# Negative polarity contexts and the phraseologies of *bear,* *endure* and *stand*: a corpus-based study

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## 1. Introduction

Many EFL dictionaries connect the uses of verbs *bear, endure* and *stand* with negative polarity contexts.[1] The *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Contemporary English* (5th ed.) (*OALD5*), for example, gives the following explanations for the verbs, *bear, endure* and *stand* in the relevant sense:

(1)  **bear**: (with *can / could,* in negative sentences and questions) to accept sth unpleasant without complaining; to stand sth: *The pain was almost more than he could bear. She couldn't bear... I can't bear having... How can you bear to... ? He can't bear to...*
   **endure**: **1** to suffer patiently sth that is painful or uncomfortable: *endure toothache He endured three years in prison for his religious beliefs.*
   **2** (esp in negative sentences) to tolerate a person, and event, etc: *I can't endure that woman a moment longer. He can't endure to be left alone/ being left alone.*
   **stand**: (esp in negative sentences and in questions, with *can / could;* ...) to endure sth/sb; to bear sth/sb: *He can't stand... I can't stand... He can't stand being kept waiting. I can't stand people interrupting all the time.*

Different EFL dictionaries give different explanations for the contexts where these verbs appear. All the dictionaries I have checked connect the environments for *bear* and *stand* with negative polarity contexts, but they differ in the degree and way they recognize the connections. Some dictionaries make no reference to negative polarity in describing the use of *endure.*

Looking them up in the 56 million word COBUILD*direct* corpus reveals that there are significant and interesting differences in the degree to which these synonymous verbs are used in negative polarity contexts and in their distributional patterning. Sinclair (1991), Stubb (1993: 14–18), Carter (1998: 62–65) and others have indicated that different words, different senses and even different forms [variants] of a single word, show different distributional patterns, which may not be derived from the principles of grammar. Corpus-based studies have also shown that synonymous verbs have different distributional patterns.[2] The same can be said for the synonymous verbs, *bear, endure* and *stand*, and the difference is also reflected in the sentence types in which they tend to appear.

In the sections that follow, we first examine in section 2 the descriptions and treatment of the verbs found in various EFL dictionaries and usage manuals, where three types of treatment will be identified. In section 3, we examine the environments where the three synonymous verbs appear in the COBUILD*direct* corpus and compare their overall

distributional patterns. Significant and interesting differences will be revealed, some of which we will confirm with another large-scale corpus, the British National Corpus (BNC). In section 4, we discuss two problems with the descriptions and presentations of *endure* and *bear* in dictionaries.

## 2. The descriptions of the environments where the verbs appear in dictionaries and usage manuals

The descriptions of major EFL dictionaries and usage manuals published both in Japan and abroad fall into three types according to the way they treat the collocability between negation/interrogation and *bear*, *endure* and *stand* (all in the relevant senses). The three types of description can be summarized in table 1, focusing on the two crucial parameters:[3]

**Table 1 Three types of description of the verbs**

| parameter / Type | &lt;the treatment of *endure*&gt; | &lt;the degree of connection between negation/interrogation and the three verbs&gt; |
|---|---|---|
| Type 1 | often used in negative sentences | bear > stand > endure |
| Type 2 | split the relevant meaning into two; point out that in one meaning it is especially used in negative sentences | bear > stand > endure |
| Type 3 | no statement about collocability between negation and *endure* | stand > bear > endure |

In table 1, types 1 and 2 are similar with respect to both parameters. The following dictionaries belong to type 1:[4]

(2)  *Active Genius English-Japanese Dictionary* (1999), *College Lighthouse English-Japanese Dictionary* (1995)

An example of this description is taken from the *Active Genius English-Japanese Dictionary*:

(3)  **bear**: (usually with *can*; in negative and interrogative sentences) *can't bear* – 4[5]
  **endure**: (often with *cannot, could not*) *can no* longer *endure* – 1, *couldn't endure* – 1, *cannot endure* – 1
  **stand**: (usually in negative, interrogative and *if* conditional sentences; with *can, could*) *can't stand* – 2, *couldn't stand* – 1, *Can* you *stand...?*

Among type 2 are the following dictionaries, besides the *OALD5* whose description we have already shown:

(4)  *Learner's Progressive English-Japanese Dictionary* (1997), *Super Anchor English-Japanese Dictionary* (1997), *New Global English-Japanese Dictionary* (1994)

Among type 3 are the following dictionaries and usage manual:

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(5) *Collins COBUILD English Dictionary* (2nd ed.) (*CCED2*), *Longman Language Activator* (1994), *COBUILD English Usage* (1990)

Below is a sample description taken from the *CCED2*:

(6) **bear: 5** If you **bear** an unpleasant experience, you accept it because you are unable to do anything about it. *They will have to bear... He bore...*
**6** If you can't **bear** someone or something, you dislike them very much. *can't bear – 3*
**endure:** *The company endured... which they had to endure...*
**stand:** *can't stand – 3, Stoddart can stand any account of personal criticism. How does he stand...?*

The *CCED2* makes no statements about the occurrence of *endure* in negative sentences. It also gives an independent treatment/definition to the affirmative use of *bear* under **bear 5**. Although it shows an affirmative example for *stand*, this seems to indicate that the *CCED2* tries to show that *bear* is more likely to be used in affirmative sentences than *stand*.[6]

## 3. The distributions of the verbs in the COBUILD*direct* corpus

In this section, we see the distribution of the three synonymous verbs in the COBUILD*direct* corpus, with special attention to sentence types in which they appear, in order to see the degree of their compatibility with negative polarity contexts.[7] We see the distribution of *bear* in 3.1, that of *endure* in 3.2 and that of *stand* in 3.3. In 3.4, we compare their overall distributional patterns and identify major differences and describe the uses of the verbs mirrored in their distributions.

### 3.1 The distribution of *bear*

Before showing the distribution of *bear* in the corpus, a note is in order about apparently relevant examples which we have not included in our survey. They are those of *bear* with inanimate subjects:[8]

(7) These were deals done behind closed doors **which** could not *bear* the light of public scrutiny, which would embarrass both allies, ... (ukbooks/B0000001117)

In (7), *bear* has a kind of passive interpretation, which is not the case with those whose subjects are animate. As we have already seen in section 1, different senses of a single word usually show different distributional patterning. Thus, it would be desirable to treat the two uses separately. Examples like (8) are also excluded:

(8) The news agency said that the Economic Planning Board will send one hundred and twenty million dollars to help fund Operation Desert Shield and a hundred million to

help countries *bear* the strain of imposing United Nations sanctions.

(bbc/S1000901102)

*Bear* in (8) is used in the sense of 'carry' or 'shoulder', and these verbs appear in different syntactic environments from the ones used with the sense of 'put up with'.

Table 3 shows the environments where four variants, *bear, bears, bore* and *borne* appear in the corpus. The examples are sorted basically according to their construction types. The left column shows the various grammatical frames in which each example falls into, the center column the raw counts of the samples, and the right column the relative percentage of the major frames.

The following are sample sentences for some of major construction types:

(9) **in negative contexts:**

a. I'M in love for the first time and enjoy being with my girlfriend so much I **can't** *bear* the thought of leaving her. (sunnow/N9119980402)

b. But before five minutes have passed he draws himself up, shakes his head as though he feels a sharp pain, and tugs at the reins. He can *bear* it **no longer.** Back to the yard!" he thinks. 'To the yard!" (usbooks/B9000001423)

c. Well because I think she'd smoke all the time and I <ZGY> it's disgusting <F01> Mm <F04> But **I don't think** I could *bear* to be <ZG1> near <ZG0> her <F01> Because of the smell or <F04> Erm <ZF1> (ukspok/S9000001240)

**after words with negative implication:**

d. We are always here for those for whom life may be getting **too much to** *bear*, and we have the time to listen and give emotional support — in absolute confidence. (ukephem/E0000000092)

e. For both Cockburn and WHSmith a mistake would be **hard to** *bear*. (times/N2000951104)

**in interrogative sentences:**

f. People often remark to her, 'How can you possibly stand your disability? **How can you** *bear* it year in, year out?' (ukbooks/B0000001233)

**in other negative polarity contexts:**

g. A three-year unlimited mileage warranty guarantees that no matter how much you put your Sportrak through its paces, it will survive to see a happy resale day. That's **if** you can ever *bear* to part with it. (ukephem/E0000002491)

**in affirmative sentences:**

h. This capacity to tolerate the emotional onslaught from the infant (sometimes combined with that of society), while thwarting the immediate gratification of their needs, requires that the mother **can** *bear* ambivalence in her emotional world. (ukbooks/B0000001312)

i. His accidental death is the second the Princess has **had to** *bear* in the space of a little over eight years. (bbc/S1000901003)

j. The subjects of homelessness, VAT on fuel, the managerial dismemberment of the

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## Table 2 Distribution of BEAR in the corpus

| environments | number of occurrence | subtotal (percentage) |
|---|---|---|
| negation | 359 | 63.77 |
| a. after a modal/semi- auxiliary + not | 306 | |
| cannot [can't] bear | 143 | |
| could not bear [have borne (3) [9]], couldn't bear [have borne (2) ] | 160 | |
| would not have been able to bear, would not bear, be not going to bear | 3 | |
| b. with a negative | 42 | |
| could [can] bear... no longer, could no longer bear | 9 | |
| can bear... no more | 1 | |
| never could bear, can never bear | 3 | |
| Neither of... could bear, neither could bear | 3 | |
| no... could bear | 1 | |
| nor could... bear | 1 | |
| No one [None] should have to bear | 2 | |
| could [can] hardly bear, hardly to be borne | 12 | |
| be unable to bear | 10 | |
| c. with a negative in the main clause + a modal auxiliary | 11 | |
| ... don't think [feel] ... could [can] bear | 5 | |
| ... was [is] not sure... could [can] bear | 2 | |
| cannot [no... can [could]] make ... easier to bear | 3 | |
| There's no way I can bear to | 1 | |
| after (a) word(s) with negative implication | 88 | 15.63 |
| too... (for...) to bear | 48 | |
| hard(er) to bear, the hardest part to bear (1) | 21 | |
| difficult (for...) to bear, have difficulty to bear (1) | 10 | |
| I think it fairly odd that you can bear to | 1 | |
| impossible to bear | 1 | |
| can only bear, could only ever bear (1), could only... and bear (1) | 5 | |
| barely bare to | 1 | |
| ... alone can bear | 1 | |
| in interrogative sentences | 24 | 4.26 |
| wh-questions: How can [could] ... bear , with indirect questions (3) | 11 | |
| how on earth could you bear, How did ... bear, Who will bear | 3 | |
| yes-no questions: Can [Could] you bear, could ... bear | 6 | |
| indirect yes-no questions: ... if [whether (2)] ... bear | 3 | |
| indirect negative questions | 1 | |
| in the other negative polarity contexts | 28 | 4.97 |
| in conditional if-clauses | 13 | |
| in so far as I was able to bear, as long as I can bear | 2 | |
| in until-clauses | 1 | |
| in comparative constructions | | |
| more (of NP) than ... can [could] bear | 10 | |
| as ... as x can bear | 2 | |
| in affirmative sentences (sorted by <meaning> & form) | 64 | 11.37 |
| <ability> | | |
| can [could] bear, can [could] be borne, should [will] be able to bear | 8 | |
| with other forms; allows us to bear, that capacity to bear, | 3 | |
| <obligation> | | |
| have [has, had] to bear, must bear, need(s) to bear, supposed to bear | 6 | |
| with other forms; NP to be borne, told [taught] to bear | 6 | |
| <prediction/intention> will [would] bear | 5 | |
| <purpose and others> to bear, help... (to) bear | 6 | |
| <easier to bear pattern — expressing the present/past state, or as general statements> | | |
| easier (for...) to bear, find ... easy to bear (1) | 8 | |
| the more painful to bear, pain enough to bear | 2 | |
| <the present state/general statements> bears (3), bear (1) | 4 | |
| <the past state> bore, was borne | 7 | |
| <the continuous state> (perfective) have borne | 9 | |
| the TOTAL number of examples/percentage | 563 | 100 |

Health Service, and all of the other social crutches that made being old, ill or poor **easier to** *bear* become increasingly discussed in Glasgow. (ukephem/E0000001538)

In table 2, 63.77 per cent of occurrences of *bear* are used in negative sentences almost always with *can/could*. Thus, the dictionary descriptions about *bear* in (1) and (3) are found to be not off the mark, but too strong in their claims.

## 3.2 The distribution of *endure*

Before we look at the distribution of *endure* in this sub-section, note first that about five examples like (10) are excluded in the present survey. (10) has an inanimate NP as its subject and little dynamic processes are involved in the proposition, hence passivization is not allowed (cf. Declerk, 1991:200), which *endure* with a volitional/animate subject generally allows:

(10) Originally sponsored by Procter and Gamble, the show *endured* a rapid succession of headwriters and even a move from New York to CBS Television City in Hollywood.
(ukmags/N0000000036)

Table 3 shows the distribution of various forms of *endure* in the relevant sense:

Examples of some often-occurring patterns are given in (11):

(11) **in negative contexts:**
a. 'I am such a nervous passenger and I **couldn't** *endure* the flight without a cigarette. Had I known I couldn't smoke, I wouldn't have taken that flight.
(times/N2000960312)
b. On January 6, he persuaded his friend John Dolliver of Iowa to read a letter before the Senate condemning Ballinger and the Alaskan coal claims. Taft **could no longer** *endure* such insolence. (usbooks/B9000001429)
**in affirmative sentences:**
c. He was held for several weeks by the Red Army and **had to** *endure* a gruelling forced march before eventually reaching Allied lines. (times/N2000951220)
d. As head of Paramount Pictures, Sherry Lansing greenlights 20 big-budget films a year and *endures* endless male gossip about whether she slept or worked her way to the top. (times/N2000960316)
e. They *endured* appalling food and a lounge infested with insects during their stay at Majorca's Belvedere Park Hotel. (today/N6000940804)
f. Maimed in Southeast Asia, made whole again through force of will during a painful recuperation, he also **had** *endured* the dark days after Vietnam, when racial strife, drugs, and indiscipline nearly destroyed the Army. (usbooks/B9000001151)
g. Of course, no one is completely happy all the time. Frustrations, disappointments and sorrows are inevitable. They must **be** *endured* bravely, with no fuss and no self-

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## Table 3 The distribution of ENDURE in the corpus

| environments | number of occurrence | subtotal (percentage) |
|---|---|---|
| negation | 36 | 5.06 |
| a. after a modal/semi- auxiliary + not | 8 | |
| *cannot* endure | 2 | |
| *couldn't [could not]* endure | 3 | |
| I'*ll not* endure | 1 | |
| *not able to* endure | 2 | |
| b. with a negative | 26 | |
| (could) *no longer* endure, *no longer* prepared to endure, can endure *no more* | 11 | |
| can [must] *never* again endure, *never* need to endure | 4 | |
| *no...* could [should] endure, *no...* endures | 4 | |
| could *hardly* endure | 1 | |
| *unable to* endure | 1 | |
| with *not* (ex. keen *not* to endure, *not...* enough to endure) | 5 | |
| c. with a negative in the main clause + a modal auxiliary | 2 | |
| ... *don't think...* can [could] endure | 2 | |
| after a word with negative implication | 14 | 1.97 |
| *without* (...) having to endure | 5 | |
| *too...* to endure | 4 | |
| *hard* to endure | 1 | |
| have... *only* to endure | 1 | |
| others (ex. *less* able to endure, *least* constrained to endure) | 3 | |
| in interrogative sentences | 7 | 0.98 |
| *wh*-questions: *Who* could endure, *Why* should... endure, *What* would... endure | 3 | |
| indirect *wh*-questions: *how...* could endure, *why...* endure | 2 | |
| indirect *yes-no* questions: *wonder if...* could endure, *Do you think...* can endure | 2 | |
| in the other negative polarity contexts: in conditional *if*-clauses | 3 | 0.42 |
| in affirmative sentences (sorted by <meaning> & form) | 652 | 91.57 |
| <obligation> | | |
| *have to [has to, had to]* endure, (*have [had] had to* endure (2)) | 156 | |
| *must* endure | 19 | |
| *be forced to* endure | 10 | |
| <ability> | | |
| *can [could]* endure, will *be able to* endure (1) | 12 | |
| <prediction/intention> *will [would, willing to]* endure | 16 | |
| <in the other future-oriented contexts> *certain to* endure, *likely to* endure, *prepare to* endure, *be prepared to* endure, *be expected to* endure | 9 | |
| <purpose> *to* endure | 6 | |
| <the present state/general statements> endure | 85 | |
| <the past state> endured | 135 | |
| <the continuous state> have [has, had] endured | 128 | |
| <progressive aspect> be enduring | 11 | |
| in passive constructions: be endured | 33 | |
| in gerundial constructions: prep + enduring, etc. | 21 | |
| in participial constructions: NP + enduring (adjectival use) | 11 | |
| the TOTAL number of examples/percentage | 712 | 100 |

pity.                                        (ukbooks/B0000001285)

A look at table 3 tells us that *endure* is predominantly used in affirmative sentences, whose distributional patterning is totally different from that of *bear*, and that the description of *endure* in type 1 dictionaries in table 1 is not adequate.[10]

## 3.3 The distribution of *stand*

First, note that examples like (12) are not taken into account in the survey. *Stand* in (12) is used somewhat differently from the relevant sense, i.e. 'to be done or made well enough to be successful or strong' (cf. the *LDOCE3*), and accordingly their phraseology is different, too.

(12) a. When choosing wallpaper for Alexander's room, Lindy wanted a pattern that would *stand* **the test of time**.                        (ukmags/N0000000614)

   b. 'If it is the right thing to do," said the president, 'then it should be done. I guess we can *stand* **the criticism**."                        (usbooks/B9000001429)

Table 4 shows the distribution of *stand* in the corpus:

(13) are some examples of *stand* in the major environments in table 4:

(13) **in negative contexts:**

   a. But i on a Saturday it's horrendous in there. I **can't** *stand* it <FOX> <ZGY> I've never been shopping <ZGY> <FOX> Oh it's murder in there.

                                        (ukspok/S9000001302)

   b. 'There was a time when I **couldn't** *stand* to see any person seeing me sing, not even Prince Charles.                        (today/N6000940421)

   c. At times he turned his head or cocked it, as if he were hearing important messages from every drop of rain, every scuttling squirrel. Even when the rain slacked and died, Meer sat unmoving, until Jahdo finally **could** *stand* it **no longer**. Meer? I feel so awful."                        (ukbooks/B0000000906)

   **in interrogative sentences:**

   d. Well, I really don't know **how** they *stood* it. Isabel finally confessed that it wasn't like living with a person at all, it was like living with sound. (usbooks/B9000001423)

   **in affirmative sentences:**

   e. Shane Scriven is in a sauna, his mind trying to convince his exhausted body he **can** *stand* the energy sapping and lung-busting heat for a few minutes longer.

                                        (oznews/N5000950928)

   f. Look, Crossy, I'm tired too," Joe defended himself, shying off. 'Why pick on me?" <p> Cause you're soft as a mattress and **can** *stand* it," Cross explained.

                                        (usbooks/B9000000492)

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## Table 4 Distribution of STAND in the corpus

| environments | number of occurrence | subtotal (percentage) |
|---|---|---|
| negation | 424 | 91.58 |
| a. after a modal/semi- auxiliary + not | 384 | |
| *can't* [*cannot*, (I) *Can't, can not*] stand | 239 | |
| *couldn't* [(I) *Couldn't*] stand, *could not* stand, *couldn't* have stood (2) | 132 | |
| *won't* stand, *wouldn't* stand, *would not* stand | 6 | |
| *not be able to* stand, *not likely to* stand (1) | 7 | |
| b. with a negative + a modal/semi- auxiliary | 33 | |
| could [can] *no longer* stand (5), could stand... *no longer* (8), *no longer*... can stand (2), could stand... *no more* (3) | 18 | |
| can [could] *never* stand | 4 | |
| *No* [*no*]... can [could] stand | 3 | |
| *nor* able to stand | 1 | |
| could [can] *hardly* stand | 4 | |
| be *unable to* stand | 3 | |
| c. with a negative in the main clause + a model/semi- auxiliary | 7 | |
| ... *don't* [*didn't*] *think*... be able to [ought to, could] stand, could have stood | 7 | |
| after a word with negative implication | 5 | 1.08 |
| *hard* to stand | 1 | |
| *only* able to stand, *Only*... could stand | 2 | |
| could *barely* stand | 1 | |
| even *less*... could stand the idea of ... | 1 | |
| in interrogative sentences | 13 | 2.81 |
| *wh*-questions: *How* can... stand | 3 | |
| indirect *wh*-questions: *how (adv.)*... can [could, be able to] stand | 5 | |
| *yes-no* questions: *Could*... stand | 1 | |
| indirect *yes-no* questions: ... *if*...can [could] stand | 3 | |
| with interrogative sentences in the main clause (*Do you think* that... can stand) | 1 | |
| in the other negative polarity contexts | 5 | 1.08 |
| in conditional *if*-clauses | 3 | |
| *as long as*... can stand | 1 | |
| in comparative constructions; *more than*... can stand | 1 | |
| in affirmative sentences (sorted by <meaning> & form) | 16 | 3.45 |
| <ability> | | |
| *can* [*could*] stand, *be able to* stand (3), *could* have stood... if... (1) | 15 | |
| <the present state> stands | 0 | |
| <the past state> stood | 0 | |
| <the continuous state> have stood | 1 | |
| the TOTAL number of examples/percentage | 463 | 100 |

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Table 4 reveals that *stand* is used mostly in the frame of *can't [couldn't] stand*, and its distributional pattern is roughly the opposite of that of *endure*.

## 3.4 Comparing the distributional patterns and the usage of the verbs

Now that we have seen the distribution tables of the three verbs, we can compare their overall distributional patterns. Two significant differences emerge. One is that the distributional pattern of *endure* stands out in that it is predominantly used in affirmative sentences (91.57 per cent of all), whereas the predominant environments for *bear* and *stand* have negative polarity. Another is that although both *bear* and *stand* prefer negative polarity contexts, there is a significant difference in their distributional patterning: *bear* spreads across much wider environments including affirmative contexts. While 91.58 per cent of *stand* are used with negatives almost always with *can/could*, only 63.77 per cent of *bear* are. A significant number of *bear* examples (15.63 per cent) are used after elements with negative implications such as *too... to* and *hard to*. The number of the examples which appear in the other negative polarity contexts is also significantly greater than *stand*, as is the number of its affirmative uses. While the examples of *bear* in affirmative sentences tend to be distributed in future-oriented contexts, they certainly spread across much wider contexts than *stand*. The differences indicate that *bear* is lower than *stand* in the degree of 'negativity'.

The differences in the frequency of *bear* and *stand* appearing with some negative polarity items are also attested in another large-scale corpus, the BNC:[11]

**Table 5. *Bear* and *stand* with some negative polarity items in the BNC**

| environments | number | environments | number |
|---|---|---|---|
| **too adj. to** *bear* | 34 | **too adj. to** *stand* | 1 |
| **hard to** *bear* | 26 | **hard to** *stand* | 0 |
| **difficult to** *bear* | 9 | **difficult to** *stand* | 0 |
| **more than... can/could** *bear* | 36 | **more than... can/could** *stand* | 15 |
| *bear* in conditional **if**-clauses | 19 | *stand* in conditional **if**-clauses[12] | 16 |

Although the number of occurrences in conditional *if*-clauses is almost the same, and the frequency difference in comparative constructions is not as large as that found in tables 2 and 4, we can observe a striking difference in the number of each verb appearing in the first three frames in table 5.

The *LDOCE3* (p. 97) shows that *stand* is roughly three times more frequently used than *bear* in spoken English, whereas *bear* is a little more than twice as frequently used as *stand* in written English. On the other hand, the sequence of 'too + one optional adjective or adverb + to infinitive' is twice to four times more frequent in the written sub-corpora than in 'the UK spoken English' in COBUILD*direct*. These factors may contribute to the frequency difference of the first phrase in table 5, but it is far larger than we could attribute solely to the register preferences of the words and phrases in question. The difference should be related to the properties of *bear* and *stand*: *bear* is lower on the scale

of 'negativity' than *stand*.

Concluding this section, let us portray the usage of the three synonymous verbs reflected in their distributional patterning. The primary function of *endure* seems to describe situations where someone suffers hardship with patience and a strong will for a relatively long time, and hence its overwhelming appearance in affirmative sentences. On the other hand, *stand* has a strong compatibility with negative sentences, and it is used to express that someone simply cannot tolerate or accept someone/something (any longer), indicating a strong association with impatience. While *bear* is often used in negative sentences, a significantly larger number of its examples are distributed among a variety of negative polarity contexts without negatives when compared with *endure* and *stand*. This reflects the fact that *bear* is higher than *endure* and lower than *stand* in the degree of 'negativity'.

## 4. Notes on descriptions in dictionaries

In this paper, we have focused on differences in distributional patterning of a set of synonymous verbs, *bear*, *endure* and *stand*. In concluding, we briefly examine two problems found in dictionary descriptions which we have not yet touched upon. The first problem is the treatment of *endure* in type 2 dictionaries. As quoted in (1), the *OALD5* recognizes two meanings corresponding to respectively affirmative and basically negative uses for *endure*:

(14) endure: **1** to suffer patiently sth that is painful or uncomfortable
         **2** (esp in negative sentences) to tolerate a person, and event, etc

The presentation, however, is difficult to interpret. I asked two of my American colleagues which of the meanings *endure* in 16 affirmative and six negative sentences are interpreted with. Surprisingly, their judgement did not match in the majority of the examples. It seems that one of them judged based on the seriousness of the situations expressed and the other on the contents of the object noun phrases. Thus in (15), while the one judged that a serious situation is involved and interpreted the meaning of the verb as 1 of (14), the other, focusing on the object of the verb, *the fighting*, interpreted it as an event, and judged the meaning of the verb as 2.

(15) The almost farcical collapse of the cease-fire...dealt a bitter blow not only to the people of Bosnia, who &lt;p&gt; have to *endure* **the fighting**, but also to the negotiators (who) believe today's meeting still has a purpose.      (npr/S2000920727)

The two are professionals with MA in TESOL, nevertheless, their ways of interpreting (14) are different. It is hard to imagine that the division of the meaning and use would help EFL learners understand the use of *endure* better. Relevant to this, these meanings are also identified for a series of examples of *bear* by the two informants, for which the *OALD5* lists only one meaning:

(16) to accept sth unpleasant without complaining; to stand sth

It is not understandable why the *OALD5* divides the relevant meaning into two for *endure*. It would rather confuse its users. The same line of argument also applies to type 2 English-Japanese dictionaries. Probably it should be better to give a single definition for *endure*, too, as type 3 dictionaries do, and to note, if necessary in comparison with *bear* and *stand*, that it is usually used in affirmative sentences.

The second point is the usage notes about the possible sentence types where *bear* appears in type 1 and 2 dictionaries. Indeed, *bear* prefers negative contexts, but it is doubtful that its occurrence in questions needs a special mention in dictionaries. This is because, first of all, the percentage of *bear* in interrogative sentences in table 2 is not so outstanding. Secondly, the t-scores between *bear* and possible interrogative markers such as *can/could* in the relevant positions and *wh*-phrases are not especially high.[13] We cannot show specific scores and numbers because of space limitation, but when we look at the t-scores between some verbs and apparent interrogative markers and the numbers of the latter actually used as interrogative markers, we can get the following picture: *bear* shows higher degree of collocability with interrogative markers than *drink* and *study*. But the degree is probably about the same as that for *consider* and *stay*, and lower than that for *work*. The degree for *mind*, a negative polarity item, is probably about five times higher. Thus, it is doubtful that *bear* has a particularly strong association with questions.

Thirdly, in an informant test, *bear* in affirmative sentences is judged as fairly good, which mitigates the need for emphasizing the preference for interrogative uses. Quirk, *et al.* (1985: 785) point out that the sentence, *I can bear that type of music* is dubious in its acceptability. Indeed, two of my seven informants (six are American and one is British) judged a similar sentence, *I can bear this type of treatment* as unacceptable and another as awkward. But the acceptability of examples in such affirmative contexts as in table 2 generally improves; on average, only two persons rated each of eight sentences presented to them as awkward or unacceptable. The acceptability of its interrogative version (*Can you bear this type of treatment?*) is not better, either; three of them judged it as awkward.[14] As already pointed out in the last section, the distributions of *bear* in affirmative sentences may be somewhat limited, but it is a fairly stable usage. There do not seem to be positive reasons to give its interrogative uses a special status along with its negative uses.[15]

## Notes

1. See Quirk, *et al.* (1985: 782–85) for negative polarity contexts, which they call "nonassertive"contexts.
2. See, for example, Partington (1998: 29–47) for different syntactic and collocational environments in which *sheer, pure, complete* and *absolute* appear, and Biber, Conrad and

Reppen (1998: 43–53) for distributional patterns of *big, large,* and *great* across genres.

3. Only crucial differing points are highlighted here. Other descriptive points are to be discussed later in section 4.

4. Ando & Yamada (1995) also point out that *endure* is usually used in the pattern of 'cannot/could not endure to do/doing', although its position concerning the other parameter is not clear.

5. '*can't bear* — 4' indicates here that four examples are illustrated, in each of which the key sequence *can't bear* is found. The same interpretation is expected for the other examples in (6).

6. The treatment of the verbs in the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* (3rd. ed.) (*LDOCE3*) is similar to that of type 3 dictionaries. It does not connect the use of *endure* with negation and shows only affirmative sentences. It also has independent definitions for the affirmative along with negative uses of *bear* and *stand*. It shows an affirmative example for *bear* but not for *stand*, but it is not clear from this whether the dictionary finds a greater degree of 'negativity' in *stand*.

7. COBUILD*direct* is a subset of a 320 million word corpus, the Bank of English, which has been jointly constructed by the University of Birmingham and HarperCollins. It consists of 56 million words, taken from texts in various genres, from both written and spoken English, and from different regional varieties of English. Most of the texts were produced in the 1990's. For further information about COBUILD*direct*, see the COBUILD home page: http://titania.cobuild.collins.co.uk/.

8. The sources of the examples from the COBUILD*direct* corpus are indicated at the end of each example. The abbreviations stand for the following sources or sub-corpora:

   | | |
   |---|---|
   | bbc ............ | transcripts from broadcasts of the BBC World Service |
   | npr ............ | transcripts from broadcasts of National Public Radio |
   | oznews ..... | issues of *the Courier-Mail* and *The Sunday Mail* (Australia) |
   | times ........ | issues of *The Times* and *The Sunday Times* |
   | today ......... | issues of *Today* newspaper (the UK) |
   | sunnow ..... | issues of *The Sun* |
   | ukbooks .... | books published in the UK (45 non-fictions, 26 fictions) |
   | ukmags ..... | periodicals published in the UK |
   | ukephem ... | ephemera produced in the UK |
   | ukspok ...... | spoken English collected in the UK (mostly spontaneous) |
   | usbooks ..... | books published in the US (38 non-fictions, 14 fictions) |

   Note also that all the examples are original quotations from the corpus, except for the use of italic and bold-faced type.

9. The numbers in parentheses after the particular forms indicate the numbers of their occurrences. The convention applies in tables 3 and 4 as well.

10. Konishi (1995) is quite correct in pointing out that while *endure* in affirmative sentences is acceptable without *can/could*, *stand* is not except in certain contexts (see also table 4). However, he seems to claim that *endure* also basically prefers negative polarity contexts like *stand*, which is not appropriate.

11. The BNC is a 100 million-word corpus of contemporary spoken and written British English. See the homepage of the BNC, http://info.ox.ac.uk/bnc/, for further information.

12. In the Simple Search on the BNC, only 50 matching lines are retrieved. I have searched the sequence of 'if+one to six optional word(s)+stand/stands/stood/', and I have got 64 hits for 'if+one word+stand', 75 hits for 'if+three words+stand', and 62 hits for 'if+one word+stood'. That means that there are some examples in the corpus that I could not check but actually exist. But considering that there are no relevant examples in the 50 hits of each query sequence, there should be few, if any, relevant examples lurking in the corpus beyond the 50 examples retrieved.

13. T-score is a statistical measure that shows whether we can be confident that an association exists between two words. A high t-score indicates that we can be confident that an association exists between words. Two words with a high t-score would be a lexical or/and syntactic collocation or parts of the same idiom. See Clear (1993) for further explanation and illustration of t-score.

14. One of the informants, Andrew Porter, pointed out to me that the interrogative sentence 'lacks a bit of naturalness' although he judged it as acceptable. He said that the sentence becomes more natural if preceded by *How*, i.e. *How can you bear this type of treatment?*. Surely the *wh*-question is more likely to presuppose the speaker's disbelief that an addressee can bear the treatment, thus a negative presupposition tends to be involved. Relevant to this, the majority of the interrogative examples of *bear* and *stand* in the corpus are *wh*-questions, nearly half of which are considered to be used as rhetorical questions. These reflect the orientation of *bear* toward negation.

15. It seems to be worth mentioning that *stand* prefers interrogative together with negative sentences. The reason is that the environments where *stand* is used in affirmative sentences are virtually limited to the pattern of 'can/could stand' in the corpus. In an informant test, too, an average of three informants out of seven have judged sentences with *stand* in the various other affirmative contexts as poor usage.

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