

A Corpus-based Analysis of *bear*, *stand*, *endure*, and *tolerate*

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Park, Tae-Sook. 2003. A Corpus-based Analysis of *bear*, *stand*, *endure*, and *tolerate*. *SNU Working Papers in English Language and Linguistics* 2, 61-74. This paper is a corpus-based analysis of four English verbs *bear*, *stand*, *endure*, and *tolerate*, representing the same meaning 'put up with.' Quirk *et al.* (1985) explains that *bear* and *stand* are used in a negative form with *can*. Dictionary statements show semantic and syntactic aspects of the four verbs. From these statements, we draw a comparison of the verbs, based on a corpus analysis. The data are from *The Times* 1995 Corpus. They are analysed in terms of negative interpretation, positive interpretation, collocating auxiliaries, syntax of object forms, and collocation. The data analysis shows that these verbs have some semantic and syntactic aspects which are inconsistent with the dictionary statements. Such findings indicate that the dictionaries and grammar books do not describe these verbs sufficiently to reflect the speech aspect in real life. Thus, this suggests the need of dictionaries and grammar books derived from corpus analysis. (Seoul National University)

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1. Introduction

This paper is a corpus-based analysis of four English verbs *bear*, *stand*, *endure*, and *tolerate*, which all represent the same meaning 'put up with':

- (1) a. How can you *bear* that noise?
b. I can't *stand* working with that girl.
c. I cannot *endure* hospital scenes.
d. They will no longer *tolerate* her presence.

A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language (Quirk *et al.*, 1985) refers to the usages of *bear* and *stand* among the four verbs. According to the grammar, *bear* and *stand* occurs in informal negative verb phrases with *can*, like in *cannot/can't stand* and *cannot/can't bear*. The negative orientation of these phrases means that their positive counterparts cannot be used, except in semantically negative contexts: in questions with a negative bias, or in the second instance contexts where a contrast with the negative is implied:

(2) I *can't/couldn't bear/stand* that type of music. [cf ? I can *bear* that type of music.]

However, since this explanation is restricted to the usage of negative forms with *can*, the grammar book does not give us sufficient information concerning these verbs. These verbs have various semantic and syntactic aspects, in addition to negative combination. In line with this fact, this paper provides an account of these verbs in terms of semantics and syntax on the basis of the corpus analysis. The materials for the paper are taken from *The Times* 1995 Corpus.

2. Statement in Dictionaries

Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English states the

meaning part 'put up with' of these four verbs as follows:

bear *v*

4. [T] to suffer or accept (something unpleasant) without complaining; ENDURE: *She bore the pain with great courage.* || *There's nothing we can do about it, so we'll just have to **grin and bear it.*** [+*v-ing*] *I can't bear (=greatly dislike) being kept waiting.* [+*to-v*] *I couldn't bear to listen any longer, so I left the room.*

stand *v*

15. [T usu. in questions and negatives; not in progressive forms] to accept successfully or without undesirable results; bear: *I can't stand whisky. This work will hardly stand close examination.* || *Do you think she can stand the pace (of work) here?* || *I think the Prime Minister's decision will **stand the test of time.*** (= still be thought correct by people after some years) || *He wants to marry me but I can't **stand the sight of him.*** (=dislike him extremely) [+*v-ing*] *I can't stand seeing children smoking.* [+*obj+v-ing*] *I never could stand people telling me what to do.* || (humor) *I could stand another of those cream cakes!*

endure *v*

1. [T to bear (pain, suffering, etc.) patiently or for a long time: *They endured tremendous hardship on their journey to the South Pole.* [+*to-v/v-ing*] *I can't endure to see/endure seeing animals suffer like that.*

tolerate *v*

[T] 2. to suffer (someone or something) without complaining

or becoming annoyed: *I won't tolerate your bad manners any longer.* || *He never could tolerate bores.*

Collins Cobuild English Language Dictionary deals with these entries, sorting the meaning parts representing 'put up with':

bear

11. If you **bear** a difficult, unpleasant, or upsetting V +
O
situation, you accept it bravely and are able to
= endure
deal with it mentally. EG *It was painful of course but I bore it... This disaster was more than some of them could bear... Others cannot bear his burden for him.* ● to **grin and bear it**: see **grin**.

12. If you say that you **can't bear** something, you PHR :
VB
mean that you feel very upset or impatient
INFLECTS
about it. EG *I couldn't bear him to leave me for someone else... I can hardly bear to tell you about it, it was so sad... Stop keeping me in suspense! I can't bear it!*

13. If you say that you **can't bear** someone or PHR :
VB
something, you mean that you dislike them INFLECTS
very much. EG *I couldn't bear staying in the =
can't abide
same town as that man... I can't bear him!...
I like dirt. I couldn't bear a job where I was
clean all day.*

14. If something can **bear** a particular strain or pressure, it is strong enough or well-made enough to be able to survive it. EG *Their policies are putting a greater strain on the economic system than it can bear.*
- V + O
↑ take
=
- sustain
15. If something does not **bear** examination or inspection, it will not be found to be good or accurate enough if it is examined critically. EG *The results just don't bear examination.*
- V + O
↑ take
= stand
- up to
- to **bear comparison**: see **comparison**.

stand

17. If something can **stand** a difficult situation or a serious test, it is good enough or strong enough to survive or withstand it. EG *In its present state, the economy couldn't stand another rise in interest rates... Her arguments could hardly stand the inspection... Do you think their music will stand the test of time?... I don't think anybody can really stand comparison with her.*
- V + O :
NEG
↑ undergo
= endure
- USU WITH MODAL + BROAD
18. If you cannot **stand** something or someone, you find it or them very difficult to bear or tolerate. EG *He kept on nagging until I couldn't stand it any longer... I've had as much as*
- V + O : USU
MODAL +
NEG
- WITH BROAD

I can stand of your constant complaining...

I don't think my nerves will stand much

more of this. 18.2 dislike it or them V + O : USU

WITH

very strongly. EG *She said she couldn't* MODAL +

BROAD

stand him... I can't stand jazz... She NEG

can't stand the sight of him. =loathe

endure

1. If you **endure** a painful or difficult situation, you bear it calmly and patiently. EG *You must be ready to endure hardships and even death... Sam could hardly endure this delay.. it was more than I could endure.* V + O
 ↑ experience
 = face

tolerate

If you **tolerate** something, 2 you are able or willing to bear something unpleasant or painful. EG *I was wondering how much longer I could tolerate isolation.* V + O
 = put up with

Longman Dictionary of Comtemporary English presents the usage of these verbs as follows:

USAGE Compare bear, endure, stand, and tolerate. 1. **Bear, stand,** and **endure** are all used with "can" in questions and with NEGATIVE words to express great dislike, but **endure** is usually used only about something really serious: *I*

can't bear/ stand black coffee. I can't endure talking to people who are racists. 2. **Bear, endure**, and **stand** are also used for great physical hardship; **endure** suggests pain that lasts for a long time: *He bore/stood the pain as long as he could. She had endured great pain for a number of years.* 3. **Tolerate** is used of people or behaviour, but not of suffering: *I won't tolerate your rudeness.*

Starting from the statements of these two dictionaries, we will analyze *The Times* 1995 Corpus. Corpus analysis will show to what degree the statement of dictionaries reflects the speech aspect in real life.

3. Corpus Analysis

In this section, we will make a comparison of *bear*, *stand*, *endure*, and *tolerate*, and see how these verbs are alike in terms of semantics and syntax. First of all, let us examine the distribution of these transitive verbs representing 'put up with' in the corpus. The table 1 presents the total number of tokens containing each item:

Table 1. Total number of tokens

	<i>bear</i>	<i>stand</i>	<i>endure</i>	<i>tolerate</i>	TOTAL
Number of tokens	373	225	281	246	1125

Bear occurs most frequently in 373 tokens and *stand* least frequently in 225 tokens. *Endure* and *tolerate* are used a little more frequently than *stand*.

According to the above usage, *bear*, *stand*, and *endure* are all used with "can" in questions. In this respect, consider the table 2

and 3, showing the frequency of questions and that of auxiliaries in questions, respectively:

Table 2. Questions

	<i>bear</i>	<i>stand</i>	<i>endure</i>	<i>tolerate</i>	TOTAL
questions	7	4	5	1	17

Table 3. Auxiliaries in questions

	<i>bear</i>	<i>stand</i>	<i>endure</i>	<i>tolerate</i>	TOTAL
can	5		1		6
could	1	1			2
should	1				1
will		1			1
must			1		1
do / does		1		1	2
others		1	3		4
TOTAL	7	4	5	1	17

In table 2, questions or interrogative sentences are found in a total of 17 tokens containing these verbs. Among them *bear* occurs most frequently in 7 questions. *Stand* and *endure* occur less frequently than *bear*, and *tolerate* is found in only one interrogative sentence, least low in a frequency.

Table 3 shows that 5 tokens containing *bear* use the auxiliary *can*, but that *stand* used with *can* is not found. And *endure* occurs in only one token with *can*. This result disagrees with the usage in the dictionary that *stand* and *endure* are used with *can* in questions. In other words, the relatively low frequency of questions from such a big corpus suggests that the grammatical

statement relating these verb with interrogative sentences is deemed not to be based on the corpus. Though small in number, the questions including *can* in our corpus are presented as follows:

- (3) a. How can our people *bear* to grow such big gladioli with no perfume?
 b. How can you possibly *bear* other people?
 c. How much of it can we *endure*?

Concerning negative sentences, the usage explains that *bear*, *stand*, and *endure* are used with NEGATIVE words to express great dislike. Also, the dictionary and common grammar books state that *bear* and *stand*, in particular, tend to be used with the combination of modal verb and negative word, like *can't*.

Table 4. Negative vs positive sentences

	<i>bear</i>	<i>stand</i>	<i>endure</i>	<i>tolerate</i>
negative sentences	223 (61.9%)	123 (54.7%)	12 (4.3%)	121 (49.2%)
positive sentences	142 (38.0%)	102 (45.3%)	269 (95.7%)	125 (50.8%)
TOTAL	373 (100.0%)	225 (100.0%)	281 (100.0%)	246 (100.0%)

The table 4 provides the rate of negative sentences and positive sentences without respect to presence or absence of auxiliaries. Here, *bear* occurs in 223 negative sentences (61.9%), while *endure* is found in only 12 (4.3%). Occurrence of *stand* and *tolerate* in negative and positive sentences is in roughly similar rate.

Within the field of negative sentences, the distribution of negative words including auxiliaries which collocate with *bear*, *stand*, *endure*, and *tolerate* is presented in the table 5 and 6. Table 5 shows the distribution of negative words with *can* or *could*, and Table 6 presents that of other negative words.

Table 5. Negative words with *can* or *could*

	<i>bear</i>	<i>stand</i>	<i>endure</i>	<i>tolerate</i>	TOTAL
can't	37	50		3	90
cannot	42	16	2	15	75
can not	1				1
couldn't	24	13		10	47
could not	38	13			51
TOTAL	142 /223 (63.6%)	92 /123 (74.7%)	2 /12 (16.6%)	28 /121 (23.1%)	264/479 (100.0%))

Table 6. Other negative words

	<i>bear</i>	<i>stand</i>	<i>endure</i>	<i>tolerate</i>	TOTAL
will not	5	1		30	36
won't		1		5	6
would not	1			22	23
wouldn't				3	3
should not	1			4	5
don't	2	1			3
do not	4			1	5
doesn't	6	3		1	10
does not	12	1		2	15
didn't	1				1
did not	3	1	1		5
never	2	1		1	4
hardly	13	1			14
no longer/ no more	8	2	2	16	28
TOTAL	58	12	3	85	158

As the tables demonstrate, negative sentences with *can* or *could* are most frequently found in 92 (74.7%) from the negative 123 tokens in the case of *stand*. *Bear* occurs in the rate 63.6%, a little lower than in *stand*. On the contrary, *endure* and *tolerate* show a very low frequency with these auxiliaries. In Table 6, in particular, we can see that *tolerate* collocates much more frequently with negative words other than *can* or *could*. In terms of collocation with negative words with *can* or *could*, thus, it is shown that *bear* and *stand* are united into one group, representing the similar aspect. This finding is consistent with the usage in the dictionaries, and the sentence patterns in (2) and (3) which appear very frequently in the corpus of *bear* and *stand* support this statement:

- (4) a. I *can't bear* to speculate.

- b. I *cannot/could't* bear it.
 c. They *could not* bear to look at each other.
- (5) a. I *can't/couldn't* stand it.
 b. I *cannot stand* the hassle.
 c. He *could not* stand them.

Next, let us go into the positive sentences, in reverse. The table 4 above demonstrates that positive sentences are found in many tokens. In the case of *endure*, conspicuously, positive sentences occupy as much as 95.7%. This fact is not in accord with the statement that *endure* is used with negative words.

Table 7. Auxiliaries in positive sentences

	<i>bear</i>	<i>stand</i>	<i>endure</i>	<i>tolerate</i>
can	31	32	7	9
could	21	13	3	5
will	6	10	13	18
would	1	2	2	14
may	1			1
must	11		9	1
should	1	1		4
had to	1		62	2
have/has to	4	1	29	2
TOTAL	77 /142 (54.2)	59 /102 (57.8%)	125/ 269 (46.5)	56/ 125 (44.8)

The table 7 shows the distribution of auxiliaries occurring in positive sentences. As a whole, positive sentences with auxiliaries occur in roughly half across all these verbs. In terms of auxiliary, *bear* and *stand* collocate with *can* or *could* very frequently. However, *endure* collocates with *have/has/had to* in a very high frequency, and *tolerate* collocates with *will/would* naturally. This result reflects the semantic aspect of these verbs.

Usually used about something serious, *endure* may collocate with the expressions of obligation in many sentences:

- (6) a. With my teenage children, I *have to endure* their tapes.
b. She even *had to endure* the indignity of her illness being put down to.

One more thing is that there are many positive sentences with *can* or *could* which occur in subordinate clauses such as *if*-clause, in the cases of *bear* and *stand*:

- (7) a. If you *can bear* the thought of wearing something once for a crazy party then you will get that dress.
b. It was almost more than I *could bear*.
(8) a. The whole scene is a whizz, if you *can stand* the noise.
/ Women *can stand* pain better than men.
b. We *could stand* him for a day. / He *could stand* the smell, but everyone else was threatening to have him thrown out.

On this point, let us consider the syntax of *bear*, *stand*, *endure*, and *tolerate*. Regarding gerunds and the *to*-infinitives as object forms, the dictionary has listed as follows:

- (9) bear : +v-ing/ +to-v
stand : +v-ing / +obj+v-ing
endure : +to-v / v-ing

The case of *tolerate* is not referred to for this description in the dictionary. The table 8 presents the distribution of these object forms in the corpus:

Table 8. +v-ing, +obj+v-ing, +to-v as object forms

	<i>bear</i>	<i>stand</i>	<i>endure</i>	<i>tolerate</i>
+v-ing	24	8	4	7
+obj+v-ing	2	2	1	9
+to-v	109	15	0	0
TOTAL	135	25	5	16

Bear occurs in 24 tokens containing the form *v-ing*. Among them, 20 tokens all take *thinking about* as object. Besides, *bear* is used in as many as 109 tokens of the *to*-infinitive. *Stand* selects three object forms without a great distinction, though it is used with the *to*-infinitive most frequently.

- (10) a. How can our people *bear* living here? [+v-ing]
 b. She can't *bear* him touching her. [+obj+v-ing]
 c. He just couldn't *bear* to be outside. [+to-v]
- (11) a. I can't *stand* losing you. [+v-ing]
 b. Joan couldn't *stand* me smoking. [+obj+v-ing]
 c. H couldn't *stand* to staay with her any more. [+to-v]

It is noteworthy that in case of *endure* and *tolerate*, the *to*-infinitive form is never used as their object forms. This is also inconsistent with the statement of dictionaries that *endure* is used with *to*-infinitive as object. Or this explanation in dictionaries is not supposed to be grounded on the corpus.

- (12) a. He is unlikely to *endure* putting his two dogs, Whisky and Soda, through the process. [+v-ing]

b. This company has had to *endure* its markets being handed to competitors, who it is then obliged to mollicoddle, ... [+obj+v-ing]

(13) a. Many women can't *tolerate* seeing you go out the door to work with a shotgun. [+v-ing]

b. I won't *tolerate* heads going down. [+obj+v-ing]

Next, let us look into the right collocates of these verbs. The following table presents the collocation of these verbs with the very right items. Collocated items are arranged in an alphabetical order.

Table 9. Right collocates

<i>bear</i>	<i>stand</i>	<i>endure</i>	<i>tolerate</i>
a 3	a 10	a 48	a 13
and 3	an 3	and 3	any 10
close 6	another 5	his 4	anything 4
comparison 8	any 3	in 7	
is 3	comparison 4	it 4	her 3
it 30	each 4	its 4	his 4
much 4	her 3	months 3	it 10
no 3	him 4	more 3	its 4
not 5	it 31	such 3	one 5
scrutiny 3	no 5	that 3	such 7
some 4	that 6	the 56	that 10
such 3	the 70	them 2	the 47
the 61	them 4		this 5
their 3	to 15		
them 3			
thinking 20			
to 109			
with 7			

Regarding pronouns, *stand* selects *her*, *him* and *it* as objects in 39 tokens: sentence forms such as *I can't stand her/him/it* are used many times. *Bear* also collocates with *it* in 30 tokens. The important thing in the above table is that the form *a/the Noun* is the common object form which is used very frequently in these four verbs. The following table lists the object nouns which occur more than four times in each case:

Table 10. Noun objects in a high frequency

<i>bear</i>	<i>stand</i>	<i>endure</i>	<i>tolerate</i>
thought of 18	heat 9	pain 8	condition 5
comparison 9	test of time 7	agony 5	
blame 7	thought of 5	noise 5	
scrutiny 7	comparison 4		
pain 5			
examination 5			
weight 5			
consequences 4			

Now, it is important to make a further investigation of collocation with *pain*, as a final step of our corpus analysis. As mentioned above, *bear*, *stand*, and *endure* are used for great physical hardships, and that *tolerate* is not used of suffering.

Table 11. Collocation with *pain*

	<i>bear</i>	<i>stand</i>	<i>endure</i>	<i>tolerate</i>
pain	5	2	8	3
other physical hardships	1		2	

In the above table, *tolerate* as well as *bear*, *stand*, and *endure* is also used for physical hardships, collocating with *pain*, as the following examples demonstrate:

- (14) a. He could no longer *bear* the pain of cancer.
b. Women can *stand* pain better than men.
c. Let others *endure* the teething pains.
d. Dancers can *tolerate* pain far longer than the average person, and ...

Endure is found to collocate with *pain* in the highest frequency. In particular, extreme and serious pain is used with *endure*: *to endure extreme cold*, *to endure the most extreme pain*, and *to endure terrible pain*. In this case, the corpus supports the statement in the dictionaries that *endure* suggests pain that lasts for a long time. For instance, *endure* is used with the objects representing a long time such as *18 years of marriage* and *a long and agonizing civil war* in our corpus. The following examples reflect this fact well.

- (15) a. The doctors say that there is nothing to be done for the child; the parents must simply *endure* his suffering. Most nights, says his father, I have been kept awake by his screams.
b. It is horribly cruel to force people to *endure* unrelenting pain.

4. Conclusion

So far, we have analyzed *bear*, *stand*, *endure*, and *tolerate* on

the basis of *The Times* 1995 Corpus. Though these verbs can be regarded as representing the same meaning 'put up with', there is no complete synonyms with respect to semantics and syntax. From this recognition, this paper have drawn a comparison of these verbs.

Bear and *stand* have shown the similar aspects in respect of the rate of negative interpretation, syntax of object forms, and collocation. However, *endure* and *tolerate* are a little different from these two verbs. It has been indicated that particularly, *endure* is conspicuous in occurring very frequently in positive sentences. This aspect has been not reflected correctly in the statement of the usage in dictionaries. The very low frequency of questions in the corpus has not supported the previous grammatical statement that *bear*, *stand*, and *endure* are all used with *can* in questions. These findings in the corpus suggest that the treatment of these items in the dictionaries or grammar books are not described correctly enough to reflect the speech in real life, and further imply the need of dictionaries and grammar books derived from corpus analysis.

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