# 1. At first glance, the term that best fits the sentences sounds like:

- a. I'd like a (large/small) amount of cash.
- b. Here comes a (large/big/small/little) dog.
- c. The dog let out a (big/small/little) yelp.
- d. They made a (big/small) mistake.
- e. What a cute (little) doggie!
- f. The twins are (big/small) for their age.

### 2. Factors that might be responsible for the choice of terms.

These words are often interchangeable. They are often used in the same situations with similar meanings. Big and large are synonyms. Small and little are also synonyms. However there are different contexts and collocations for each word.

- 1) 'Big' is used to refer to objects that are large in size, height, width, or amount. While for 'large', as a synonym of 'big', it still means big, but it requires the patient to be somewhat bigger than 'big'. It requires the noun to be bigger than people's prototype of the size/quantity of certain categories. Therefore, in sentence 'b', both 'large/big' dogs are acceptable, because both describe the size of a dog. However, 'large dog' might be even bigger than a 'big dog.' Since people have a prototype of how big a dog can be, 'large' seems to indicate an alien giant dog. Similarly, 'large twins' carry the meaning of 'bigger than the category' of all human twins.
- 2) The phrase 'large amount of' is often used as a phrase to describe uncountable nouns like money. 'Big' is used both on countable and uncountable nouns.
- 3) 'Large' can be used to describe both concrete bigger and abstract bigger. 'Big' is used more on concrete objects that interlocutors can refer to. For example, big in size, height, width, number, loudness, power, capacity, etc. This explains sentence f, the size of the twins is what the sentence is talking about. It should be either big or small.
- 4) Large' goes better with abstract things, such as scale, extent, degree, quantity. 'Big' is used more causally and used more often with real events, objects. You won't find 'a large mistake' (but people tend to say 'a huge mistake').

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- 5) Large and big are both antonyms of 'small'. They all talk about size, dimension, and intensity. The fact that each sentence, except for the one modifying 'doggie', can all bear the usage of 'small'. Small is widely used to refer to things that are either concrete or abstract, over small or medium small, formal small or informal small.
- 6) Small and little are synonyms, but they are different in terms of speakers' attitude. 'Little' is used only on small animals that are likely to be tiny, friendly, cute, and harmless. People do not call a whale 'little', unless there is a super small whale. Sentence 'e' uses the word 'doggie', in which the suffix '-ie/-y' indicates a tiny, fuzzy, cute dog. The same with sentence 'b', small dog would be just small in size, but little dog is smaller than small, and is more beloved than small things. For sentence 'c', 'little yelp' sounds like a poor little dog asking for food.

# 3. The TIME Magazine corpus

I focused on the TIME Magazine, 2000s corpus. There are over 3000 sentences for each term, therefore I chose some of the chunks and analyzed the following factors that I did not think of before.

# 1) 'Little' as an adjective.

- a) I found that 'little' is not only used for cute tiny animals like monkey, turtle, but also on cute kids, short story, and even tiny buttons, dresses or pills. As in example 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 12, 15 (table 1). Some of them are interchangeable with 'small', as with 'little voice' in example 8. 'Small voice' and 'little voice' usually leaves interlocutors the same idea of a not loud voice. Some are not interchangeable. In 'little piggy', 'little' bears speaker's emotion and attitude of loving the piggy, but 'small piggy' cannot express this.
- b) 'Little' is used frequently in the phrase 'a little' to indicate small in duration, as in 'a little late', in example 9.
- c) 'Little' indicates small in quantity or amount, scale. 'Little money' is different from 'small money'. The previous one means small in quantity, the later one means small in terms of size. Example from the corpus is 'bears little resemblance' and 'little contests.' As in example 13, 14.
- d) Used with uncountable nouns. For example 'a little time'.

# e) It has the meaning of 'younger', as in my little brother. As in example 11.

| 1  | little kid         | New Hampshire, " get out there on a three-hour walk and you are a <u>little</u> kid again. " # Outdoor enthusiasts can snowshoe wherever there is snow on   |
|----|--------------------|---|
| 2  | little dress       | here is comes in forms like a comic riff on the empowering influence of a <b>little</b> black cocktail dress.   |
| 3  | little boy         | filing suit to win him asylum. # In the middle is Elian, the <u>little</u> boy plucked from the Atlantic on Thanksgiving Day after the boat carrying him, his                                     |
| 4  | little monkey      | Manaus, Brazil, of biologist Marc van Roosmalen holding a tin can with a <u>little</u> monkey shivering inside. "' Oh, no. Not another one,'  |
| 5  | little turtle      | so it will be ready for the next time. " I'm like a <u>little</u> turtle, " she says from her Washington home. " I just bring a   |
| 6  | little<br>girl     | hinks that looks perverted, "Patsy says." JonBenet was an entertainer <u>Little</u> girls play dress up. "In a comment that didn't make the final   |
| 7  | little piggy       | ery partial to pork rinds c) arresting a convention protester d) playing this <u>little</u> piggy went to Chino # 2. Jesse Jackson termed racial diversity at the G.O.P.                          |
| 8  | little, tiny voice | months old, spilled something on her new shoe: " She said in a <b>little</b> , tiny, low voice,' Oh sh,' and my husband and   |
| 9  | a little           | was exactly how I dreamed it would happen. # I know I'm a <u>little</u> late on the dotcom trend, but the way I see it, I'm   |
| 10 | little story       | very good golfer, but he's an even better writer. From a distressing <u>little</u> story about Michael Jordan to some superb explorations of the golfer's soul, there                             |
| 11 | little brother     | At this late date, I don't want to dwell on my <b>little</b> brother taking my new bike without permission back in 1974. What's important is  |
| 12 | little buttons     | including one for a hanging cap rack that neatly holds the hats by the <u>little</u> buttons on top. Beck's firm also creates its own line of products,   |
| 13 | little resemblance | Twist was the inspiration for his snarling mafioso character.  Never mind that Twistelli bears <u>little</u> resemblance to Twist; if the judgment stands, McFarlane's Image Comics imprint could |
| 14 | little contexts    | " he says. " I like seeing how high they fly. We have <u>little</u> contests where we go out and see who can get the longest hang time on   |
| 15 | little pill        | GOOD NEWS # FOOD AND SEX Pfizer's little blue pill may do more than revive a flaccid love life. Viagra could restore  |

Table 1

### 2) 'Small' as an adjective

'Small' is a synonym of 'little' when they are used to describe something absolutely small in size, duration, value, degree, intensity. But there are differences:

- a) 'Small' can be used to compare with others of the same kind. It means some thing is generally physically small. One can say a small elephant to refer to an elephant that is smaller than the normal size. But 'little elephant' has to be absolutely as small as a newly born elephant. Example sentences from the corpus are: 1, 3.
- b) Young in age. Small in appearance comparing to peers. Thin. As in example 2, 9.
- c) Small in terms of numbers. Not great numerically. In example 4, 5, 6, 7, 8.10.
- d) Of little importance or on a minor scale. Example 12.
- e) Used with both countable and uncountable nouns. Such as 'a small amount of money' and 'a small number of friends.'

| 1  | Small boat     | Elian whose mother Elizabet, 29, drowned after the capsizing of the              |
|----|----------------|--|
|    |                | <b>small boat</b> in which she, Elian and 12 others had escaped Cuba.            |
| 2  | Small boy      | be just as ugly as the political kind and just as damaging to a small boy.       |
| 3  | Small battles  | she might be a political functionary in the vast Chinese bureaucracy,            |
|    |                | fighting small battles to achieve obscure goals.                                 |
| 4  | Small group of | a small group of avant-garde psychotherapists -                                  |
| 5  | Small number   | Volkswagen has a program to train 18 women a year admittedly a small             |
|    |                | number   |
| 6  | Small (budget) | Girlfight's <b>budget was small</b> (\$1 million), but the film is having a big- |
|    |                | time impact  |
| 7  | Small armies   | hundreds of <b>small private armies</b> recruited by Colombia's druglords        |
| 8  | Small portion  | His hard years make up only a small portion of a story filled with               |
|    | of             | enchanting details.  |
| 9  | Small (boy)    | Most of them will be too <b>small</b> to have a keyboard                         |
| 10 | Thin and small | A rubber bullet thwacked into Wael's shin. Thin and small for his                |
|    | (for his age)  | age, he reached down and rubbed the stinging wound with one hand                 |
| 11 | Small world    | It's a Small World.  |
| 12 | Small          | Rick Reinert has built a small business called Reha Enterprises                  |
|    | buisiness      |  |

Table 2

#### 3) Large and Big, as adjectives

These two are synonyms of each other. They are hard to separate. In a dictionary, 'big' and 'large' are always explanations of each other. Here I would like to put them together

and talk about what I found from the corpus. They both means more than average size, quantity, degree, intensity, etc.

| 1 | Large study     | For one thing, although the study was large drawing from a pool of             |
|---|-----------------|--|
|   |                 | 46,355 postmenopausal women  |
|   |                 | This news comes from a large study the first of its kind published in          |
|   |                 | Human Reproduction, of 56,000 women  |
|   | Big study       | Two weeks ago, a big study in the New England Journal of Medicine              |
|   |                 | showed that a particular pattern of drinking                                   |
|   |                 | What they didn't know but <u>a big study</u> involving 4,740 participants      |
|   |                 | published in the Archives of Neurology showed                                  |
| 2 | A large company | Anne Guepiere works in the Hong Kong office of a large U.S. company            |
|   |                 | that would prefer to remain nameless.  |
|   | A big (company) | Starbucks, the first <u>big U.S. retailer</u> to sign on, will promote its new |
|   | retailer        | coffee beans this fall with  |
| 3 | A large man     | He was a large, good-natured, hardworking man whose competitive                |
|   |                 | heart transcended even his impressive baseball stats.                          |
|   |                 | In a first-floor classroom, second-graders were just finishing up a music      |
|   |                 | class when a large man in cream-colored trousers dashed madly toward           |
|   |                 | them, rambling incoherently  |
|   | A big man       | He's <u>such a big man</u> solid as a brick wall and well over 6 ft that       |
|   |                 | he   |
| 4 | Large stocks    | But under Clinton, small stocks rose 16.2% a year, vs. 19.4% for               |
|   |                 | <u>large stocks</u> , reports Ibbotson Associates.                             |
|   | Big stocks      | To keep it simple, he says, stick with pairs of <u>big stocks</u> in the same  |
|   |                 | industry and pairs with similar long-term trading histories.                   |
| 5 | Large           | the current differential of 40% to 50% between mid-size and big oil            |
|   | differential    | is <u>too large to justify</u> .   |
|   | percentage      |  |
|   | Big portion     | A big portion of the Mississippi is missing from your cover.                   |
| L | T-1-1 - 2       | 1  |

Table 3

However, they are used in different contexts and have different collocations:

- a) Context is important. 'Big boss' is different from the 'large boss'. The previous one refers to the top guy; the later one refers to a fat guy.
- b) 'Big' is used for elder in age. 'Big brother' cannot interchange with 'large brother', which would mean a fat man.
- c) Large is more commonly used as collocations with the word 'amount': 'a large number of', 'a large amount of', 'a large audience of', etc.

d) 'Big' is used more widely than 'large'. More nouns can be modified by 'big' than 'large'.

Below I summarized two tables, table 4 notes sentences that can use 'large', but cannot use 'big'. Table 5 notes sentences that can use 'big', but were not found interchangeable with 'large'.

| 1 | By and large     | These are smaller prizes, by and large, but they're up for grabs.        |
|---|------------------|--|
| 2 | At large         | Government, the media and the public at large were all completely        |
|   |                  | convinced we programmers were too stupid to properly allow for a         |
|   |                  | change   |
| 3 | A large group of | Teachers have the greatest experience with a large group of normal kids. |
|   | A large audience | a large audience of African Americans                                    |
|   | of               |  |
|   | A large amount   | There's a large amount of celebrity dirt in Hollywood Animal, and        |
|   | of               | much of it is rich   |
|   |                  | meant I was able to use a large amount of new, fascinating papers and    |
|   |                  | photographs, including the letters of Stalin                             |

Table 4

| 1 | A big issue  | That's why dealing with company stock is a big issue                   |
|---|--------------|--|
| 2 | Big picture  | That's pretty manageable in the big picture                            |
| 3 | Big brother  | Hello, Big Brother! "  |
| 4 | A big mess   | The show's big, all right: a big mess                                  |
| 5 | Big eyebrows | A little man with <u>big eyebrows</u>                                  |
| 6 | Big money    | It is hard to deny that big money has had a huge influence on politics |
| 7 | Big elephant | It was like there was a big pink elephant in the room and everyone     |
|   |              | acted like it wasn't there.  |

Table 5

# 4. Conclusion

- 'A large/small amount of' is a fixed collocation. So for the first sentence, the terms best fits it should be 'I'd like a (large/small) amount of cash'
- O Here comes a (big/small) dog. In the second sentence, four words all fit to describe a dog. But normally, people would choose big/small in this case. Because 'large dog' means something extra big. It is rarely seen. It's not the best choice for a dog. 'Little dog' fits here, but people are more likely to choose 'doggie' instead of 'dog' as in sentence 5 to express a 'loving' attitude.

- o **The dog let out a (big/small/little) yelp.** Only 'large' is not proper here because 'big' has a wider distribution. It should go better with sound or voice.
- They made a (big/small) mistake. There were not any evidence of 'large mistake' or 'little mistake. I put 'big/small' here, but I think the best choice is 'big', because if one wants to refer to a small mistake, there should be other adverbs and adjectives, such as 'They just made a small mistake, no big deal.'
- What a cute (little) doggie! As was discussed before, in order to describe the loveliness and cuteness of the dog, the only proper word is 'little'.
- o **The twins are (big/small) for their age.** Big and large are all found in describing the size of a man in the examples in table 3. However, in the context of describing twins, it is more likely to be comparing these twins with other normal twins. Only big and small are used for size comparation.