A New Approach to Navigating Extensible Digital Text Editions: The Leiden University Old English ColloQuest

Amos van Baalen, Jennifer Jansen, Krista A. Murchison, Thijs Porck (Faculty of the Humanities, Leiden University)

Recent pedagogical research (Boekaerts 2010; Tomlinson 2014) has shown that students are more motivated—and therefore more inclined to learn—when faced with an appropriate level of challenge. However, in a traditional educational setting, it is not always possible to provide all students with assignments and readings that are appropriate to their individual abilities. This problem is particularly present in the context of teaching a new language. For teaching reading fluency, the mainstay of the traditional language classroom is the static print edition, which contains both a learning text in a new language and, to help students read it, a glossary in a familiar language. Bounded as it is by space and page constraints, such an edition can only meet the needs of a limited number of learning situations, determined by a student's skill level, learning approach, or available time.

Digital platforms offer some possible solutions to these difficulties; due to their extensible nature, they can offer multiple teaching texts in one place and therefore meet the needs of a larger number of students. However, these platforms, while solving one problem, can pose a new one; speaking of digital texts in general, Dahlstrom (2000) warns that a "hypermedia database exhibiting all versions of a work, enabling the user to choose freely between them and to construct his or her "own" version or edition, presupposes a most highly competent user, and puts a rather heavy burden on him or her." In order to transcend these specific limitations, our team has, with the support of a pedagogical grant and using the authoring platform Articulate360, designed a digital, dynamic text edition that adapts to meet the needs of a variety of learners.

This text edition embraces the relative flexibility of digital platforms to provide differentiated glosses (translation aids) to suit the needs of individual learners. In order to evaluate a user's needs in this respect, the edition contains strategically-placed questions about the text; one's answers to these questions confirm the understanding of the text and determine the type and frequency of gloss available. The prototype of this project is centred on a text in Old English (the language used in early medieval England, c.500 - c.1100), Ælfric's *Colloquy* – a didactic guide used in classrooms a thousand years ago. The dialogic format and pedagogical origins of this Old English text support the approach of the edition.

This demonstration outlines the history of glossing technology, showing that while the extensible nature of online platforms allows unprecedented possibilities for differentiated pedagogy, a differentiated approach to language education is nothing new but grounded in a long tradition. The adaptive aspect of the project is explained, as well as the didactic goals and pedagogical theory behind the edition. The demonstration will also include a preliminary evaluation of the efficacy of the edition based on focus group testing, and a discussion of some of the limitations with the authoring platform used to create the edition. DH Benelux participants will be invited to explore the edition for themselves using their smartphones or laptops.

References

Boekaerts, Monique. "The Critical Role of Motivation and Education in Classroom Learning," in *The Nature of Learning: Using Research to Inspire Practice*, ed. Hanna Dumont et al. (Centre for Education Research and Innovation, 2010), 91-112.

Dahlström, Mats. "Drowning by Versions." *HumanIT* 4 (2000). Web.

Tomlinson, Carol Ann, *The Differentiated Classroom: Responding to the Needs of All Learners*. 2nd ed. (Alexandria, VA: ASCD, 2014).