Big and Large as Near Synonyms

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Abstract

Palmer mentioned that the existence of Absolute synonymy is rare; however, near synonyms are numerous. Furthermore, there are no real synonyms where words will have exact same meaning; where she provided five ways in which possible synonyms can be seen to differ. Following-up an earlier study of the near synonyms *high* and *tall* that Taylor discovered near synonyms, exhibit the pattern of dominant-recessive co-extension: *High* is the dominant term for the vertical dimension and tall the recessive term. *High* is readily applied to a wide range of different kinds of entities, whereas the distribution of *tall* is skewed towards use with human nominals. Also, *high* is more frequent in the language than *tall*.

Taylor suggestions for further research to observe whether there are any other pairs of near synonyms exhibit the pattern of dominant-recessive co-extension. Therefore, this paper examines that another pair of near synonyms, *big* and *large*, exhibit the pattern of dominant-recessive co-extension. This report examines that *big* is more dominant co-extension than *large* is.

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Introduction

Synonymy is a single meaning that is symbolized by two or more distinct phonological forms. It can be divided into three kinds; absolute synonymy, descriptive synonymy, and near synonymy. According to Lyons, "It is by now almost a truism that absolute synonymy is extremely rare. Two (or more) expressions are absolutely synonymous if, and only if, they satisfy the following three conditions:

(i)   all their meaning are identical;

(ii)   they are synonymous in all contexts;

(iii)   they are semantically equivalent (i.e., their meaning or meanings are identical) on all dimensions of meaning, descriptive and non-descriptive."[1](1995:61)

Lyons also gave a definition of descriptive synonymy that is "identity of descriptive meaning"[2] (1995:63) where sentences with expressions are mutually entailing. In other words, proposition x entails proposition y, since x is true, then y is true; for example, *Pat broke her tibia.* It can also mean *Pat broke her Tibia*. Unlike absolute synonyms, Lyons stated that "near synonyms are expressions that are more or less similar, but not identical, in meaning."[3](1995:60) In other words, near synonyms performs a low degree of implicit contrastiveness. Here are examples of near synonyms: *mist/ fog, high/ tall, little/ small and big/ large. Big* and *large* have both same and different kinds of entity; however, they have different contextual preferences. As a result, there are many contexts in which *big* cannot be substituted for *large* (or vice versa). Furthermore, it is not surprising that *big* and *large* should distribute in different ways.

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[1] Lyons, John. 1995. Linguisitc semantics: *An introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[2] Lyons, John. 1995. Linguisitc semantics: *An introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[3] Lyons, John. 1995. Linguisitc semantics: *An introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Method

My observations are based on 40 words of the word *big* and 40 words of the word *large* from several transcripts of MICASE. I did not choose the same noun that is modified by the word *big* or *large*. I chose the 40 words of the word *big* and 40 words of the word *large* that can share their entities and cannot share their entities. I collected all 40 words of each word. I categorized the kinds of entity by most animate to least animate. I counted the word and put it into the same kind of each entity.

Results/ Analyses

Entities to which *big* and *large* are applied in 40 words of each word:

Kind of Entity	Big (40 words)	Large(40 words)
Humans	4	2
Animals	4	3
Plant, trees	1	1
Topographical features	1	1
Natural phenomena	-	1
Physical bodies	1	2
Places and buildings	2	14
Money	5	-
Shapes	2	-
Articles of clothing	-	1
Miscellaneous artifacts	2	1
Quantity	-	12
Positive attribute	5	-
Negative attribute	4	1
Uncertain reference	5	10

There are some of the words big and large that do not fit in the kinds entity given above.

From the data it appeared that *large* is widely used in domains which are conventionally conceptualized in terms of horizontal, especially places and buildings; whereas *big* is widely used of domains which are conventionally conceptualized in terms of both horizontal and verticality. The examples are shown below:

1. S.2: The Six-cornered snowflake. or you have uh, naturally occurring crystals here's a **big** waterfall with hexagonal columns.

2. SU-M: the font's too **big**.

3. S.1: let me just say, we've got dad here. and you had, A and B. okay? so i'll just say he's **big**-A, **big**-B... let's draw it small.

4. S.1: he was also very tall and he was about six feet tall, uh so people would actually physically look up to him cuz most Romans aren't that **big**. You know your average Roman would be between about five and a half feet, five eight somewhere in there and Caesar is a **big** guy, um and he looks out as he looks out over the crowd.

5. S.3 : and then on the other sides of the sloughs often these are found um, these have more sand, and gravel deposits more coarser sediments in there. and sloughs are actually more typical in very **large** river channels.

6. S.3 : there's vegetation there the vegetation kind of slows down, the water if there's a really h- a **large** rainstorm, and it gets a chance to seep back down into the water

7. S.3: There are many popular putdowns of **large** women, such as this postcard, from the World War Two era, and concerns about overweight spread to middle class parents and to girls

8. S.4at the State University of New York, which is a **large** institution at the State University of New Jersey

Those examples provided above showed that *large* provided a sense that objects can be expanded horizontally; whereas *big* can be expanded not only horizontally but also vertically. Therefore, we are familiar with large size more than big size, especially clothing that is labeled large (L), extra large (XL)

From the data, money is also used for the word *big* because there are some contexts that *large* cannot be substituted for big. They are not identical in meaning. The examples are show below:

9. S.1: and you need money, you go to the **big** budgets. where are the **big** budgets? the **big** budgets, the really **big** budgets

10. S.1: those are very **big** dollars and once

11.S.8: she was willing to take a **big** salary cut to not have to teach this one class

12.S.1: we've got a lot of attorneys around and, getting into medical school both of those are, **big** prizes, and there is a feeling that the flagship university here oughta be training

It might also be the conceptual blending in "*big dollars or big salary*" involves a two-sided frame network in which input contains a frame for *big* which occurs in the larger domain of number (many, much or a lot). *Dollars* and *salary* are money frame. Therefore, *big dollars* or *big salary* would translate to great amount of money.

From the data, it can be concluded that *big* and *large* have the similar meaning of a great number of quantity. It can be seen from the data the table that a number of the word *large* is more than a number of the word *big*. *Large* can somehow substitute for big. The examples are shown below:

13. SU-F: but just because we see a **big** group of birds doesn't mean it's starlings.

14. S.1: we can produce products that are really large scale and and and very accurate in in their um portrayal of huge data sets. There are national efforts at atlases and so on so these are are **big**-scale

However, the data showed that *big* is used for negative attribute and for positive attribute more than *large*. It showed that *big* is collocationally restricted with those words. *Large* is not interchangeable with *big* with those contexts because not only does *big* mean a great number of quantity as same as *large* does but it also gives a sense of major, priority and important. The examples are shown below:

15. S.1: uh there is a **big** concern with the water purity, there are many industrial plants surrounding Venice that in particular discharge, heavy metals, into those waters.

16. S.1: if you look at them for long enough. <P :06> uh <P :06> (xx) <P :06> **big** mistake never use Windows N-T. <P :07> still can't see

17. S.1: overabundant species you've heard me talk about this the Double-crested Cormorant, in the state of Michigan a **big** worry because, um, they are increasing.

18. S.1: murdered Caesar, had felt, that it would be possible for them, to restore the old style of government. Where there was no **big** boss.

19. S.1: this is going to make **big** national news, on and on. it' s already started but i haven't really seen any, **big** articles yet.

Therefore, if one replaces *large* for *big* that occurs with those words, it is collocationally unacceptable or unidiomatic. *Big* has no identical meaning the same as *large* because *big* means a great number of quantity, and it also means major, priority and significant.

According to Langacker (1987) cited in Evans& Green, "centrality relates to how salient certain aspects of the encyclopedic knowledge associated with a word are to the meaning of the word. Langacker divides the types of knowledge that make up the encyclopedic network into four types: (1) conventional; (2) generic; (3) intrinsic; and (4) characteristic."[4] (2006:217) from the data I found, there are some sentences that *large* cannot be substituted for *big* because they have less similar meaning. Here are some examples shown to show their differences:

20. S.1: the web goes i will put, um outlines of my stuff on the web, um i'm not a **big** fan of giving you complete notes either on reserve or on the web

21. S.2: the sort of era of late capitalism, where really we see uh interpenetration of government and **big** business to an extent that we hadn't seen before, and i think you can remember back to, Lisa's lecture, uh on Wednesday on the work of Hans Hocka an artist who was i- is explicitly commenting on the interrelationship between, uh government **big** business and the arts.

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[4] Evans, V& Green, M. 2006. *Cognitive linguistics: An introduction.* Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

From the examples above it can be assumed that *big* is used based on types of encyclopedic knowledge: conventional knowledge. Langacker stated that "Conventional knowledge is information that is widely known and shared between members of a speech community, and this likely to be more central to the mental representation of a particular lexical concept."[5] (2006:217) From those contexts, members of a speech community 'agree' that *big* has a particular meaning that we can communicate successfully using language. *Large* cannot be substituted for big for those contexts because it is not conventionally common usage.

Conclusion

There are three conditions providing the near synonyms *big* and *large* in which *big* is more dominant co-extension than *large.* Firstly, big is widely used in domains which are conventionally conceptualized in terms of both horizontal and verticality; whereas, *large* is widely used in domains which are conventionally conceptualized in terms of horizontal. Secondly, there is a conceptual blending involving a two-sided frame network between *big* as an amount in number frame and *dollars or budgets* as money frame. Thirdly, there are collocation differences between using *big* and *large* in the same contexts. *Large* provides less similar meaning for those contexts because *big* provides not only the same meaning as *large*; but, it also provides larger meaning than *large* does in the same context.

Finally, big is used in some contexts based on the conventional knowledge; whereas *large* cannot be substituted for *big* as mentioned above. In sum, *big* is more dominant co-extension than *large* is. According to Lyons, there are some contexts that *big* and *large* can be absolute synonym; for example, they live in a big/ large house. It will be a matter for further research what features providing those two words can be absolute synonyms in some contexts.

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[5] Evans, V& Green, M. 2006. *Cognitive linguistics: An introduction*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

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Appendix

40 words for Big

1. S.1: you know the t- two of the **big** guys and then i gave the uh academic reference to it

2. S.2: The Six-cornered snowflake. Or you have uh, naturally occurring crystals here's a big **w**aterfall with hexagonal columns.

3. There's a big difference between a mystery and a secret

4. SU-M: the font's too big.

5. S.1: Canis Major the big dog.

6. S.1: It's a big social occasion. It is very competitive.

7. S.1: let me just say, we've got dad here. and you had, A and B. okay? so I'll just say he's big**-A,** big-B... let's draw it small.

8. S.1: he was also very tall and he was about six feet tall, uh so people would actually physically look up to him cuz most Romans aren't that big. You know your average Roman would be between about five and a half feet, five eight somewhere in there and Caesar is a big guy, um and he looks out as he looks out over the crowd.

9. These are big scale.

10. S.1: and then you pay, for housing. (now) that's a big amount of money.

11. S.1: They leave Detroit, are the big factories in Detroit

12. SU-F: All sparrow-like starling are big red black bears

13. SU-F: A sparrow's not gonna have big long-ass legs like that. The big gray bird with that.

14. S.1: and you need money, you go to the big budgets. Where are the big budgets? The big budgets, the really big budgets

15. S.1: those are very big dollars and once

16. S.8: she was willing to take a big salary cut to not have to teach this one class

17 S.1: we've got a lot of attorneys around and, getting into medical school both of those are, big prizes, and there is a feeling that the flagship university here oughta be training.

18. SU-F: but just because we see a big group of birds doesn't mean it's starlings.

19. S.1: we can produce products that are really large scale and and and very accurate in in their um portrayal of huge data sets. There are national efforts at atlases and so on so these are big-scale

20. SU-M: There was a big bog bottom there

21. S.1: uh there is a big concern with the water purity, there are many industrial plants surrounding Venice that in particular discharge, heavy metals, into those waters.

22. S.1: if you look at them for long enough. <P: 06> uh <P: 06> (xx) <P: 06> big mistake never use Windows N-T. <P: 07> still can't see

23. S.1: Make a big profit he thinks they're gonna

24. S.1: overabundant species you've heard me talk about this the Double-crested Cormorant, in the state of Michigan a big worry because, um, they are increasing.

25. S.1: You are just planted but, big tree, are likely to be...

26. Significant ecosystem problems, um in big regions of the of, North

27. S.1: murdered Caesar, had felt, that it would be possible for them, to restore the old style of government. Where there was no big boss.

28. S.1: Washington Post has a big headline. Bush breaks promise.

29. S.1: this is going to make big national news, on and on. it's already started but I haven't really seen any, big articles yet.

30. S.1: It is coming a b really- big problem now

31. S.1: the web goes I will put, um outlines of my stuff on the web, um I'm not a big fan of giving you complete notes either on reserve or on the web

32. S.1: Clearly this is a big advantage, elements can be different.

33. S.2: the sort of era of late capitalism, where really we see uh interpenetration of government and big business to an extent that we hadn't seen before, and I think you can remember back to, Lisa's lecture, uh on Wednesday on the work of Hans Hocka an artist who was I- is explicitly commenting on the interrelationship between, uh government big business and the arts.

34. S.1: be a small peasant a big peasant and so on

35. S.1: Kerouac, uh, going out buying big jugs of wine and...

36. S.3: above and you see this big red throat, it's like, eat...

37.S.1: ...is interesting it's building these big chimneys, there are sulfide deposits.

There are 40 words of the word big but 37 utterances.

40 words for *Large*

1. S.3: there's vegetation there the vegetation kind of slows down, the water if there's a really h- a large rainstorm, and it gets a chance to seep back down into the water

2. S.10 um I'm wondering if these theaters or the Chinese tourist authorities differentiate between what you were calling as Western tourists and, Japanese [S2: Japanese] Korean Taiwanese Hong Kong tourists which I [SU-F: the overseas (xx)] assume (were) still uh a large portion of the tourist market

3. S7: is- we should remember I mean I'm not, well educated in this but thirty years ago when I was here Professor Jone, who drew, large crowds for his annual demonstrations and, <LAUGH>

4. S.3 first we use a technology known as combinatorial chemistry where very large collections of molecules can be synthesized and presumably screened rather quickly.

um this molecule differs by then by this large piece here, um which is not present here and in fact because that large is piece o- uh is there it one renders the, cytotoxic properties the converse side of cytotoxic properties but more importantly it also abolishes all the sedative properties of Valium. So why would we use benzodiazepines? um, it's really twofold. First large libraries of benzodiazepines

5. S.3: and then on the other sides of the sloughs often these are found um, these have more sand, and gravel deposits more coarser sediments in there. And sloughs are actually more typical in very large river channels.

6. S.1 they again came mainly from from Asia from China Korea Taiwan are the top 6. sending countries, and in all they have nine hundred and sixty-one students at the undergraduate and graduate level. very large department.

7. S.1 well in the first large cosmopolitan site, I wouldn't necessarily say that people see it as a problem.

8. S.3: There are many popular putdowns of large women, such as this postcard, from the World War Two era, and concerns about overweight spread to middle class parents and to girls

9. S.1 in the first engineering site i think their high rank their large size and their cosmopolitan nature of the department, cause them to see international students as a nonissue.

10. S.3 so the optimization problem is going to look something more like this and what you, are taught to do in calculus is just completely ineffective when, you're faced with a large number of possibilities like this... let me say a few words about the solution.

11. S.2 this is the closest we have to what you would call the modern model of agriculture with large amounts of, uh chemical fertilizer and chemical pesticides applied to the system next slide.

12. S.2 uh with a large percent about forty percent of their plantations, but about ninety percent or, eighty percent of their plantations in the central valley of Costa Rica were transformed, to uh, highly intensive coffee plantations

13. S.2 and that's caused largely by political decisions. I mean the large grain companies an- a as a matter of fact are making out like bandits on the whole thing. And they

14. S.3 but a lot of them were workers in the large coffee plantations in the Suconosco.

15. S.2 when, the public at large and especially the political leaders of the world acknowledge that there's an emergency situation.

16. S.2uh and it's Descartes, whom Cudworth is, uh in large part exercised about, in the Treatise that was published in seventeen thirty-one.

17. S.2a large number of Europeans thought this was just the appropriate attitude and it made perfectly good sense to them.

18. S.3 it has a large degree of symmetry, it says, if you have this you must have that. if you have that top thing there, you must have the zed-zero.

19. S.3most of the gl- eyeglasses are androgynous before World War Two after the war, there tend to be boy gla- glasses and girl glasses, and of course we also move into contact lenses, um which <PRESENTS NEW SLIDE S1> <SS LAUGH> it's from Look magazine in the fifties lenses were by and large invented for men, to improve their performance, in airplanes uh during the war at sport, uh hunting and fishing, but it's very clear

20. S.3so increasingly fat is cast as a psychological issue, as well as a beauty issue. Now in nineteen fifty, adult mainstream culture idealized large pointed breasts.

S.3if you hate your thighs because they're too jiggly too cottage cheesy, large curve you feel like the before in a before and after shot uh it's too hereditary blah blah blah blah blah,

21. S.3uh is that um intellectual freedom, and and uh and for a for an engineer or a scientist such as myself uh, the realization that in fact, you are in, uh to a large extent, in control of of of your research destiny

22. S.4at the State University of New York, which is a large institution at the State University of New Jersey

23. S.3: i left Spelman and came here, i don't know it was like... i don't even know how to explain it to you. um... first of all there's this sense of, being overwhelmed because it is so large**.**

24. S.6number two, [SU-F: and weekends] <SS LAUGH> evenings and weekends that would be good. number two, when do you get the large blocks of time

25. S.5tend to make especially coming from a large research institution like this one and maybe only having been in that environment and moving to a different, kind of institution say a smaller

26. S.2 Project the M-Pathways Project is a, very big attempt large scale attempt to say, that we could make information accessible, across different groups and different cub - subcommunities of this campus. That is the value

27. S.2i tell you this because, a very large corporation developed a very large program, and they, used these same tables. And at some point in my life I was privy to these tables they gave me all these tables, and I found them full of holes, they were not complete they were, full of omissions, they had lots of contradictions. They managed to make a very fine product, using the tool. But, it was a miracle to me that it worked. Well, obviously, you cannot, solve very large problems on a little piece of paper like this.

28. SU-F: there could be, a large bird that could fly by, because there is

29. S1: no, ah but you also didn't get as many large fish you didn't get the, the Largemouth Bass

30. S1: no whenever there's a large dangerous fish I uh get a student to handle it.

31. S.3: - it's dark often and because it has a large amount of, of humus coming from these organic layers,

32. S.3: large amount of stress there. So sometimes right on the levee you'll see, different cornuses different dogwoods, um but for the most part, the shrubs don't have the ability to withstand, such as large amount of flooding as the trees do. If the river has the ability to carry a very large quantity,

33S.1: when I teach a large class I'll usually generate a couple of different exams

34.S.2: I mean since one of 'em's right down the street here and, a very large school with, over ten kindergartens um um...

35. S.3: there is a higher mean response for treatment one, and these are l-definitely large sample sizes seventy-nine and sixty-two

36. S.1: Observation Africa is such a large country there's so many different.

37. S.3: With nursing experts in a large metropolitan area were undertaken

38. S.5: A three-D, like a large scale space.

39. S.16: Where the mother consumes like large quantities of alcohol.

40. S.1: uh explanation for the collapse of these large empires is there was, ver-apparently very little profit involved in holding them

Please fill the word *big* or *large*, where you think it is suitable to each sentence.

1.   The Six-cornered snowflake. Or you have uh, naturally occurring crystals here's a _____ waterfall with hexagonal columns.

2.   The font's too _____.

3.   Let me just say, we've got dad here. And you had, A and B. okay? I'll just say he's _____ -A, _____ -B... let's draw it small.

4.   He was also very tall and he was about six feet tall, uh so people would actually physically look up to him cuz most Romans aren't that _____.

5.   These have more sand, and gravel deposits more coarser sediments in there. and sloughs are actually more typical in very _____ river channels.

6. There are many popular putdowns of_____ women, such as this postcard, from the World War Two era, and concerns about overweight spread to middle class parents and to girls.

7.   at the State University of New York, which is a _____ institution at the State University of New Jersey.

8.   The Southern African Telescope (SALT) will be the _____ telescope in the southern hemisphere (and third _____ in the world)

9. You need money, you go to the _____ budgets. Those are very _____ dollars

10. We've got a lot of attorneys around and, getting into medical school both of those are, _____ prizes.

11. There is a _____ concern with the water purity.

12. _____ mistake never use Windows N-T. <P: 07> still can't see

13. This is going to make_____national news

14. I'm not a _____ fan of giving you complete notes either on reserve or on the   web

15. ...the sort of era of late capitalism, where really we see uh interpenetration of government and _____business to an extent that we hadn't seen before