekh introduce SEAsite, a web-based interactive learning resource site for various Southeast Asian languages, including Indonesian, Tagalog, Thai, Khmer, Lao, Burmese, and Vietnamese and describe how their system accommodates Southeast Asian orthographies.

(2) Chinese
Tianwei Xie provides examples of Chinese chat sessions employing the Internet Relay Chat (IRC) and discusses the positives and negatives of using IRC. Hang Zhang describes Business Chinese online courseware that includes simulation tasks to promote business communication. Hui-Mei Hsu and Liwei Gao review four sets of software packages designed for learning Chinese characters and provide comparative observations. Jing Luo reviews two web-browsing utilities that allow users to access Chinese, Japanese, or Korean web pages.

(3) Japanese
Chris Houser, Shigeki Yokoi, and Takami Yasuda present a flash card program and a word processor tool devised for existing Internet services to help students to learn kanji and write Japanese texts. Reiko Itoh and Charles Hannon report the effect of online quizzes on learning Japanese using Blackboard. Kaori Kabata and Jie X. Yang describe multimedia lesson
modules using Japanese broadcast news clips and evaluate the TAKO (Teaching Assistance Kaleidoscope On-line) project. Ryu Kitajima presents computer-aided Japanese expository texts aimed at improving learners' higher order interpretation skills. Noriko Nagata introduces BANZAI, an intelligent language tutoring system that allows students to freely produce Japanese sentences in response to exercises and to receive detailed error feedback.

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EDITOR'S BIODATA

Noriko Nagata (Ph.D., University of Pittsburgh) is Associate Professor and Director of the Japanese program at the University of San Francisco. She teaches Japanese language, linguistics, and culture courses. Her research involves the development of intelligent CALL programs employing natural language processing. Her publications include descriptions of her CALL programs and a series of empirical studies examining the effectiveness of various CALL features in second language acquisition.

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