

# POLYSEMY OF THE MODERN CHINESE ADJECTIVE “SHENG”

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**Abstract:** The Modern Chinese Dictionary (7th Edition) is the most widely printed and circulated dictionary in the history of Chinese dictionaries, with the most academic and research value, and plays an important role in the process of Chinese learning. Comparing the Chinese and English dictionaries, it is found that the fineness of the items in the interpretation of Modern Chinese Dictionary (7th edition) needs to be further improved, and there are still some omissions in the delineation and interpretation of the items, which need to be remedied urgently. In this paper, we will use corpus technology and the theory of generative thesaurus, adopt the method of combining quantitative analysis and qualitative analysis, and with the help of Peking University's CCL corpus, we have taken statistical samples of the corpus of the modern Chinese adjective “shèng”, and we will take the 5,000 pieces of collated corpus as an important reference to try to make a comprehensive analysis of the adjective “shèng” in the Chinese dictionary (7th edition). With the help of Peking University CCL corpus, we have taken a statistical sample of the modern Chinese adjective “shèng”, and taken the 5000 corpus articles as an important reference, and attempted to redistribute the meaning of the adjective “shèng”, with as the reference, in order to be more helpful for Chinese learners to understand and distinguish the meaning of the word, and to provide some references for lexicographers.

**Keywords:** Corpus; Generative thesaurus; “Shèng”; Denotations

## 1 INTRODUCTION

The Dictionary of Modern Chinese (7th Edition) has reached a new height in terms of the theory of dictionaries, the level of compilation, and the quality of editing and proofreading. It is a model work in the compilation and publication of dictionaries. Its large circulation and wide application are rare in the history of dictionaries in the world; it has an important influence on the unification and standardization of modern Chinese, on the study, learning and correct use of modern Chinese, and on the expansion of the communication between China and various nationalities in the world.

Hu Wenfei and Zhou Jun [1] pointed out that “interpretation is the core and soul of dictionary compilation”, and Li Shichun [2] pointed out that “the fineness of the entries of commonly used polysemous words in Chinese medium-sized linguistic dictionaries is still at the level of the 1950s and 1960s when the sense of language was relied upon to determine the entries of the entries of the entries of the entries of the entries of the entries of the entries of the Chinese language. As a result, the classification of terms in Chinese language dictionaries of medium-sized languages is relatively loose and there are cases of omission of terms. Therefore, it is of great significance that the lexical cuts of polysemous words help language learners to better grasp the meanings of words.

## 2 REVIEW OF RELEVANT RESEARCH

Yuan Yulin [3] conducted a pioneering study on noun definitions in lexicography from the perspective of Generative Lexicon Theory, identifying several systemic issues in current lexicographical definitions and proposing solutions grounded in qualia-based analysis. Their research demonstrated that adopting a “thematic argument + qualia role” definitional schema enhances both the precision and systematicity of lexical entries. This model prioritizes three definitional sub-principles—patterning, uniformity, and identity—thereby facilitating the construction of lexicographic definitions that are more standardized, streamlined, and reader-accessible. Building upon Yuan Yulin's theoretical framework for qualia role classification, this study applies the “thematic argument-qualia role” schema to reanalyze the adjectival senses of the character “shèng”, aiming to achieve a comprehensive and semantically precise description of its adjectival semantics[4].

Since the 1980s, corpus technology has been widely used in foreign dictionaries. English dictionaries such as Longman Dictionary of Contemporary Advanced English (6th edition), Macmillan Advanced Learner's English-Chinese Dictionary, and Oxford Advanced Learner's English-Chinese Dictionary (10th edition), which dominate the market of English dictionaries, attach great importance to the discovery of new meanings of polysemous words by corpus technology. By utilizing corpus technology, the meaning of words can be determined more scientifically and objectively, avoiding the omission phenomenon caused by relying on the sense of speech. At the same time, corpus technology can help users understand the distribution of different word meanings in actual language use, thus making the dictionary more accurate and practical. This will enhance the quality of dictionaries and meet users' needs.

## 3 RESEARCH DESIGN

### 3.1 Analysis of the Adjectival Senses of “shèng” in Contemporary Chinese Dictionary

#### 3.1.1 Adjective: Prosper; flourish

Comparing with the Chinese-English Dictionary (3rd edition), we can find that the English counterpart of “Shèng” in this item is “Prosperous” in the Chinese-English Dictionary. In the Collins English-Chinese Dictionary (9th edition), the corresponding word is “Prosperous people, places, and economies are rich and successful”. The definition in Collins points out the subjective element “people, places, and economies” and captures the evaluative role of the subjective element “rich and successful.”

As we can see from the corpus annotations, the subject elements modified by the word “Shèng” are usually divided into two categories: one is abstract things such as “industry, society, religion, country, region, day, city, activity”; the other is living things such as plants. According to the interpretation principle of “subject element + object role” in generative thesaurus theory, when the subject element changes, the object role inspired by it will also change accordingly. According to the change of the subject element of the character “Shèng”, it is suggested to re-describe the item as the following two new items, categorized from different roles in the abstract and concrete:

① Adjective: The scene is prosperous and thriving. There are 1269 entries in the balanced corpus, with a frequency of 25.38%. In this item, the subject theorist usually points to the states and scenes of abstract things such as “regions”, “industries”, “activities”, etc., emphasizing that these states and scenes are “flourishing” and “prosperous”, highlighting that these states and scenes are ‘flourishing’ and “prosperous”. The characterization of these states and scenes as “thriving” and “prosperous” emphasizes the evaluative role of the subjective element.

② Adjective: Good healthy plant growth. There are 293 entries in the Balanced Corpus, with a usage frequency of 5.86%. In this item, the subject element usually points to plants, emphasizing the state of good growth and health of plants, and the modified objects are often words pointing to plants, such as “blossom”, “crop”, “branches and leaves”, etc. The word ‘bloom’ shows the state of “good growth and health” of plants, which highlights the fact that plants are “growing well and healthy”. The word “bloom” shows the plant's state of “good growth and health” and emphasizes the evaluative role of the subject element.

Comparing with the Chinese-English Dictionary, we can find that the English equivalent of the meaning of the word “Shèng” is “flourishing”, and the adjectival interpretation of ‘flourishing’ in Collins is as follows: “If a plant or animal flourishes, it grows well or is healthy because the plant or animal flourishes, it grows well or is healthy because the plant or animal flourishes. The adjectival definition of “flourishing” in Collins is as follows: “If a plant or animal flourishes. The Collins interpretation of “flourishing” points out the subject theorist “a plant or animal” [5] and captures the evaluative role of the subject theorist “it grows well or is healthy” and the scholastic role “the conditions are right for it”.

#### 3.1.2 Adjective: Intense; exuberant

By organizing the corpus, we found that there are 1,562 entries, accounting for about 25.38% of the total number of entries.

The Modern Chinese Dictionary adopts a word-for-word interpretation of this term. The meaning of “strong” is as follows: adjective, extremely strong; powerful: the corresponding meaning of “exuberant” is as follows: adjective, strong vitality; high emotion; luxuriant: it can be seen from the annotated corpus that the meaning of the word ‘sheng’ modifies the meaning of the word “Shèng”. It can be seen from the annotated corpus that the subject element modified by “sheng” tends to point to abstract things such as “vitality”, “energy”, ‘desire’ and “growth”. ” and other abstract things, showing the characteristics of strong momentum and power, highlighting the evaluative role of the subject element.

Comparison with the Chinese-English Dictionary reveals that the English equivalent of “energetic” in the Chinese-English Dictionary is “Shèng” in this sense. In the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary Advanced English (6th edition), the adjectival definition of “energetic” is “having or needing a lot of energy or determination.” [6]. The Longman Dictionary of Contemporary Advanced English (6th edition) captures the evaluative role of the subject element as “having or needing a lot of energy or determination”. Therefore, we propose that the sense be re-described as: adjective :Strong vibes; lots of energy.

#### 3.1.3 Adjective: grand

By organizing the corpus, it was found that there are 794 corpora for this denotation. It accounts for about 15.88%.

According to the labeled corpus, the objects modified by the character “Shèng” are often “meetings”, “banquets”, “costumes”, etc. The character ‘Shèng’ shows that the subject theorist is characterized by “large scale and grand ceremonies”, which highlights the subject theorist's evaluative role. The word “Shèng” characterizes the subject theorist as “large-scale and ceremonial” and highlights the evaluative role of the subject theorist.

Comparing with the Chinese-English Dictionary, we can find that the English counterpart of the meaning of the word “Shèng” is “grand”. The adjectival definition of “grand” in Collins is as follows: “If you describe a building or a piece of scenery as grand, you mean that its size or appearance is very impressive. appearance is very impressive. The

definition of “Collins” points out the subject theorist “a building or a piece of scenery” and captures the evaluative role of the subject theorist “its size or appearance is very impressive. ”. Therefore, we suggest that the denotation be re-described as: large in size; ceremonially grand.

### 3.1.4 Abundance

By organizing the corpus, it was found that there are 360 corpora indicating this denotation. It accounts for about 7.2%. The Modern Chinese Dictionary adopts a word-for-word interpretation of this term. The corresponding meanings of “abundant” are as follows: adjective, rich (in terms of material things). The corresponding interpretation of “abundant” in the Modern Chinese Dictionary is as follows: (material wealth, knowledge, experience, etc.) of great variety or quantity. The labeled corpus shows that The character “Shèng” emphasizes the characteristics of large quantity and variety of people or things, and the modified objects often point to “material wealth”, “production”, “food”, “talent”, etc. It highlights the subject's evaluative role. “food” “talent” etc., emphasizing the evaluative role of the subjective thesis element[7].

Comparing with the Chinese-English Dictionary, we can find that the English equivalent of “rich” in the Chinese-English Dictionary is “Shèng” . The Longman Dictionary of Contemporary Advanced English (6th edition) defines “rich” as follows: “LARGE AMOUNT containing a lot of something.”. The Longman Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Contemporary English (6th edition) captures the evaluative role of the subject's theorizing element as “LARGE AMOUNT” “containing a lot of something”. Therefore, we propose to redescribe the sense as: a large number; a lot of something.

### 3.1.5 deeply

By organizing the corpus, it is found that there are 122 corpus items indicating this denotation. It accounts for about 2.44%. The Modern Chinese Dictionary adopts a word-for-word interpretation of this term. The corresponding meanings of “Shèng” are as follows: adjective, (of feelings) strong: ~ friendship | ~ feelings. The item “Shèng” is often used to describe the depth of people's feelings. suggests that the item be re-described by the method of “subjectivist meta+objective character” : deeply attached.

### 3.1.6 Universal; widespread

By organizing the corpus, it is found that there are 456 entries, accounting for about 9.12% of the total number of entries. The Modern Chinese Dictionary adopts a word-for-word interpretation of this term. The corresponding meanings of “universal” in the Modern Chinese Dictionary are as follows: adjective, having a wide range of existence; having a common nature. The corresponding meanings of “extensive” in the Modern Chinese Dictionary are as follows: adjective, involving a wide range of aspects; universal. According to the annotated corpus, the subject element modified by the character “Shèng” tends to point to “phenomenon” “doctrine” “plague” “group” and other abstract concepts, emphasizing their universal and extensive characteristics and highlighting the evaluative role of the subject element. Therefore, we propose to recharacterize this term as “universal and extensive” by using the method of “subjective element + material role”.

### 3.1.7 Higher force; deeper degree

This interpretation is consistent with the portrayal of “subjective meta + physical role” and will not be modified.

## 3.2 Redistribution of the meaning of the word “Shèng” after depiction

In this paper, “Shèng” is selected as the research object, and based on the theory of generative thesaurus, combined with 5000 specific corpora extracted from the CCL corpus, we try to reclassify and describe the distribution of meaning terms of “Shèng” in modern Chinese, and put forward corresponding suggestions for modification. The distribution of the denotational items of “Shèng” in modern Chinese is summarized at , and corresponding modifications are proposed.

### 3.2.1 Meaningful terms related to the subjective theory of meta

Comparison of the meaning of the word “Sheng” before and after modification (table 1):

**Table 1** The Meaning of the Word “Sheng” Before and After Modification

Original meaning of Modern Chinese	Suggested meaning after modification
② Strong; vigorous: youthful vigor fire is very strong	③ Strong momentum; energetic: fire is very strong young vigor
③ Grand; solemn: meeting banquet	④ Large scale; solemn ceremony: meeting  banquet  decoration  classic  event
④ Rich; abundant: food	⑤ Large quantity; many types: food production prosperity of talents

⑤ Deep: affection|feelings

⑥ Deep feelings: affection|feelings

⑥ Common; widespread: practice|transmission

⑦ The aspects involved are common and extensive: practice|transmission

### 3.2.2 Meaningful terms related to changes in the subject's thesis elements

According to the rule that when the subject element changes, the object roles will also change accordingly[8], combining with the specific corpus, the adjective term of endearment is split into two denotative items according to the way of depicting "subject element + object roles". When the subject element points to abstract things such as "industry, society, religion, country, region, day, city, activity", the item is described as "adjective, the scene is prosperous and flourishing:"; when the subject element points to plants and other objects, the item is described as "adjective, the scene is prosperous and flourishing:". When the subject element points to a living thing such as a plant, the denotation is depicted as "adjective, the plant is growing well and healthy.

### 3.2.3 Frequency of use of items

According to the method of arranging the frequency of use of each item of the character "Shèng", from the highest to the lowest, reorder the items after adding and modifying them.

## 4 CONCLUSION

To summarize, the steps of describing adjectival items by applying the theory of material structure are: firstly, determine the subject element modified by the adjectival items in the corpus article by article, then classify the subject elements, then analyze the material structure of the adjectival items and the subject elements as well as the association between the two, and finally describe the items by adopting the interpretation mode of "subject element + material role" according to the activated material roles of the adjectives to achieve the purpose of descriptive discourse interpretation. Finally, according to the role of object activated by the adjective, the item is described by the interpretation mode of "subject theorist + object role", which achieves the purpose of using descriptive discourse to interpret meanings. The theory of object structure can more comprehensively and accurately depict the semantic features of the adjectival denotations of monosyllabic adjectives, which helps to optimize the lexical interpretation and facilitate the understanding of lexical meanings by dictionary users.

Due to the limitations of knowledge and reference materials, the author has only conducted a preliminary study on the distribution of meaning items of the word "Shèng", which is still incomplete in many aspects, such as insufficiently selected corpus, insufficiently diversified reference dictionaries, and so on, and I hope that will be able to throw out bricks to draw in jades and provide useful references for the subsequent researchers. The size and quality of the corpus have a direct impact on the results of the study, and the study in this paper has some limitations, such as the relatively small size of the corpus, the lack of rich and comprehensive samples, and the single reference dictionary, etc. Therefore, future research can start from expanding the size of the corpus to include more languages, so as to obtain more accurate and comprehensive results. Therefore, future research can start from expanding the size of the corpus and adding more languages to the lexicon for comparison, so as to obtain more accurate and comprehensive research results.

## COMPETING INTERESTS

The authors have no relevant financial or non-financial interests to disclose.

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