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Major

media, psychology, television, computer game, internet

■ Research topics

Internet-Based Communication for International Exchanges

Keywords

Cross-cultural communication, international exchange, text chat with translation, online game, 3D-MUD

Contents

■ Overview (background, goal, detail)

There are increasing opportunities for us to interact with non-Japanese people on the Internet using for example a chat program or a BBS with a translation function or a multilingual online game. Compared to face-to-face communication, Internet-based international exchanges require lower costs and allow individuals to easily communicate with a large number of people. Note, however, almost no studies have been conducted to examine methods of preventing misunderstandings arising from Internet-based communication with individuals from different cultural backgrounds or creative methods for establishing friendly relationships. Our laboratory, therefore, is studying to identify a type of international exchange, carried on in Internet-based communication, which reinforces friendly relationships.

■ Process, case study

(1) Development of an international exchange game and hosting of Japan-Korea exchanges

We developed an international exchange game where users attempted to communicate in a 3D virtual space (3D0-MUD) using only the body language of avatars (characters created in a virtual space). We also used this game to host Japan-Korea exchanges.

(2) Examination of the effect of the international exchange game — examination of the laboratory examination result —

We hosted an international exchange game, presented a problem that required the cooperation of both parties, and limited the means of communication to body language. We examined the effect of the exchange in a laboratory experiment. The result indicated that, by participating in the game, the participants intensified their positive feelings about their partner country.

(3) Japan-Korea exchanges through translated chat messages

We are planning to develop a training method to improve users' skills and literacy in translated chat sessions. In addition to assessing the training result, we will empirically examine how translated chat message-based international exchanges influence users' attitudes toward the partner's country, culture, and people.

■ Potential (applications, future goals)

With the emergence of various types of Internet-based communication services having a translation function, general Internet users in Japan now have more opportunities than ever to communicate with non-Japanese Internet users using the translation function. Internet-based international exchanges incorporating previous study findings can be proposed to allow even more people to enjoy Internet-based international communication. We will therefore encourage the use of such services in education or places where general users can casually communicate with foreign people. Thus far in our studies, we have worked only with Japanese and Korean users due to translation accuracy and time lag issues; however, our future task is to conduct similar studies on translated chat-based exchanges involving other languages such as English and also on exchanges with non-Korean users.

Potential of social/industrial contribution

■ Joint research

Previous studies used commercially available systems to host international exchange games that required the cooperation of two parties as well as international exchanges through translated chat messages. Such commercially available systems however were able to incorporate only a limited number of features to reinforce the effects of international exchanges. For this reason, we plan to host a joint study to develop a system that incorporates previous findings that would contribute to enhanced international exchange effects.

■ Knowledge sharing (open lecturers, workshops, and publications)

Based on the findings from the previous studies, it is possible to plan an Internet-based international exchange workshop for youths.

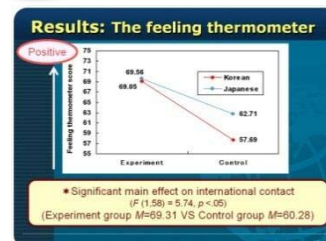


Fig.1 Effect of international exchange game

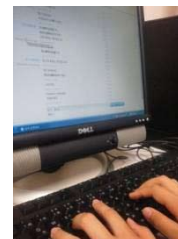


Fig.2 An experimental trial of text chat with translation