Discourse Markers in Chinese University Students and Native English Speakers: A Corpus-Based Study

Authors : Dan Xie

Abstract : The use of discourse markers (DMs) can play a crucial role in representing discourse interaction and pragmatic competence. Learners' use of DMs and differences between native speakers (NSs) and non-native speakers (NNSs) in the use of various DMs have been the focus of considerable research attention. However, some commonly used DMs, such as you know, have not received as much attention in comparative studies, especially in the Chinese context. This study analyses data in two corpora (COLSEC and Spoken BNC 2014 (14-25)) to investigate how Chinese learners differ from NNSs in their use of the DM you know and its functions in speech. The results show that there is a significant difference between the two corpora in terms of the frequency of use of you know. In terms of the functions of you know, the study shows that six functions can all be present in both corpora, although there are significant differences between the five functional dimensions, especially in introducing a claim linked to the prior discourse and highlighting particular points in the discourse. It is hoped to show empirically how Chinese learners and NSs use DMs differently.

Keywords : you know, discourse marker, native speaker, Chinese learner
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