

A DIACHRONIC CORPUS BASED ANALYSIS OF THE ADJECTIVAL COLLOCATES OF [MAN] AND [WOMAN] IN AMERICAN ENGLISH FROM 1861 TO 2010

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ABSTRACT

This thesis aims at analyzing the adjectival collocates of [man] and [woman] in American English from the Civil War period (1861) to Obama's presidency (2010) using the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) and the Corpus of Historical American English (COHA). The objective of this study is to compare the changes in the adjectival collocates of [man] and [woman] from 1861 to 2010. In the analysis, the corpus evidence is also related to the facts written in American history references, to show how far they conform to one another.

Corpus linguistics, which is the approach adopted in this thesis, is practical, in that it examines, and makes conclusions from, proved language use, rather than intuitions because the data in the corpus are taken from real life data such as newspapers, magazines, television shows, academic journals, etc. I focus on the adjectival collocates for the nouns [man] and [woman]. I use Dixon's (2004) seven categories of adjectives which consist of dimension, physical property, color, human propensity, age, value, and speed. I use mixed methods design which consists of qualitative and quantitative methods to analyze the data.

I divide the time range into ten groups based on the important events in American history. The results show that there are similarities and differences in the adjectival collocates of [man] in American English over time. For example, the phrase 'white man' has been quite frequent since 1861, while the phrase 'black man' has just started to gain a high frequency in 1941 and has even higher in frequency than 'white man' in 2001 and 2010. The similar case goes to the adjectival collocates of [woman]. The phrase 'American woman' can be found in all periods of time, while 'French woman' is only high in frequency during the World War I, and 'Muslim woman' has just started to gain high frequency during Obama's presidency. Although there are similarities in the modifiers of men and women, there are also some differences shown even within the same period of time and across time. For example, the phrase 'fat man' occurred in three period of time, while the phrase 'fat woman' only occurred once.

Keywords: *adjective, collocate, collocation, concordance, corpus, corpus linguistics, diachronic corpus, noun.*