Chapter 16

Instructional Technology Design of Smart Malay–Mandarin Dictionary (SMMD) to Support Vocabulary Acquisition in Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language

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ABSTRACT

Teaching Mandarin language to non-native learners requires lots of efforts and excellent resources in order to assist learners in their learning process. Vocabularies plays an important roles for the learners because the numbers of vocabularies they have will help them to master the language and give them confidence to converse in Mandarin. Smart Malay–Mandarin Dictionary (SMMD) is developed to help learners gain as much as they can the vocabularies needed. The advantages of SMMD that offers not only the word that learners search for, but it also provides all of the related words that match the word typed by the learners. Formative evaluation was conducted in order to gain users feedback, comments and suggestion towards the use of SMMD in their learning process. The result shows students did agree that SMMD assisted them in their vocabulary acquisition. They were very contented with the use of SMMD in improving their vocabularies. The effectiveness of SMMD as a whole is positive as it did support the vocabulary acquisition for the teaching of Chinese as a foreign language.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-61350-198-6.ch016
INTRODUCTION

In the process of learning Chinese as a foreign language, students normally encounter problems acquiring the vocabulary they need to enable them to express themselves in writing and speaking forms. More often than not, students after taking few semesters of Chinese courses are still unable to acquire vocabulary they needed without depending on their instructors. Therefore educational technology has to come in to assist students in their vocabulary enrichment and enhancement. With this intension, the Smart Malay-Mandarin Dictionary (SMMD) is designed, developed and evaluated as a noble effort to achieve this purpose.

This chapter is focused on the design, development and formative evaluation of the Smart Malay-Mandarin Dictionary (SMMD), an online dictionary created for the vocabulary acquisition among non-native learners of Chinese in the teaching of Mandarin as a foreign language. There are a wide variety of online dictionaries available in English and Mandarin. However there is a lack of comprehensive online Malay-Mandarin dictionary for vocabulary acquisition purpose. Students learning Mandarin as a foreign language may always find that they do not have enough words to express themselves even though they have gone through formal Chinese courses. They might also find that looking for Chinese vocabulary can be a niggling matter. Therefore, the objectives of this project are:

• to design and develop an online dictionary for Malay-Mandarin search which incorporate suitable functions that enable search to be done not only with exact words, but also with related words.
• to evaluate the effectiveness (formative evaluation) of the online dictionary with the purpose of gathering users’ feedback, suggestions and comments in order to improve the online dictionary.

BACKGROUND

The instructional design for vocabulary acquisition in the teaching of Chinese as a foreign language is basically based on the ADDIE model. This is to ensure that SMMD is developed in a systematic manner. In addition to that, in order to develop vocabulary materials in an educational technology presentation, the structure system of vocabularies needs to be comprehended (Yang, 2001). The instructional framework description of vocabulary included in a system has to include the following: (i) Micro teaching level, e.g., Chinese morpheme(语素) and semantic, (ii) Intermediate level, e.g., categories of words, words collocation (词语搭配), and (iii) macro level, e.g., overall semantic. For the development of the SMMD system, focuses are given to these three aspects in which students are led in the search by presenting the search results that comprise of word morphemes (i.e. basic meaning of the words), words collocation (i.e., related words or combination of words), and overall semantic (i.e., extensions of meanings that related to that particular words). Hence in the consideration of the inclusion of presentation in the search results, this instructional framework is used as a guideline to decide word list to be presented in relating to the word root.

On top of these, the concept of developing a system for Chinese vocabulary search is to provide a virtual space to acquire Chinese vocabulary (Zheng, 2000). The concept of SMMD is to prepare a virtual database for Chinese vocabulary that needed by non-native Chinese learners. The search results are to take account of relating vocabulary which is culturally bound grammatically bound, and etc.

Overall, in order to assist students in expanding their vocabulary acquisition, there are three aspects that have to be taken into consideration (Xing, 2004). They are (i) Determining the basic morphemes for Chinese instruction (i.e. to include as comprehensive as possible in the database of