A Comparative Study of the Colligation of the Japanese Degree Adverb "非常に" and "大変"

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The abstract collocation of words reflects a grammatical level of relationship that can be summarised as class association, a term introduced by Firth (1957 [1968], p. 181) as one of the key concepts in the study of corpus. A colligation is a collocation class that shows the different collocations between words. The classification of degree adverbs in Japanese can be divided into "evaluative degree adverbs (評価系程度副詞)" and "non-evaluative degree adverbs (非評価系程度副詞)" according to Watanabe's (1990) theory. This paper takes "非常に" and "大変", both of which are non-evaluative degree adverbs, as the objects of the study, using a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches, to analyse "非常に" and "大変", which belong to the same category of degree adverbs, from a co-occurrence perspective by using relevant statistical tools and the definition of colligation.

Keywords: colligation, degree adverb, Japanese, 非常に, 大変

Introduction

Definition of Colligation

The concept of colligation was first introduced in the early 1950s in an article by Harry Simon on the study of colligation in Chinese. The expression " Colligation" was first used in this article, but it did not attract much attention from the academic community at that time. Later, in 1957, Firth formally proposed the theory of "Colligation", defining its concept and definition in concrete terms, and the concept was gradually accepted by the linguistic community and widely used in the study of collocation at the corpus, lexical and grammatical levels.

Colligation is an important concept in the study of word collocation, which refers to the combination of grammatical categories (Wei, 2002). The term "Colligation" refers to an abstract representation of word combinations rather than a concrete collocation form, and can also be understood as a collocation formula between grammatical structures (Wei, 2002). For example, in Japanese, the structure "非常に+Adj" is a colligation, representing a type of collocation between the adverb "非常に" and an adjective, with concrete examples such as "非常に大きい" and "非常に多い".

Because of the abstraction of the concept of colligation, it is difficult to perceive the grammatical concept as a component of a sentence. The study of colligation is a useful tool for exploring the connections and

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components of a language system and for finding commonalities and features in unfamiliar languages. At the same time, for bilingual and multilingual learners, an understanding of the colligations of a word or a topic can facilitate the use of the vocabulary of that language and lead to new advances in second language acquisition.

Reason for Choosing the Topic

"非常に" is similar in meaning to "大変" and is often used in everyday life, although it is mostly used in formal expressions. The common dictionaries in the marketplace both have the meaning of "甚だしい", which means very, extremely. The two are also roughly the same in the classification of Japanese degree adverbs. Kudo (1983) and Moriyama (1985), among others, classify both "非常に" and "大変" as adverbs that tend to express high degrees in terms of the definition of "quantity" and "degree". Watanabe (1990) and Tawa (2011) classify both "非常に" and "大変" as adverbs in terms of "evaluation" and "non-evaluation" (i.e. "subjectivity" and "objectivity") as relatively objective, non-evaluative degree adverbs. It can be seen that "非常に" and "大変" are very similar in terms of semantics and classification, and the number of studies on the specific differences between them is relatively small. Some scholars, such as Katayama (2006), have studied the higher degree adverbs in which "非常に" and "大変" are found in beginner and intermediate textbooks, pointing out the subtle differences in the conjugation and grammar of the two, which provide some reference for this paper. However, there are relatively few studies of the class association of "非常に" and "大変" as "nodal words" on a categorical and grammatical basis in the earlier studies.

Previously, colligation was often used as a concept and method for studying the English corpus. The use of colligation in English language learning involves interlinking vocabulary and related grammatical knowledge to build a system of connections in learning this body of knowledge and to facilitate the expression and input of English language. Similarly, the Chinese language literature has also made use of colligation to study the Chinese corpus. Both domestic and foreign studies have mostly been analysed from the perspective of Chinese, English learners, and second language acquisition, but few scholars have studied word collocation and grammatical phenomena in Japanese from that perspective. In this paper, we examine the colligation classification of the Japanese degree adverbs "非常に" and "大変" as "nodal words" from the perspective of colligation, based on the previous classification studies, and explore them in more depth from both quantitative and qualitative perspectives.

Table 1

The Definitions of "非常に" and "大変" in Common Japanese Dictionaries

	『国語大辞典』 （小学館）	『新明解国語辞典』 第五版	『大辞泉』 （小学館）
非常に	程度がはなはだしいさま。なみひととおりではないさま。	普通△考えられる（言われる）程度よりはるかに強いものと受け取られることを表わす。	並の程度でないさま。はなはだしいさま。
大変	程度がはなはだしいさまを表す。非常に。たいそう。	（驚くべきほど）程度がはなはだしいことを表わす。	程度のはなはだしいさま。非常に。たいそう。

Research Methods

In constructing the corpus, firstly, using the KOTONAHA Language Corpus (『現代日本語書き言葉均衡コーパス』), 15,697 items containing "非常に" and 14,073 items containing "大変" were found. Afterwards, the examples that did not fit this study were manually screened out. For example, "大変" was used as an

adjective example. In the end, 461 items of "非常に" and 189 items of "大変" were selected as the basic and indexed corpus by merging and deleting similar items.

In terms of technical methodology, this paper uses Excel software to analyse and categorise the syntactic constituents of each of the 186 items obtained from the sample corpus, and presents the difference between the class association of the degree adverb "非常に" and "大変" by means of statistical and graphical displays.

Colligation of the Degree Adverb "非常に" and "大変"

In this paper, we use the indexed corpus to summarize the colligation patterns of "非常に" and "大変", and conduct a comparative qualitative analysis of the class association data.

Colligations of the Degree Adverb "非常に"

There are three main types of colligations for the degree adverb "非常に", namely "非常に+AdjP", "非常に+NP" and "非常に+VP".

The first major category is "非常に+ AdjP", where "非常に" directly modifies the adjective. When adjectives of this type are modified, they are often followed by words of a serious nature, such as "大き", "重要" and "残念", to increase their degree. Sometimes there is a case of "非常に+ N+の/が+AdjP", in which case the "N+の/が+AdjP1" part is often used as a conjunctive modifier to modify the noun that follows, as in (3).

(1) 非常においしかったです。It was very tasty.

(2) 非常に重大な問題になるに違いない。It must be a very serious issue.

(3) 非常に成績がいい人。People with very good grades.

(4) 当初よそしておりましたよりも非常に不況が深刻である。The recession is very much more severe than we had initially estimated.

The second major category is "非常に+ NP", which is less numerous, with a few classes of couplings of the form "非常に+ Adj + NP".

(5) 非常に昔。Very long time ago.

(6) 非常に変りものだ。A very odd person.

(7) タバコの効果が、うつ病にはどのくらい効果があるのかというと、非常に短期間である。The effects of tobacco on depression are very short-lived.

The third major category is the "非常に+VP", where the "非常に" directly modifies the verb. In this category of verb-modifying conjunctions, it is also common for "非常に" to be followed by a verb-object construction, i.e. "非常に+Nを+V", but because of the relatively free position of the subjunctive, the meaning of the sentence is still modifying the verbal component, as in (2). In addition, the verb phrase is also added after "非常に" (example (3). It is relatively uncommon for "非常に" to modify a noun directly. It is usually the case that the noun is joined by the word "ある", which indicates presence, i.e. "非常に+ N+ある/ない", to convey the meaning of "very ......", as in (4).

(8) これは非常に考えさせられる難しい問題です。This is a very thought-provoking and difficult question.

(9) 過去十年、十五年ぐらい、日本企業というのは非常に設備投資を抑制してまいりました。For the past ten or fifteen years, Japanese companies have been very restrained in their capital investment.

(10) この共通フレームワークは非常に役に立つ。This common framework is very useful.

(11) 非常に人気がある。Very popular.

Table 2

The Comparison of the Types and Numbers of Colligations in the "非常に" Category

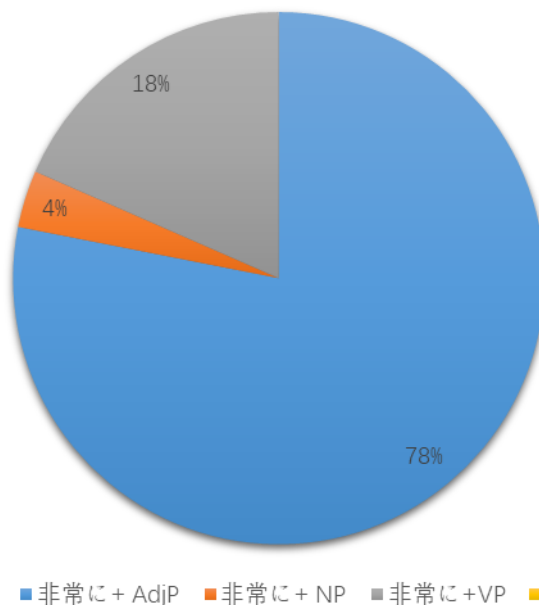| Basic colligations	Number	Colligations	Number
非常に+ AdjP	360	非常に+ AdjP	151
		非常に+ Adj+ NP	151
		非常に+ N+の+Adj	19
		非常に+Adj+ VP	39
非常に+ NP	16	非常に+N	14
		非常に+ Adv+N	2
非常に+VP	85	非常に+V	57
		非常に+VP	17
		非常に+ N+の+ある・ない	7
		非常に+ Adv+V	4

Figure 1. The Percentage of "非常に" Type of Colligations.

Colligations of the Degree Adverb "大変"

There are three main categories of class associations for the degree adverb「大変」: "大変+ AdjP", "大変 + NP", and "大変+ VP". Although the three categories are the same as '非常に', they differ in terms of subcategories.

The first major category is "大変+AdjP", where "大変" is followed by an adjective and an adjectival verb to deepen the degree of the adjective. This category of "大変" is simpler than that of "非常に", and the difference in meaning between the adjectives added after it is not significant, so it is combined into the same category. In terms of the number of colligations, "大変" is more often followed by an adjective. In some cases, the adjective is followed by an adjective to increase the degree of respect.

(12) この事実は大変興味深いです。This fact is very interesting.

(13) 薬の利き方には個人差があり、自己判断で薬を飲まないのは大変危険です。There are individual differences in the way of using medicine, and it is very dangerous not to take medicine by your own judgement.

(14) それが、大変失礼な申し上げ方かもしれませんが。That may be a very rude way to say it.

The second major category is the form "大変+ NP", which in most cases is expressed as "大変+ N+の/が + Adj". This is a subcategory of the second major category, where the noun or noun phrase is added directly after "大変", but the adjective following the noun is modified in the sense of the sentence. The two main forms are "大変+ N+Adj" and "大変+ N+を+V".

(15) 日本においても大変問題意識が高まってきていると思います。I think that the problem consciousness has increased greatly in Japan.

(16) 全国のネットワークを組み立てて動かす、こういう面で、物理的にも大変時間と労力と費用を要するということは先生御指摘のとおりだと思います。I think the professor is right in pointing out that it takes a lot of time, effort and money physically to assemble and operate a nationwide network.

(17) 政府の法案は大変苦肉の策なんです。The government's bill is a very bitter measure.

The third major category is "大変+VP", which is used to directly modify the verb and, as in the second usage category, deepen the degree of the verb. This category also contains words such as "助かります" to express gratitude, which semantically overlap with the first major category, as in (3). In the corpus data collected, there is also a special category of colligation, namely "大変+ exclamations". This type of colligation, which in fact only intends to deepen the degree of respect, is less frequent and is usually followed directly by "ありがとう/ありがとうございます". Since this variant of the word is similar to the verb in Japanese, it is incorporated into the "大変 + VP" type of colligation, as in (4).

(18) さらに、原作を読むか、それとも注釈書や評論を読んだ方がいいか、という問題でも大変迷いました。Furthermore, the question of whether it is better to read the original work or the commentaries and critiques was also very confusing.

(19) 医者は大変酔っていた。The doctor was very drunk.

(20) みなさんに教えていただけると大変助かります。It would be very helpful if you all could help me.

(21) 貴重な御意見、大変ありがとうございました。Thank you very much for your valuable opinions.

Table 2

The Comparison of the Types and Numbers of Colligations in the "大変" Category

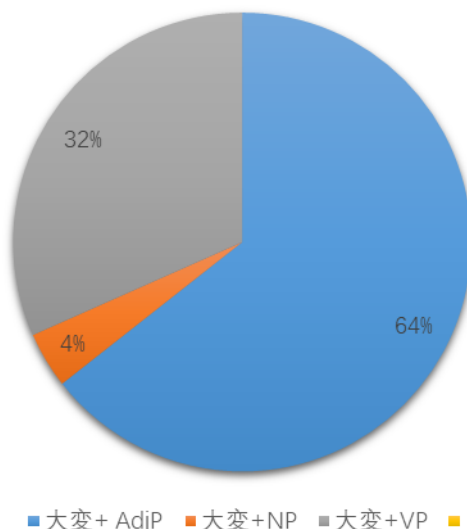| Basic colligations	Number	Colligations	Number
大変+ AdjP	114	大変+ Adj1	50
		大変+ Adj2	64
大変+NP	7	大変+N	6
		大変+ Adv+NP	1
大変+VP	56	大変+V	36
		大変+VP	17
		大変+N+が+VP	2
		大変+Adv+VP	1

Figure 2. The Percentage of "大変" Type of Colligations.

The Comparison of the Colligation of the Degree Adverb "非常に" and "大変"

When comparing the colligations of "非常に" and "大変", they are similar in that both can directly modify adjective components or verb components, and there are a relatively large number of colligations that modify adjectives, especially adjective verbs. Both are rare in that they modify nouns directly, generally by modifying nouns in phrases with verbs or adjectives or in verb-object constructions. Both modify nouns and verbs with occasional adverbs, i.e. "非常に/大変+Adv+V/N", both for the purpose of furthering the degree, but this is less frequent. The differences between the two are:

(22) When it comes to adjectives, "非常に" is often followed by "大き" and "重要", which are adjectives of a colligation in themselves and have a more positive connotation, while "大変" has the same situation but can be followed by a wider range of adjectives. When it is used with words such as "危険" and "失礼", the expression is relatively negative. However, when "大変" is used with an honorific, it can be used to express both gratitude and apology, and is semantically neutral, but with a deeper degree of respect.

(23) "大変" can be directly followed by an honorific or adjectival verb to express gratitude, respect, apology, etc. "非常に" does not have a colligation to express this level of meaning. Compared to the colligations of "非常に", "大変" is more subjective and more respectful. On the other hand, "非常に" is more formal and objective, being more essay-oriented. As a result, there are relatively few salutatory collocations following "非常に".

(24) "非常に" occurs with "非常に+N+の+ある·ない" when connected to a verb, but the number of colligations collected is small. There is no equivalent colligation for "大変", which usually occurs as a direct addition of a verb phrase or a verb-object construction.

(25) In terms of the number of specific colligations, the proportion of adjectives following "非常に" and adjective verbs is more balanced, with each accounting for 50% of the adjective class associations, while the number of adjective verbs following"大変" is significantly higher.

(26) In terms of the overall classification of colligations, although both are divided into three main categories, the subcategories of adjectives and verbs show that "非常に" has significantly more class associations than "大変", and the variety is flexible.

Conclusion

This paper has taken a comparative study of colligation by using the KOTONAHA Language Corpus （『現代日本語書き言葉均衡コーパス』）and Excel software to select similar degree adverbs "非常に" and "大変", and has used the data and graphs to show the similarities and differences between them in terms of the refinement of colligation and the semantic collocation of the latter. This paper is a preliminary attempt to investigate colligation in Japanese language learning, as the number of studies on colligation is relatively small. However, this paper only examines the collocation of the words "非常に" and "大変" with the help of colligation theory, but it does not analyse the collocation of the major classes of Japanese degree adverbs from a systematic and macroscopic perspective, nor does it address the promotion and influence of colligation on Japanese language learning. These issues need to be further explored by the academic community.

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