Online Self-learning System for ESP Specializing in the Field of Intellectual Property Business

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Abstract

The present study attempts to develop an online self-evaluation system to investigate and check the skill and knowledge on English related to intellectual property business.

As the fundamental theory of the courseware, the framework of CEFR was adopted. Items of the learning material were chosen from the can-do list of CEFR according to the result of the needs analysis.

The system was developed with Adobe Flash technology and is on a pilot stage now. In the poster presentation, system architecture in detail and the result of the system evaluation on the pilot study will be reported and discussed.

Keywords

e-learning, can-do list, CEFR, intellectual property, ESP

Introduction

As known, now that the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (CEFR) has become a sort of universal guideline used to describe achievements of learners of foreign languages across the world, its assessment system, which uses some can-do lists to evaluate learners' performance of the target language, has given an insight in language teaching and learning all over the world.

Like the rest of other regions, in Japan, some major qualification tests started to compile the list in order to show learners which items or performances will be associated with the grade to aim at. Furthermore, it has been applied for learning methodology as learning steps or learning hierarchy.

1 Background

Since CEFR was officially introduced in 2001, various education and business organizations have been engaging in establishing "the measure for measure of learners' language skills" based on the can-do lists, which let the learners appraise their own language abilities in the context of global standards.

The Association of Language Testers in Europe (ALTE), one of such organizations, published a can-do list that is reflected TOEIC, which is considered as an English language test designed specifically to measure the everyday English skills of people working in an international environment, and CEFR.

In the previous study, the research project that the author was involved in completed a can-do list according to the CEFR and ALTE items. Regardless of the fine-tuned lists, the test takers expressed the difficulty in judging whether they "could do" it or not because they had no such experiences and were not able to imagine the situation. That fact led to the need of experience-based learning materials.

2 Purpose of the study

When teachers make serious efforts on teaching English for specific purposes, one of the most annoying factors for them is selection and development of teaching/learning materials.

The purpose of current study is developing an online e-learning system, which allows learners of English to increase their skills and knowledge of English specializing in the field of intellectual property business and to evaluate their reference level based on CEFR for themselves.

3 Contents of the material

3.1 Reference level of this study

The levels were set according to CEFR and ALTA by the authors as follows.

Table 1: Descriptions of Common Reference Levels

		Examples
Basic User	A1	I can understand and express familiar words and very basic phrases concerning myself, my family and immediate concrete surroundings. In business situation, I can use standard expressions.
	A2	I can find specific, predictable in-

		formation in simple everyday material. I can communicate in simple and routine tasks beyond standard expressions.
Inde-pendent User	B1	I can understand the main points of clear context on familiar matters regularly encountered in work.
	B2	I can understand clear, detailed descriptions on a wide range of subjects related to my field of interest on familiar matters regularly encountered in work..
Profi-cient User	C1	I can understand long and complex factual and literary texts, appreciating distinctions of style .
	C2	I have no difficulty in understanding and expressing any kind of language even if it is very professional and specific.

3.2   Material selection

The courseware is based on the CEFR can-do list, and consists of reading, listening and vocabulary sections. First of all, ESP research group allocated skills according to CEFR Reference levels such as A1, A2, B1, B2, C1 and C2. However, as what learners above C1 level require is very specific and individual, the authors had an extreme difficulty in development of teaching materials. So, main target was supposed to be learners from A1 to B2 level. Vocabulary section was designed for those at C1 and C2 level as well.

After that, materials related to the communicative scenes listed on the CEFR can-do list were collected.

Finally, the contents are selected from variety of materials on the field of intellectual property from telephone skills for business to how to understand the patent application form according to Swales' CARS model genre analysis (Swales: 1990).

4   E-learning system

The system was developed with Adobe Flash technology and can be accessed by most of the web browsers via Internet. The pilot research on reading sections is being held and the data of users are being collected now.

It has variety types of questions and descriptions on English in terms of intellectual property, including vocabulary tests on technical terms, comprehension check of extended text, practices for understanding basic forms of business letters and learning how to read figures on patent forms.

The system is basically designed for self-learning, thus users can learn items mentioned above individually at any time. Use of CALL classrooms and assessment by teachers or instruc-

tors are not considered.

Figure 1: Example of the test item

In the poster presentation, system architecture in detail and the result of the system evaluation on the pilot study will be reported.

5   Acknowledgements

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