The Development of Chinese-English Homophonic Word Pairs Databases for English Teaching and Learning

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Abstract : Homophonic words are common in Mandarin Chinese which belongs to the tonal language family. Using homophonic cues to study foreign languages is one of the learning techniques of mnemonics that can aid the retention and retrieval of information in the human memory. When learning difficult foreign words, some learners transpose them with words in a language they are familiar with to build an association and strengthen working memory. These phonological clues are beneficial means for novice language learners. In the classroom, if mnemonic skills are used at the appropriate time in the instructional sequence, it may achieve their maximum effectiveness. For Chinese-speaking students, proper use of Chinese-English homophonic word pairs may help them learn difficult vocabulary. In this study, a database program is developed by employing Visual Basic. The database contains two corpora, one with Chinese lexical items and the other with English ones. The Chinese corpus contains 59,053 Chinese words that were collected by a web crawler. The pronunciations of this group of words are compared with words in an English corpus based on WordNet, a lexical database for the English language. Words in both databases with similar pronunciation chunks and batches are detected. A total of approximately 1,000 Chinese lexical items are located in the preliminary comparison. These homophonic word pairs can serve as a valuable tool to assist Chinese-speaking students in learning and memorizing new English vocabulary.

Keywords : Chinese, corpus, English, homophonic words, vocabulary
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