

Attachment 2: Evaluation Sheet.

Report on Tokyo University of foreign Studies, Centre of Excellence Program Corpus-based Linguistics and Language Education.

1) Project planning

The report which is the basis of this evaluation does not specify the original planning of the various subprojects of this program. However, it is clear from the report that the project as a whole and the various subprojects are all well planned, and that the planned activities have all been executed in the past few years.

The organizational structure of the program is clear, and is wisely built on the existing structures of TUFs, in particular ILCAA and the Graduate School of Area and Culture Studies. Moreover, there is a well developed advisory structure in which foreign linguists also play a role, which enhances the quality and the visibility of the program.

2) Originality

The program Corpus-based linguistics and language education can boast originality as to the way in which it combines these two fields. Corpus-based linguistics has become of utmost importance for present day linguistic research and is widely acknowledged as an essential methodology of linguistic research. There is general awareness of this insight across the globe, but the strong point of this program is that it has the aim to relate the techniques and methodology of corpuslinguistics to various related objectives: the description of languages, the creation of tools for foreign language education, and the training of a new generation of linguists who know how to use the relevant tools and how to apply them in the description of languages.

Language education is in need of good lexicons, with sufficient information about the proper contexts in which words are used. Moreover, they are essential if one wants to learn to speak a foreign language idiomatically. This requires knowledge of the prefabs of a language, the actual word sequences (chunks) that are memorized by the speakers. A recent estimate has it that about 55 % of our language production consists of these prefabs, and hence the corpus-based approach is essential for translating this insight into proper language training. The originality of this approach can even be further enhanced by making as explicit as possible to what extent descriptive and educational goals could not and cannot be achieved without the tools of corpuslinguistics and the software and databases as developed in this program.

Corpus-based linguistics is essential for present-day theories such as usage-based theory and Construction Grammar, and it would be important to link the results of this program to the international debate on these theories.

3) Scientific quality

The results of this program are only partially accessible to me as non-Japanese speaking evaluator. What is positive is that a number of studies have been published in a series by

Benjamins, one of the outstanding international publishers. This is a proof of quality. Another proof of quality is that outstanding linguists from all over the world have been willing to contribute to these volumes. The Table of Contents show excellent lists of authors and topics.

Many of the volumes are in Japanese, for obvious reasons, but these publications will therefore have a national impact only.

What remains a desideratum for achieving top quality is the publication of results in peer-reviewed international journals. At present, there are various international journals in the field of corpus-linguistics and applied linguistics where one could try to publish more general results. Journals are even better than books because they are more easily accessed by the scholarly community.

4) International Contribution

As noted above, there is a clear international contribution of this program to both language description and corpus-linguistics. There is quite a rich array of important results, but the international visibility can still be improved on.

An important issue is the international accessibility of databases for linguists across the globe. There are certain requirements as to the metadata for a corpus being accessible, and there are also organizations that help in distributing corpus material such as ELRA in Paris, the Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics in Nijmegen, the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology in Leipzig, and the European CLARIN-program. The international contribution of the program and the dissemination of the results could thus be enhanced. It would be a good idea in the next stage of this program to give special attention to the accessibility and dissemination issues.

More attention could also have been given to the question how the results of this program can contribute to present-day linguistic theorizing, which makes intensive use of the results and methods of corpuslinguistics, for instance, in the theory of Construction Grammar, and in the domains of psycholinguistics and of computational linguistics.

5) Feasibility (Results)

The feasibility of the program seems excellent to me, as most of the various activities have been carried out successfully. Moreover, the number of graduate students and the attendance of the conferences show that there is an enormous lot of interest in the activities of this program. This program really fills a gap and is needed!

As to the dissertation projects, it is not clear from the report how many of the graduate students who got a scholarship for doing a dissertation actually finished their dissertation. In addition, it is important to somehow arrange that the dissertations are accessible in some on-line form (compare the site for Dutch linguistic dissertations: <http://www.lotschool.nl/>). For some of the projects, it is reported that there is ongoing research, but without making clear whether the actual goals have been reached.

The general issue of reusability of created resources should remain on the agenda of this program.

6) Scientific results

The overall results are impressive from a quantitative point of view. The various lexicons, databases, and language descriptions are an important result, as are the various volumes published by Benjamins, and by TUFs itself. As stated above, a point of concern is the international accessibility and visibility of the results. I hasten to add that this problem is not unique for this program but a global issue, about which many linguists around the world are now deliberating, and trying to build organizations and research infrastructure.

7) Fostering young researchers

The way in which young researchers are trained in this program deserves a lot of praise. It is innovative in that much attention is given to methodology, research tools, and how to write an article or a dissertation. This is very important and favourably compares to the old situation in which young researchers depended for their training on one professor, the supervisor of the dissertation. The report does not give much insight in the quality of the dissertations on the basis of which the degrees are awarded, and whether they are written in such a way that one could safely give them to other linguists.

It is not clear to me from the report to what extent the young linguists receive theoretical training. I think that such a training is essential for achieving good results and for giving these students a chance to pursue an international career in linguistics.

All in all, I am impressed by the powerful organisation and the results of this program, and certainly recommend that TUFs finds ways to continue this program in such a way that the points of concern mentioned above are taken into consideration.