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Thesis for the Degree of Master of Arts

A Contrastive Study of “Adjective–Noun”
Collocation between Chinese and English: “大(Da)”
and “big/large”

by

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August 25, 2017

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between Chinese and English: “大(Da)” and “big/large”
중국어와 영어의 형용사–명사 결합에 대한 비교 연구:大(da)
와 big/large를 중심으로

Advisor. Prof. Eunil Kim

by

Huang Lu

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
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Pukyong National University
August 25, 2017

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Abstract

Collocation is one of the most important contents in linguistics and practical linguistics. The ability of collocation is one of the most prominent abilities that can reflect the discourse competence of native speakers and language learners. From Firth first put collocation forward in 1957 till now, in the area of language teaching and other related areas, theory workers and teaching practitioners define and discuss the methods of learning collocation and other problems from different angles. Also, they revealed the significance and some important features of collocation in language learning. Along with being one of the main methods in language learning, the importance of researching collocation based on corpus in vocabulary learning are appearing gradually. According to the corpus of CCL(Center For Chinese Linguistics PKU), the Chines–English Bilingual Corpuses of the Four Major Classical Novels, this thesis mainly investigates the differences of adjective–noun collocation between the Chinese adjective “大(Da)” and its English counterparts “big/ large”. According to comparing the three words in theses

sentences appear in these corpus, this thesis reveals that the differences between big and large when translating Chinese adjective “大(Da)” and help students to know that how to use the two words correctly.



1. Introduction

1.1 What is Collocation?

Collocation is referred to as a kind of lexical phenomenon and grammar phenomenon. Linguists establish research systems from different points of view and define the definitions of collocation. Some of the linguists define collocation from vocabulary, grammar, semantic, language acquisition and language phenomenon; some of them define collocation from the descriptivity and regularity; some of them define collocation from the angle of corpus. However, almost all of the researchers endorse “collocation is co-occurrence of vocabularies”. Followings are different notions of different linguists.

Firth (1957): Collocations are actual words in habitual company. / You shall know a word by the company it keeps.

Kjellmer (1987): Collocation is a sequence of words that occurs more than once in identical form and which is grammatically we structured.

Sinclair (1991): Collocation is the occurrence of two or more within a short space of each other in a text.

Hill (1997): A collocation is a predictable combination of words.

Lewis (1997): Collocation is the readily observable phenomenon whereby certain words co-occur in the natural text with greater than

random frequency.

1.1.1 The significance of this thesis.

Linguists pay close attention to collocation because collocation provides visual expressing methods. For language teaching and language studying, collocation competence is an important constituent part of the whole language competence of language learners. It not only enriches conversation, but also expresses the conversation more impressively. Collocation plays a very important role in building competence of using language and competence of language, and also it is built while language learners are creating words and matching them. Thus, choosing and using collocation is one of the most important features of marked language to distinct native speakers and language learners.

1.1.1 Collocation and language teaching

Linguists pay attention to collocation in language teaching. For operating frequency of collocation is very high in average, competence of collocation decides the level standard of language learners in a large extent. Thus, people focus on collocation increasingly recent 20 years and collocation is brought into language teaching and occupy a big scale in mental lexical. Brown (1974), Alexander (1982), Channell (1981), Conzett (2000) and Hill (2000) consider collocation is an

important approach of language acquisition(Qin Yue, 2005).

1.1.1.1 Collocation and language studying

Lexical studying is an important part of language studying. Linguists Wang Zongyan (2001) consider English lexical is a semantic network, there are kinds of relationships among words. Besides, the most obvious relationship is the collocation relationship among words. If you wouldn't learn the collocation relationship, these words couldn't form a network. Integrating words to be bigger language units, such as phrases, collocation, rather than separating words to be smaller words or other units, is very important in language acquisition. Hill (1999) considers the biggest problem of communicating frequently for most language learners is "the limit of collocation of language". Lewis (1993) refers that using a word well, you must know the range of collocation and boundness of this word.

1.2 The purpose of the Study.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the "Adjective Noun" collocation between Chinese- English based on Chinese adjective "大" and its counterparts "big" and "large". Specifically, two goals are attempted to be achieved:

First, A-N collocations with the aim of enriching the study of collocation and further testifying that strong awareness of A-N

collocation learning and provides a new approach to teaching vocabulary efficiently.

Second, it is hoped that the conclusions of the study will help English learners in China increasing language proficiency, accuracy and fluency by rendering collocation, even on “big” and “large” with their counterpart “大”.

1.3 The structure of this thesis

This paper includes five chapters: chapter one introduces the definitions of collocation from different linguists, the purpose and the structure of this thesis. Chapter two focuses on the theoretical background of “adjective–noun” collocation. It explores the current situation and achievement of “adjective–noun” collocation in domestic and overseas and the reasons why the author choose “大(Da)” and “big/large” as the objects of this thesis. Chapter Three introduces the corpuses that this thesis bases on and the methods how to compare the two words. Chapter four is the main part of this paper. According to the corpuses, what are the differences of collocation between “大(Da)” and “big/large”. For instance, when “大(Da)” modifies individual nouns, in which situation we could use big and in which situation we could use large. The final chapter is the conclusion part. It describes the conclusion of the differences between “big” and “large”.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1 Research on “adjective–noun” collocation.

“Adjective–noun” collocation is a universal phenomenon. Since 1920s, starting to research on phraseology, western linguists have made systematic analysis and research, which went through four stages: The first stage is pre–collocation stage, in which Palmer started to study on phraseology. The second stage is in the name of studying on the collocations in lexical phrases, which started from 1950s. The third stage started 1960s, in which the new school studied on the grammar, semantic, text interlink and regular collocation in lexical phrases. In the fourth stage, the method of corpus study rose up. “Adjective–noun” collocation developed up in this stage.

In the early of the last century, Saussure, Palmer started to study on collocation. Palmer(1933) suggested that regarded collocation as the content of language teaching. Firth, called “the father of collocation”, put forward the notion of collocation, which is “*you shall know a word by the company it keeps*”. Firth paid much attention to “adjective–noun” collocation. For instance, he thought “night” always matched “dark”; “tall” always matched “man”, not “bookcase” or “hair”. The Contribution of his research is that people started to pay attention to collocation study, which includes “adjective–noun”

collocation study. Lewis emphasized the importance of “adjective–noun” collocation. He cited numerous examples of “good looking”, but the matched nouns were different. “Pretty” always matched village, woman, garden, girl, flower and color. However handsome always matched overcoat, man, boy, typewriter and car.

2.2 Research Object

In the study of Dixon by Shen Xuan (1999), when adjectives are in a very small and closed language, they all express the size, age, the good from the bad and color. In the language of Ibo in Africa, there are only four pairs of adjectives. They are “big–small, new–old, black–white, good–bad”. There are adjectives to express “big–small” in almost every language. In the adjectives of expressing interspace, the meaning of “big” and “small” is the most general ones. They have the most active semantic and the biggest range of application. In the study of children’s language, the acquisition of “big/small” appears in the earliest time. The research achievement of historical linguistics show that “big” and “small” appeared at the earliest time and continued till now which are the classical basic vocabularies.

The object of this research is the difference between big and large when they are with different collocates, which are animals, persons, specific nouns, places and abstract nouns.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction to the Corpus Applied

Corpus is a set of corpora of one or more than one applications, which are made from a number of electronic texts collected by certain standards. Corpus is a structural and scale collection which could be classified by various aspects. Parallel Corpus is a bilingual corpus that could retrieve and contrast the original texts and the translation. Comparing with dictionary and the monolingual corpus, bilingual corpus has its own special advantage, such as bilingual contrast, numbers of language examples etc. The conclusion get from the corpus based on examples could represent a research on a language, variant or literature genre and then promote this conclusion to the whole language, variant or literature genre. Corpus linguistic is an important branch of linguistics, which is a linguistic research proceeded based on corpus. Corpus linguistic plays a crucial role in the summarizing corpus and building the theory of language, hence, corpus linguistic has already become to be the mainstream of language research, and it has been affecting the research field increasingly.

In this thesis, I choosed three Chinese-English parallel corpuses, which are “the Chinese-English parallel corpus of ‘A Dream of Red Mansions’”, “the Chinese-English parallel corpus of ‘ourney to the West’” and “Center for Chinese Linguistics PKU” (CCL). The first

two corpuses are from Pool of Bilingual Parallel Corpora of Chinese Classics, come out from Shaoxing University and CCL is from Beijing University.

3.1.1 CCL Chinese–English Bilingual Corpus

CCL Chinese–English Bilingual Corpus: CCL Corpus is developed by the Center for Chinese Linguistics PKU of Beijing University which is supported and helped by The Center for Computational linguistics of Beijing University and colleagues from The Chinese Academy of Sciences Institute of Computer. It includes three corpuses: The Modern Chinese Corpus, The Ancient Chinese Corpus and Bilingual Corpus. CCL adopts the bilingual corpus's processing specification, including the regulation of the machining process.

CCL Chinese–English Bilingual Corpus belongs to the Parallel corpus. In this corpus, there are numbers of English texts translated into Chinese, and also numbers of Chinese texts translated into English, and texts that have been produced at the same time in two or more languages, such as the EU regulations are published in all the official languages of the member countries (Zhang Xin, 2009: 28–29). For retrieving “大” and “big” / “large” in this corpus, “大, big” and “大, large” should be input separately, as the following two pictures.

360安全浏览器 8.1.1

提示：输入更多关键词可以获得更精确的结果

大 large

最多显示字数：左 30 右 30 结果排序：无 搜索 在结果中搜索

使用说明 普通查询 高级查询

搜索：“大 large” 共有 1413 条结果，这是第 1 - 50 条。 [搜索用时：0.0 毫秒]

下载 500 条

1 工作组交换机像基于交换机一样，能在每个端口上支持大量的以太网地址，并能代 ... switch can support a large number of Ethernet addresses ...
替路由器和分段网或用户。

2 ... 管理集团 (OMG) 在奠定OpenDoc规范的基础方面发挥了很大的作用。 ... of more than 500) played a large part in laying the foundation ...
3 ... 内部网的首批实例之一——各种各样的用户通过标准接口可以访问极大服务器。 ... of an intranet -- a very large server, accessible to a ...

4 据一项对全世界范围内的巨型信息系统机构的调查表明，用户已经很快迷恋上内部 ... to a worldwide survey of large IS organizations, users have ...
基于Web的应...

5 因此，除了最大的公司外，CTI的软件开发都是因成本太高而受到限制。 ... development at all but the largest companies.
6 传递大文件可能是困难的，若一家公司在高峰时接近到带宽极限时此问题尤 ... Passing large files around could be painful, ...

7 ... 类似操作系统的特点放入各自浏览器，但多数分析家和用户认为，对大规模 ... that the technical needs for large-scale, transaction-oriented ...
面向交易的客户机/服务器应用程序的技术需求不只是要求基...

8 关系OLAP (在线分析处理) 要求大规模的多维和时序数据。 Relational OLAP asks for large-scale multi dimensional and ...
9 ... 于万能服务器编程接口工作在高级开发工具集的高水平上，开发大规模数据 ... programmer productivity on large-scale data-intensive ...
密集型应用程序的程序员生产率可以大大提高。

10 随着数据挖掘者向越来越大的数据仓库数据库进一步深入，对复杂数据类型的需求 ... miners drive deeper into ever-larger data warehouse databases, ...
便转变成对更复...

11 ... 掘、多媒体体的Intranet和Internet体系结构、开发大规模的应用程序以及把复杂 ... architectures, developing large-scale applications, and adding...

360安全浏览器 8.1.1

提示：输入更多关键词可以获得更精确的结果

大 large

最多显示字数：左 30 右 30 结果排序：无 搜索 在结果中搜索

使用说明 普通查询 高级查询

搜索：“大 large” 共有 1413 条结果，这是第 1 - 50 条。 [搜索用时：0.0 毫秒]

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1 工作组交换机像基于交换机一样，能在每个端口上支持大量的以太网地址，并能代 ... switch can support a large number of Ethernet addresses ...
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便转变成对更复...

11 ... 掘、多媒体体的Intranet和Internet体系结构、开发大规模的应用程序以及把复杂 ... architectures, developing large-scale applications, and adding...

As we can see from the two pictures, the number of sentences including “big” and “large” which corresponded “大” are both 500. The content includes various aspects that in terms of computer activities etc. For this paper, I’m going to choose the aspects of computer and abstract words to research.

3.1.2 The Corpora of the Four Major Classical Novels

The four major classical novels are the most novels in Chinese, the corpora of which belong to bilingual corpus from Pool of Bilingual Parallel Corpora of Chinese Classics developed by Shaoxing University. The Pool of Bilingual Parallel Corpora of Chinese Classics includes seven big categories, which are Luxun’s novels, collection of the great men, traditional classics, the four classical novels, other novels, laws and regulations on the mainland, Hong Kong and Taiwan and combination of corpus. Altogether, there 39 corpora collected in the Pool of Bilingual Parallel Corpora of Chinese Classics, the other two novels in the four classical novels are “Water Margin” and “Romance of the Three Kingdoms.”

The Journey to the West is a story about the master and his three apprentices for getting the real scripture, started the journey from east to the west. In the journey, they met numbers of monsters who are stopping them and wanted to eat the master. After going through much suffering, finally they get the real scripture. In the

“Journey to the West” parallel corpus of Chinese–English, there are 243 hits found for “big” but only 60 hits found for “large”. There are 3 aspects of individual nouns appeared with the highest frequency, which are animals, letters and ears. So in the contrast part, I’m going to choose this corpus to comparing “big” and “large” when they modify animal and letters which are corresponding with “大”.

A Dream of Red Mansions is a story records the process of a wealthy family with a complicated background in the feudal society from prosperity to fallen, which reflects the corruption of the society. In this corpus, there are 315 hits for “big” and 269 hits for “large”, among which there are lots of places modified by “big” and “large”, such as courtyard, garden, room etc. Based on this corpus, the comparison will be researched on the differences of the places.

The Water Margin is a story about 108 heroes lead by Song Jia, in Northern Song Dynasty time, revolted in Liang Mountain and accepted the offering of amnesty and enlistment to rebels. After getting together and uprising, they fight around and finally win the battles. In this Corpus, there are 80 hits of big and 43 hits of large are searched, which are big, snake, tiger, feast etc.

The Romance of Three Kingdoms is a story about the military struggle of three kingdoms. It reflects the permeating to conversion of various social conflict and generalizes the big change of history. In this corpus, there are 22 hits of big and 150 hits of large are found, which are business, matter, banquet, ship etc.

3.2 The Methods of Contrast.

The purpose of this paper is to compare “big” and “large” which are corresponded with the Chinese word “大” when they are modifying different types of nouns according to the corpus. The method of comparison of this paper is the method of parallel contrasting.

First of all, I will search all the sentences that include big and large in English and 大 in Chinses, then classify them into various categories, which are catergories of animals, persons, specific objects, places and abstract nouns. Second, calculating the frequency of every collocate in various catergories and rank them according to the frequency. Next, choosing two or three collocates at high frequency to make the comparison of big and large. In this part, the similarities and differences will be seek out in terms of collocats, then get the conclusion that how to choose the right words to modify various types of nouns.

4. Contrastive study of “大(Da)” and “big/large”.

4.1 The Definitions of “大(Da)” and “big/large”.

4.1.1 The Definitions of Adjective “大(Da)”.

In modern Chinese-language, “大(Da)” is a widely used word which has lots of meanings. In *Great Chinese Dictionary*, *Chinese Big Dictionary* and *Modern Chinese-Dictionary*, the senses of a dictionary entry are the same. That is

“大(Da) excesses other aspects of area, volume, cubage, quantity, strength, intensity, age, importance and so on and the comparative objects”. However, to be specific, the definition of “大(Da)” should have a evolution process. French linguist 孙狄亚克 said: “human named objects, sooner or later, always according to how much objects could draw attention from people,···the recombination concept of object was the earliest one recognized by people···along with reflecting on the different feeling included in those concepts, people possessed the ability of analyzing those concepts gradually···distinguished the different natures of objects. After knowing the natures were in different environment, people created more new words to express all

of the natures, what we called adjective and adverb.” From this expound, we know that people always recognize the entity of object than its property. So we can easily know the definition of “大(Da)”.

Firstly, 大(Da) expresses the measure of objects in space, such as in area and volume.

Secondly, animals and plants correlate with each other when they are growing up, so “大(Da)” could also expresses the persistence length in time, such as age.

Thirdly, it expresses the power of action, for instance, it can modify verb.

Lastly, 大(Da) expresses degree and importance, for instance, it can modify adjective and psychological verb.

4.1.2 The Definitions of “Big”.

Big is a common word in English. If “five stars” represents that the word is used the most frequently, then the frequency of “big” is four stars from The Collins Dictionary, which is called “the most comprehensive and authoritative guide in modern English”. In The Collins Dictionary, “big” can be used as two characteristics: adjective and adverb. There are nine definitions of “big”, as an adjective, in The Collins Dictionary. According to the dictionary, “big” can be used in nine different environments. It can represent the great size, the significance of a person or something, the huge influence and so on. Meanwhile, it has three different definitions as an adverb. In this

thesis, the characteristic of adjective is the main content that should be discussed. So I conclude the nine definitions into several parts as follows:

First, it describes the great or considerable size of objects, also in height, weight, number, capacity or power. A big person or thing is large in physical size.

Third, it describes the degree, importance and complexity in an organization, place, problem, or activity.

Fourth, **big** describes the cubage of an organization also.

Fifth, as the same as Chinese, **big** can describe the age of a person. It refers to the older brother or sister as their big brother or sister.

Last, Capital letters are sometimes referred to as **big** letters.

4.1.3 The Definitions of “Large”.

The frequency of “large” in The Collins Dictionary is five stars which is used more frequently than “big” in English. Generally, there are seven definitions concluded in the dictionary.

“Large” describes something that has a great quantity, size, extent, etc, which surpasses “big” in these aspects. It expresses the concept that something is greater in size or bigger than average or usual.

“Large” modifies the wind. It modifies the scale of the wind, such as large scale wind farm, large diameter wind wells and large cotton wind updsheets.

Conclusion

Big refers to the degree, scale, cubage, weight, quantity (great, important), etc. It is used for modifying concrete, shaped people or objects. Such as: This is a big cock. Jim’s cake is the biggest of all. There is a big tree beside the house.

Large always refers to area, scale and expresses number and quantity (when used for people, it focuses on the size of the body). Such as: They say China is a large and beautiful country. We have a large farm. I like the color, but it’s too large.

4.2 “大(Da)” and “Big/Large” Modify Nouns As Adjectives.

4.2.1 The Definition and Classification of Nouns.

Noun, in Chinese Dictionary ‘新华字典’(Xinhua Dictionary), is defined like this: 表示人或事物以及时间,方位等的词语。多数汉语名词有同数词,量词组合的功能;而一般不同副词组合,在句子中主要充当主语,宾语,定语。 It says that noun is the word to show person, object, time and

location. Most nouns have the function of combining numeral words and measure words. Nouns commonly used as subject, object and attribute, not combine with adverb.

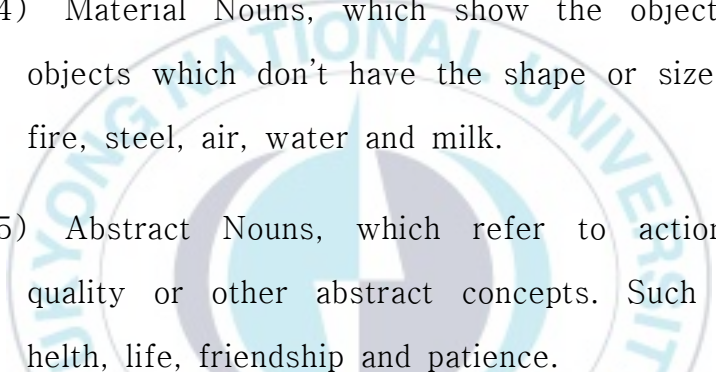
In *Collins Dictionary*, noun is defined like that “a word, a group of words that refers to a person, place, or thing or any syntactically similar words.

In the two definitions, they both refer to person, place, object, time and syntactically similar words. So how can we classify these words? There are two ways.

Firstly, nouns are divided into proper nouns and common nouns by the definitions. Proper nouns show the concrete person, object, place and organization. Such as China, Asia, Beijing, the People's Republic of China. If there are noun phrases in proper nouns, it must add the definite article “the” before the proper nouns, such as the Great Wall. If surnames are used as plural, it means the whole family members under these surnames, such as the Greens, the Smiths, the Millers.

Secondly, common words mean person, object, matter or abstract words. They are divided into five parts as follows:

- (1) Individual Nouns, which refer to single person or object or matter. Such as car, room, fan and photo.

- 
- (2) Collective Nouns, which refer to a group of people or objects or matter. Such as people, family, army, government and group.
- (3) Compound Nouns, which mean the nouns which are combined by two or more single words. Such as passerby, brother-in-law.
- (4) Material Nouns, which show the objects or the objects which don't have the shape or size. Such as fire, steel, air, water and milk.
- (5) Abstract Nouns, which refer to action, status, quality or other abstract concepts. Such as labor, health, life, friendship and patience.

The other method to classify nouns is classifying them by if they are countable or not.

The purpose of this thesis is to help English learners acquire the ability of how to use “big” and “large” correctly when translated into Chinese word “大”, therefore, I’m going to research on the differences by comparing them when they are modifying different types of nouns. “大” is one of the most basic and important adjectives in Chinese and it could modify plenty of types of nouns, such as “大的变化”, “大的杯子”, “大型公司”, “大国”. In these “adjective+noun” phrases, there are concrete objects, organizations, countries and some abstract nouns. In

English, they are “big change”, “big cup”, “large company” and “large country”. As you can see, though there is only one word “大” to modify these different types of nouns in Chinese phrases, there are two different words to modify the same nouns in English phrases. Hence, this thesis is going to find out in which situation English learners should choose “big” and in which situation they should choose “large” before different types of nouns. In this thesis, I’m going to list numbers of sentences including nouns modified by “big” or “large”, however, how to classify these nouns becomes a crucial problem. As I mentioned above, two ways of classifying were showed. For this thesis, the first way is much more fitable to choose. That is, I’m going to list the nouns to compare “big” and “large” according to their definitions. Detailedly, proper nouns and common nouns would be separately compared in the following parts.

4.2.2 The Contrast of Individual Nouns.

As mentioned above, common nouns include five parts, which are individual nouns, collective nouns, compound nouns, material nouns and abstract nouns. In this paper, individual nouns and abstract nouns will be discussed. This part of comparison is the crucial of this thesis, because it concludes the most words that people come into contact with, such as a person, a table and a mirror. Let’s research on common nouns in detail.

Individual nouns, we can call it countable nouns also. In our life, there are numerous individual nouns, such as animals, words, facial organs, fruits, places etc. How do we choose the two words “big” and “large” to modify the individual nouns? Let’s find out according to the parallel corpus of Chinese–English.

4.2.2.1 The Contrast of Animals.

As we all know, most nouns of animals are countable. In the corpora of the four major classical novels, there are totally 57 hits with animals are found for “big” in total 638 hits, however, there just are 10 hits with animals are found for “large” in total 522 hits. The following are collocates that appeared in the corpora.

Table 1. Collocates of animals for big and large.

Big	large
fish	mule
monkey	geese
demon	cockerel
crab	deer
horse	
monster	
turtle	
snake	
tiger	
sheep	
gorilla	
bird	
duck	
knelt	

From this table, we can get that “big” is chosen much more frequently than “large” for modifying animals. Then, when should we pick “large”? Let’s see some examples.

(1). 那 崖 下 石坎边, 花 草 中 树木 里, 若 大 小 之

That cave under cliffs, flowergrass middle trees in many big many small 's'
猴 跳 出 千千万
monkeys jump out thousands

Big monkeys and little monkeys came bounding in their thousands and tens of thousands from caves in the cliffs,...

(2). 领 众 杀进 洞 中, 将 那 大 小 妖精, 尽皆剿灭。

Lead force charg cave into, make those **big** small demons, all killed.

Then he led his forces charging into the cave, where they exterminated all the demons, **big** and small.

(3). 像 那 千里 之内, 蜻蜓儿 展 翅, 我也 看见何期 那匹大 马,

Like hat thousands inner, dragonfly spread wings, I also see no way that **big** horse

我就 不见

I could miss

And with that range I can even spot a dragonfly spreading its wings. There's no way I could miss a **big** horse like that.

There are 5 animals appeared in sentences 1 to 3, which are monkey, demon, horse. At the same time, still more animal appeared in these corpuses, such as **big monsters**, **big bird**, **big devils**, **big wolf etc.** Through these examples, animals mentioned here are with different types on manners, different features and different sizes. Basically, we can say that both “big” and “large” could modify almost all types of animals.

4.2.2.2 The Contrast of Specific Objects

Specific objects are the real objects that people can see and touch, such as dog, table, clothes.

In the four corpuses, there are 387 hits which are matched with specific objects are found in 638 hits for big, and 339 hits matched with specific objects are found in 522 hits for large. The following table is the top 10 frequent collocates of specific objects for big and large.

Table 2 Top 10 frequent collocates of specific objects for big and large

big			large		
Rank	Collocates	Frequent	Rank	Collocates	Frequent
1	ear	35	1	character	33
2	table	27	2	letter	29
3	cup	24	3	word	24
4	mouth	19	4	Table	17
5	tree	15	5	chair	13
5	mouth	15	6	screen	9
7	letter	13	6	stone	9
8	case	9	8	lantern	6
9	eye	8	9	Cup	5
10	bowl	6	10	packet	4

According to table 2, many objects are both modified by big and large, such as table, letter and cup. What is the difference between big and large when they modify the same object.

Let's see some examples:

(4). 变作 一管浓墨豪笔, 在 那 柱子上写 一行大字 :

Turn into a ink brush, on that pillar write a line big letter:
“齐天大圣, 到此一游。”
THE GREAT SAGE EQUALING HEAVENS

It turned into a writing brush dipped in ink, and with it he wrote
THE GREAT SAGE EQUALING HEAVENS in big letters on the middle
pillar.

(5). 山 门 里, 又 见 那 正 点 上 写 四 个 大 字, 是

Mountain doors inside, again see that up right write four large letter, are
是 “观 音 禅 院”。

are CHAN MONASTERY OF GUANYIN

...and inside they saw the words CHAN MONASTERY OF
GUANYIN written in large letters on the main hall.

From the two sentences, we can see that the two words both can
modify the letters from the size as a whole. In this situation, they can
exchange with each other. The only little difference is the large
means a bigger size than big. Maybe the background is the main factor.
In sentence, the letter appeared on the pillar and it appeared on the
hall and the building in sentence 26 and 27. So if the background is a
big object of reference, large is better for the objects.

(6). 把 那 大 圆 桌子放在当中, 酒 一 菜 都放着。

That big round table put middle, wine dishes all put

Just put the wine and dishes on the big round table in the middle
there.

(7). 说着, 便 起身, 众 媳妇 忙 撤去 残席, 在里面 顺

While speaking, then stand up, the servants hastily cleared away the feast, inside by the
way

并了三张 大 桌, 另又添换了果子 摆好。

put three large tables, and brought refreshments put well.

Land rose from their seats. The sercants hastily cleared the feast away, put three large tables together in the lobby, and brought in more refreshments.

(8). 堂屋内 设下 大 案,铺了红 毡, 将庆寿之物都摆上,请贾母过目。

Hall insidedisplay large table, cover red felt, the best gifts all put let Jia'sMom see.

A large table covered with a red felt was set in the hall to display all the best gifts for the old lady's inspection.

From the three sentences, we can get the conclusion that large is focus on the width of objects. In sentence 7 and 8, the writer emphasizes the size of the tables which are wide engouh to place all the freshments and the gifts.

(9).那 大 树 上 绑着 一个女子。

That big tree on tied a woman.

...a woman tied to a big tree...

(10). 从 房间里内又 得 一 小 一 门, 出去则是 后院 有

From room inside again have a small door, go out is back garden,have 大株梨花 兼着芭蕉。

big pear-treewith plantain.

Another small door in the inner room opened on tho the back garden with its large pear-tree, broad-leafed plantain.

In sentence 9 there is no obvious big site, so “big” just states the truth of the size. In sentence 10, the “tree” appeared in the back garden which is an obious big site. So “large” is much more suitable for this situation. Nervertheless, even if there is a site of garden in

the sentence, “big” could also be used to modify the tree. But in the following sentence mentioned that it is with ‘broad-leafed plantain”, so the size of the tree might be bigger than the normal size. Hence, “large” is much suitable. Here refers to another function of “large”, which is the same as it modifies animals while modifying objects, that is to make an effect of strong contrast,

(11). 大圣 耍了一会儿,吃了几个桃子, 变做 二寸

The Great Sage played a while, eat some peaches, turn into two inches
长的个人儿,在那 大 树梢头浓 叶 之下睡着了。
long person, that big tree large leaf under sleeping

The Great Sage had in fact made himself only two inches long after eating some of the peaches for fun, and he was sleeping under a large leaf at the top of one or the big trees.

In sentence 11, the author chooses “large” to modify “leaf” and “big” to modify “trees”.In this sentence, there is a person sleeping under the leaf, which is needed wide enough to cover the person, so here large refers to the width of the leaf which is more suitable than big. Here big just describes the normal size of the tree. It could include the height, the weight, the area of the tree.

In conclusion, there are two points for big and large. First, big and large both can modify individual objects and in some situation, they could exchange with each other and large could express the deeper degree. However, large focuses on the width or the range of the objects

4.2.2.3 The Contrast of Persons.

When “big” and “large” modify persons, there are two different meanings in Chinese. In Chinese, we always say “大哥” (big brother) , “大姐”(big sister) which don’t mean the brother or the sister is bigger in body, but mean elder brother and elder sister.

(12). 现今宝钗 生怕 宝玉 教训 他，倒没意思，便 连忙 替贾环 掩饰。

Now Bao-chai fear Bao-yu embarrass him, isn't funny, then quickly for Jia-Huan defend.

But Bao-chai was ignorant of all this: and fearing that Bao-yu might embarrass them all by delivering a **big** brother's telling-off, she hastened to Jia Huan's defence.

(13). 贾母 道：“如今你们大了，别 提 小名儿了。”

Jia's mother say: " now you old, don't call pet names.

You're getting too **big** to go on calling each other by your pet names, said the Lady Dowager.

In these two sentences, “big” doesn't refer to the size of body or other things, it refers to the age. In the corpuses, there is no hit found for “large” which refers to age. So we can see, “big” is the proprietary word to describe the age of a person, not “large”.

However, when referring to the body size, big and large could exchange with each other.

(14). 他那里六条大汉, 你这般小小的一个人儿, 怎么敢与 他 争执?
 He there six big men, you this small a person, how dare with him fight?
 They are six **big** men against little you, all by yourself. You
 can't possibly have the nerve to fight them?

(15). 行者道: “我儿, 你虽然认得他, 他却不变 大的, 如狼抗
 Monke say: “ my son, you know him, he but can't turn **big**, like wolf fight
 大象, 恐进 不得你 门; 他若变作 小的, 你 却难 认。
 elephant, afraid go into can't your door; he if turn into small you hardly recognize.
 “My son,” said Monke, “you may be able to recognize him
 sometimes, but he won't turn into something **big** like a wolf...”

In these two sentences, big doesn't mean the age but the body size. In this situation, big could be replaced by large. We could say they are six large men than you in sentence or he won't turn into something large like a wolf. The intention of the sentences are the same, just the degree of big is much deeper.

Moreover, big also means great and important when modifying a person but large couldn't.

(16). 毛泽东是 中国 历史上一位伟大的领袖。
 Mr. Mao is Chinese history a big leader
 Mr. Mao is a big leader in the history of China.

(17). 他在公司 是一位重要的人物。
 He in company is a big man.
 He is a big man in the company.

In conclusion, big and large are both suitable for modifying the size of a person and large is much deeper in degree. However, when

modifying the age and importance of a person, big is the only choice not large.

4.2.2.4 The Contrast of Places.

In the four corpuses, there are almost 30 places appeared and the frequency of collocates of big and large can be calculated and the top 10 collocates of big and large are listed as follows in the decreasing order of the frequency.

Table 3 Top 10 frequent collocates of Places

big			large		
Rank	Collocate	Frequent	Rank	Collocate	Frequent
1	garden	14	1	court	10
2	place	12	2	garden	8
3	court	9	2	hall	8
4	bridge	8	3	place	7
4	temple	8	4	bridge	6
6	room	6	4	estate	6
7	moutain	7	7	forest	5
8	hall	5	8	house	4
8	house	5	9	courtyard	3
10	building	3	10	state	2

From the sheet above, we can see that some collocats of place appeared in both columns, which are garden, court, palce, bridge and house. Let's see some examples of garden:

- (18). 这些姑娘、小姐们，这么一所大花园，都是你们看管...

These girls ladies this a big garden ,all you look after

You're looking after all these young ladies and this big Garden

- (19). 那院子也太大，一时照顾不到，皆有关系，

That garden too big , at a time keep an eye can't, all relations,

惟有少几个人儿，就可以少操些心。
Just few people , then can less worry

And the garden is too big for you to keep an eye on everything.
The fewer the people there, the less you need worry.

(20). 我才 做了一个梦，竟 梦到了都中 一个大 花园 里头，

I just have a dream, but dreamed Du City a large garden inside,
遇见几个姐姐，都叫 我 臭小厮， 不理 我
Meet somegirls, all call me nasty creature, don't have anything to do with me
I've just been having a dream in which I went into a large
garden and met some girls there who called me a "nasty creature"
and wouldn't have anything to do with me.

(21).我们有一个花园 极 大，姐妹们住着，容易 没 人 去的。

We have a garden extrem large, sisters live, easily no person go into
There is a very large garden at the mansion which all the young
people live in and which other people very seldom go into.

In sentences 18.and 19, the writer sees the garden as a whole and just states the garden is big. However, in sentences and, the writer emphasizes the size or area of the garden, because there are referred objects which the garden are big enough to hold. In sentence 20, the object is some girls and in sentence 21, the object is all the young people. So the size and area are very important factors of the difference between big and large.

However, let's see some examples of hall.

(22).至 十五 这一晚上，贾母 便在大 花厅上 命 摆 几席酒

On the fifteenth this evening, Jia's mother on big flower hall call lay some wine

On the evening of the fifteenth Grandmother Jia had tables laid for a reast in her **big** ‘new’ reception hall

In the same way, the writer just states the truth that the hall is big.

(23). 那里就有这般 大 堂屋,却 也没处 买 这般 大过梁。

There has this kind big hall, but nowhere buy this kind big roof-beams.

There couldn’t possibly be a hall as large as this: there’s nowhere you could buy roof-beams big enough.

(24). 只见是三间大 厅,帘枕 高控, 静悄 全 无人迹

Just see three large hall, curtained windows high hang, silent compelete no people

也 无 桌 椅家伙

and no table chair .

He saw a large hall with high, curtained windows that was completely quiet and deserted. There were no tables, chairs or other furniture.

According to the examples above, the referred objects are crucial factors making the writer choose the word large. In sentence 23 and 24, the referred object are the roof-beams and the windows which are modified by “big” and “high”. In terms of the area, big roof-beams and high windows give readers a feeling of great momentum. Therefore, if the referred objects are big in area, large is better to be chosen.

4.2.3 The Contrast of Abstract Nouns

Abstract nouns are nouns to express action, state, quality or

other nouns of abstract conception, which are always noncountable, no plural form and not used with article a and an.

For this part, I got the data from the CCL corpus. Type “big 大” and “large 大” sepretely, there are totally 1,000 sentences appeared and 500 sentences for ecah word.

The top 20 collocates of big and large are listed as follows in the decreasing order or the frequency.

Table 4 Top 20 frequent collocates of abstract nouns for big and large.

big			large		
Rank	Collocates	Frequent	Rank	Collocates	Frequent
1	problem	67	1	number	89
2	force	54	2	scale	77
3	change	53	3	size	74
4	battle	48	4	network	59
5	step	42	5	file	55
6	issue	39	6	型	53
7	question	35	7	amount	49
7	mistake	35	8	data	41
9	challenge	28	9	corporate	36
10	help	27	10	portion	33
11	army	22	11	site	29
12	contribution	18	12	disk	22
13	advancement	15	13	inch	16
14	difficult	13	14	segment	13
15	corporation	12	15	battle	9
16	area	9	16	sum	8
17	hurdle	7	17	financial	7
18	deal	5	18	Increase	6
19	capality	4	19	site	3
20	strength	3	19	quantity	3

In terms of table 4, we can see that big and large could exchge when modifying abstract nouns. Take battle as an example:

(25). 常常 由大小 数个以致数十个 战斗 组织而成。

Always by big small scores of battles made
... or even scores of battles, big and small...

(26).从 大 小 数千次的血战中, 来保护 我们国家 的土地和人民的生命

From large small thousands battles, to protect our country 's land and people's life.
... thousands of bloody battles, large or small to protect our
country's land and people's life and treasure. ...

In the two sentences, big and large both modify battles while they could exchange with each other and it will not change the writer's intention. Moreover, there are lots of examples with other nouns. Take number as an example:

(27). 数字 3 比 数字 2 大。

Number 3 than number 2 big
Number 3 is bigger than number 2.

As you can see, big and large could exchange with each other because they both just modify the number itself. Therefore, when the objects are partial to materializaiton, big and large could exchange with each other. However, in some situation, big couldn't take the place of large and large couldn't take the place of big. For example:

(28). 能再每个端口 上支持 大 量的 以太网地址.....

Can every switch on support large number ethernet addresses
 ...switch can support a large number of ethernet addresses...

In the two sentences, large modifies the same word number as in sentence, however, it doesn't modify the number itself but the quantity of records and addresses. There is a Chinese word appeared in both Chinese sentences, that is 量. 量 means quantity and amount in Chinese, which are omitted in English sentences. Hence, compared with big, large is used for emphasizing the quantity when modifying number.

According to the table, there is a Chinese word that appeared at a high frequent, which is 型, in English, that is scale. Like the word 量 above, 型 are omitted in all English sentences.

- (29). ...内部网的首批实例之一——各种各样的用户
 Intranet's first batch living examples one of --- various users
 通过标准接口可以访问极大服务器。
 Across standard port can visit extrem large server.
 One of the intranet's first batch living examples—a very large server, accessible to a ...

- (30).以上扩至大型网络。
 ... up to the large net
 ...technologies to scale up in large nets.

As you can see, 型 are omitted in both sentences above. Nevertheless, there are still 77 sentences which include the scale in English sentences appeared in this corpus.

- (31). 对大规模的、面向交易的客户机/服务器应用程序的

For large scale facing deal 's client/ server application program's

技术 需求不只是 要求...

Technical needs not only require

...that the technical needs for **large**-scale, transaction-oriented...

(32) . 开发**大** 规模数据密集型 应用 程序的 程序员生产率 大大提高

Develop large scale data intensive application program's programmer productivity much increased.

..., programmer productivity on **large**-scale data-intensive.

From these sentences, large scale is a collocation at a high frequent even in English or in Chinese. In the same situation, there are many collocation are at high frequent as scale, such as size, inch, disk etc.

In conclusion, for abstract nouns, large is more partial to quantity, scale and size, to express scope and range. Now, let's see collocates of big.

In the column of big, the nouns at high frequent are issue, problem and question, which belong to specific objects and the objects that don't refer to the range, size or other aspects. Here big means important, serious, crucial, significant etc..

In the same way, big problem here means serious problem, and big question means the crucial question.

According to the examples and analysis above, we can get that when modifying abstract nouns, big and large could modify the same objects and large just more greater in the degree of expression. At the same time, they could exchange with each other in some situation.

However, big is used mostly for the specific objects and means crucial, serious and so on. In addition, large is used for expressing big of range and scope in number, scale, size and so on.



5. Conclusion

In the chapters above, we've compared big and large with their Chinese counterpart “大”. In general, big and large both mean the size of objects and in most situation, they could be replaced by each other. Also, we've known that the differences between big and large when matching up with various types of nouns. First, when matched up with animals, almost every animal can be modified by both the two words, for animals are all independent and tangible objects. Second, when matched up with specific objects, big is partial to volume or other factors and just state the truth that the object is big. However, large is partial to width of the object. For example, the big box means the box is not just big but also heavy, however, the large box means the box is big in area. In the same way, we can say China is a big country. It could mean China has the strong strength in economy or population. But if we say China is a large country, that means China is big because of the wide land. Third, when modifying persons, big and large both can refer to the body of the person, but only big can refer to the age and the importance of the person. Fourth, when matched up with places, large still focus on the area of the places.

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