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Recognition of Japanese Characters by Non-native Learners Through a Support Database System

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Recognition of Japanese Characters by Non-native Learners Through a Support Database System

S. Bhalla, The University of Aizu, Aizu-Wakamatsu City
J.R. Goodwin, The University of Aizu, Aizu-Wakamatsu City
L.M. Schmitt, The University of Aizu, Aizu-Wakamatsu City
H. Abramson, Natural Language Understanding Group, Unisys Corporation
K. T. Christianson, Department of Linguistics, Michigan State University
J. M. Goodwin, Department of Computer Science, University of California
J. Sarraille, Computer Science Department, California State University

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This paper presents a qualitative analysis of differences in the way that kanji are perceived by different users of Japanese language. Most non-native users of Japanese dictionaries find it difficult to use these dictionaries, because the data are organized in the conventional way, that is similar to dictionaries for native Japanese users. These present compilations are based on the assumption that each user has sufficient knowledge of the language. However, the non-native users, in particular at the beginner's level, have a number of difficulties concerning the Japanese characters (called `kanji' ), and words ( called `compounds'). In practice, the experienced user with adequate background of the Japanese language also finds it difficult to use Japanese dictionaries. In some cases, these require up to 20 to 30 minutes to locate a reference which may involve the use of several dictionaries. A simple analysis demonstrates that learning tools currently in use are not favorable for non-Japanese learners, and that it is necessary to develop new tools. We describe, analyze, and give examples of some new tools that we are currently developing in connection with a multimedia Japanese -- English dictionary, in particular a convenient user interface based on support data from multi-attribute databases.

Index Terms:
Japanese language learning, kanji recognition, electronic dictionary, word lookup, indexing methods for character and word recognition.

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