A Corpus-Based Study of zunshou and Its English Equivalents

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Abstract

This paper describes a corpus-based contrastive study of collocation in English and Chinese. In light of the corpus-based approach to identify functionally equivalent units, the present paper attempts to identify the collocational translation equivalents of zunshou by using a parallel corpus and two comparable corpora. This study shows that more often than not, we can find in English more than one translation equivalents. By taking collocates into consideration, we are able to establish bilingual equivalence with more accuracy. The present study indicates that semantic preference and semantic prosody play a vital role in establishing equivalence between corresponding lexical sequences in English and Chinese. The studies of collocation across languages have potentially useful implications for foreign language teaching and learning, contrastive linguistic and translation studies, as well as bilingual lexicography.

1 Introduction

The importance of the concept of collocation has long been recognized in theoretical linguistics. It was first put forward as an academic terminology by Firth (1957). Since then, there have been three major approaches to the study of collocation, which can be referred to as the semantic approach, the lexical approach (Halliday, 1966; Sinclair, 1966) and the integrated approach (Mitchell, 1971). Since the 1980s, the notion of collocation has been at the center of much corpus-linguistic work. The corpus-based and corpus-driven approaches have been widely adopted in the study of collocation. Although numerous studies of collocation based on corpus data have been conducted, the features of collocation have mainly been explored in monolingual context and there are comparatively fewer attempts to investigate collocation across different languages. The use of parallel corpora has greatly facilitated cross-linguistic research in recent decades and indeed, “they have been a principal reason for the revival of contrastive linguistics” (Salkie, 1999).

As a tentative attempt, the present study focuses on investigating the cross-linguistic collocational equivalents of one verb – 遵守 zunshou using a bi-directional English-Chinese parallel corpus and two comparable corpora. A close observation of the right collocates of 遵守 zunshou and its English equivalents in terms of semantic preference and semantic prosody (Louw, 1993; Sinclair, 1996) have been made, with a view to determining the collocational translation equivalents in English and Chinese.

In what follows, we will first describe the research method of the present study in Section 2, which includes the corpora to be used, the procedure for the identification of translation equivalents, the approaches and analytical concepts of collocation. Section 3 will present our corpus findings, followed by some discussions in Section 4. Section 5 will conclude this research with various implications and prospects for future work.

2 Research Method

2.1 Corpora

The data analyzed in this study were obtained from one parallel corpus and two general corpora. The parallel corpus is the Shanghai Jiao Tong University Parallel Corpus (henceforth JDPC) (Wei and Lu, 2014). It is a 9-million bi-directional English-Chinese parallel corpus consisting of 3,626,890 English tokens and 5,362,748 Chinese characters. The three major categories in JDPC are politics, science and technology, and humanities.
In addition, JDPC has an associated database which contains 590,799 pairs of translation equivalents of varying lengths and grammatical ranks. JDPC serves as the point of departure from which the possible translation equivalents are extracted for further data analysis. The advantage of using a parallel corpus in this contrastive study of collocation is that “it gives the benefit of such input in a more reliable manner; it offers a range of possible translation pairs that have already been identified and used by translators, in other words, verified by actual translation usage” (Tognini-Bonelli, 2001).

The English general corpus is the British National Corpus (henceforth BNC) which consists of approximately 100 million words of British English, 90% from written texts, 10% from spoken texts. The written part of BNC was used in this study. The Chinese general corpus is the Modern Chinese Corpus (henceforth MCC). We use its core version, commonly known as the Main Corpus of MCC, which contains 20 million Chinese characters proportionally sampled from the whole corpus.

### 2.2 The Procedure for the Identification of Translation Equivalents

The procedure for identifying the collocational translation equivalents in English and Chinese involves three steps. The first step is to extract prima facie translation equivalents (Tognini-Bonelli, 2002: 81) from the parallel corpus. We searched 遵守 zunshou in JDPC and found that there are three prima facie translation equivalents of 遵守 zunshou, namely, abide by, adhere to and observe.

However, what a parallel corpus can do is only to offer a set of possible translation pairs. It is more important to base our observation on the comparable corpora to establish correspondence between the form and function of the lexical items or sequences under study. Therefore, the second step is to observe the formal and functional features of the node words in the two monolingual corpora. So we turn to MCC and BNC. The right collocates of 遵守 zunshou, abide by, adhere to and observe were extracted from MCC and BNC respectively.

Then we come to the last step – to identify de facto translation equivalents. Based on the data extracted in the previous steps, we analyzed the four node words in terms of their collocates, semantic preference and semantic prosody, which will reveal the key patterning of the node words and help to establish equivalence across the two languages.

### 2.3 The Approaches to the Study of Collocation and Analytical Concepts

Generally, there are two approaches to the study of collocation using corpora, namely, the corpus-based approach and the corpus-driven approach. Although there is no clear-cut demarcation between them, the major difference is whether corpus data is analyzed in the pre-constructed grammatical framework. The corpus-based approach generalizes collocational patterns on the basis of collocation and lexical co-occurrences (Wei, 2002), whilst the corpus-driven approach proceeds with data and uses purely statistical method to extract collocation. The present study adopts the former approach. The study to be presented in the remainder of this paper will be qualitative in nature and statistical test will not be applied due to the low frequency of many collocates of the node words. Through observing the concordance lines (the KWIC Format), we first generalized the collocation and then analyzed the right collocates of the node words in the colligational framework.

The study involves two key analytical concepts: semantic preference and semantic prosody. As with Sinclair, semantic preference refers to “the restriction of regular co-occurrence to items which share a semantic feature” (Sinclair, 2004: 142), and semantic prosody refers to the attitudinal meaning a node word and its co-selections convey, which essentially indicates the communicative purpose of the speaker (Sinclair, 1996: 87). The four node words will be compared in terms of these two analytical concepts in order to establish the de facto cross-linguistic equivalence.

### 3 Corpus Evidence

#### 3.1 Evidence from the Parallel Corpus

An initial check of zunshou in JDPC yielded 30 occurrences which were translated by abide by in 10 times, by adhere to in 3 times, and by observe
in 17 times of all cases. The profiles of the 30 prima facie collocational translation equivalents are presented in Table 1, Table 2 and Table 3 respectively.

| Chinese collocations          | English collocations                  | Freq. |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-------|
| 遵守宪法和法律 zunshou xianfa he falv | abiding by the Constitution and laws | 2     |
| 遵守党章 zunshou dangzhang            | abide by the Party Constitution      | 2     |
| 遵守国家的法律法规 zunshou guojia de falv fagui | abide by the laws and decrees of the State | 2     |
| 遵守人民政府法律 zunshou renmin zhengfu falv | abiding by its laws                  | 1     |
| 遵守...法规和制度 zunshou ... fagui he zhidu | abide by the rules and regulations   | 1     |
| 遵守约法八章 zunshou yuefa bazhang     | abide by the following eight-point covenant | 1  |
| 遵守中英联合声明 zunshou zhongying lianhe shengming | abide by the Sino-British Joint Declaration | 1  |
| TOTAL                          |                                      | 10    |

Table 1. 遵守 zunshou and abide by with their right collocates in JDPC

| Chinese collocations          | English collocations                  | Freq. |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-------|
| 遵守纪律 zunshou jilv            | observe discipline                   | 5     |
| 遵守党的指示 zunshou dang de zhishi | observe the directives of the party | 2     |
| 遵守宪法和法律 zunshou xianfa he falv | observing the Constitution and laws | 2     |
| 遵守正确的原则 zunshou zhengque de yuanze | observe the correct principles     | 2     |
| 遵守...法规 zunshou ... falv fagui   | observe...laws and regulations       | 1     |
| 遵守党纪国法 zunshou dangji guofa  | observe party discipline and state laws | 1  |
| 遵守党的章程 zunshou dang de zhangcheng | observe the provisions of the party constitution | 1 |
| 遵守...原则 zunshou ... yuanze       | observing principles                 | 1     |
| 遵守社会公德 zunshou shehui gongde  | be polite and observe common courtesy| 1     |
| 遵守基本行为准则 zunshou jiben xingwei zhunze | observing the basic code of conduct | 1     |
| TOTAL                          |                                      | 17    |

Table 2. 遵守 zunshou and adhere to with their right collocates in JDPC

| Chinese collocations          | English collocations                  | Freq. |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-------|
| 遵守“不干涉中国内政的政策” zunshou “bu ganshe zhongguo neizheng de zhengce” | adhered to a policy of non-interference in China’s internal affairs | 1     |
| 遵守...宗旨和原则 zunshou ... zongzhi he yuanze | adhere to the purpose and principles | 1     |
| 遵守...各项重要文件 zunshou ... gexiang zhongyao wenjian | adhere to the important documents | 1     |
| TOTAL                          |                                      | 3     |

Table 3. 遵守 zunshou and observe with their right collocates in JDPC

3.2 Evidence from the Chinese Corpus

Adopting the method as defined in Section 2.2, the present study obtained 497 instances of 遵守 zunshou from the core part of MCC. In order to show its patterning, we present 10 concordance lines randomly selected from the overall data as shown in Table 4 below.

1. 遵守宪法，维护宪法。我国现行宪法是第五届全国人民代表大会制定的，具有最高法律效力。遵守宪法和法律。一切组织或者个人都必须遵守宪法和法律。一切违反宪法和法律的行为都必须受到追究。任何组织或者个人都不得有超越宪法和法律的特权。
2. 遵守党章和法律。党的政策是根据宪法和法律制定的，必须在宪法和法律规定的范围内活动。遵守党章和法律，必须遵守党的纪律。
3. 遵守国家的法律法规。国家的法律法规是根据宪法和法律制定的，必须在宪法和法律规定的范围内活动。遵守国家的法律法规，必须遵守党的纪律。
4. 遵守和维护社会公德。社会公德是全体公民在社会交往和公共生活中应当遵循的行为准则。遵守和维护社会公德，必须遵守党的纪律。
Table 4. Concordance lines of 遵守 zunshou

A close observation of the data reveals that over 90% of all the instances of 遵守 zunshou are followed by a noun phrase. In a few cases, it is used to end a clause or sentence. Since the present study focuses on collocates in the right co-text and examination of the usage of 遵守 zunshou in the sentence-final position does not reveal many new collocates, we only focus on analyzing the data in the first colligational framework.

It has been observed that most of the right collocates of 遵守 zunshou can be categorized into different groups according to two criteria: whether they are authoritative or compulsory. By being authoritative is meant that they are documented and enforced by a country’s government or government organs (e.g. laws and regulations), or agreed between governments of different countries (e.g. treaty or declaration). By being compulsory is meant that they must be obeyed and if not, the related party should suffer the consequences. In terms of these two criteria, the right collocates of 遵守 zunshou can be put in a hierarchy scale with differing degrees of authoritativeness and compulsoriness. For reasons of space, we only present those right collocates of 遵守 zunshou with a frequency higher than five (including five) in Table 5. Note that the raw frequencies of the collocates are listed in the brackets.

| Criteria                          | Right collocates of 遵守 zunshou                                      |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Most authoritative & compulsory  | 法律 falv (39), 宪法 xianfa he falv (17), 宪法 xianfa (12), 规则 fagui (7), 法令 fajing (5) |
| Authoritative & compulsory       | 规则 guize (20), 规则 guiding (8), 政策 zhengce (7), 条约 tiaoyue (5) |
| Non-compulsory                   | 纪律 jilv (32), 原则 yuanze (15), 劳动纪律 laodong jilv (11), 规则 guizhi (11), 道德 daode (11), 党的纪律 dang de jilv (9), 公共秩序 gonggong zhixu (7), 标准 biaozhun (5) |
| Non-authoritative                | 命令 mingling (6), 要求 yaoqiu (5), 指示 zhishi (5)                   |

Table 5. Right collocates of 遵守 zunshou

It needs to be noted that the demarcation between these collocates of 遵守 zunshou is, in fact, not so clear-cut as Table 5 shows and the aim to present such a hierarchy scale is mainly for the sake of classification. As shown in Table 5, at the top of the hierarchy scale are the most authoritative and compulsory collocates such as 宪法 xianfa, 法律 falv, 法规 fagui, etc. Down the scale, we can find words such as 规则 guize and 政策 zhengce which are less authoritative and compulsory than words in the first layer. Words in the third layer include the non-compulsory 纪律 jilv, 道德 daode, 公共秩序 gonggong zhixu, etc. Although they might be authoritative, but people still can be free to choose to follow it or not. At the bottom of the hierarchy scale, we can find words such as 命令 mingling and 要求 yaoqiu which are usually non-authoritative but still might be compulsory. In the following sections, the right collocates of the three node words (i.e. abide by, adhere to and observe) are also classified according to the same criteria.

3.3 Evidence from the English Corpus

For the collocates of abide by, adhere to and observe, this study uses a span of up to five words to the right of the node. This is in line with Sinclair’s (1991: 106) suggestion that beyond four words from the node there were no statistical indication of the attractive power of the node. It needs to be noted that the lists of the right collocates of these three node words in the
following Table 7, Table 9 and Table 11 are not exhaustive and we also have removed a few collocates which seem to be of little relevance and importance. In addition, those collocates which are relevant to our study but difficult to categorize in terms of the two criteria defined above have been classified as “others”.

### 3.3.1 Abide by with Its Right Collocates

We have extracted in total 193 instances of *abide by* from BNC. In Table 6, we report ten randomly selected concordance lines from the overall data to show the patterning of *abide by*.

| Criteria | Right collocates of abide by |
|----------|-----------------------------|
| Authoritative & compulsory | rule(s) (30), law(s) (7), terms (5), Code (4), regulations (3), treaty (3), policies (3), conditions (3), provisions (2), proviso (2), accord (2), contract (2), constitution (1), convention (1), declaration (1), resolution (1), ceasefire (1), settlement (1), sanctions (1), etc. |
| Compulsory (either from institutions or person in authority or as a must) | code of practice (5) (e.g. the federation’s code of practice), order (5) (e.g. the court order), directive (4) (e.g. the directive of the government), plan (4) (e.g. a peace plan), standards (3) (e.g. government-imposed standards), principle(s) (2) (e.g. principle of non-interference in the internal affairs), injunctions (1) (e.g. the injunction of official leaders), etc. |
| Others | decision(s) (12), restrictions (2), words (2), maxim (2), oath (1), intention (1), etc. |

Table 7. Right collocates of abide by

### 3.3.2 Adhere to with Its Right Collocates

In BNC, there are 274 occurrences of *adhere to* in total. In Table 8 below, we also present ten randomly selected concordance lines from the overall data to show the collocational patterning of *adhere to*.

| Criteria | Right collocates of adhere to |
|----------|-----------------------------|
| Authoritative & compulsory | a strict moral code for years (while others, Marxists and Leninists, had their principles of predictability, even had to the principles of equal rights and self-determination). How far this reorientation will go is now being decided. Marxism-Leninism is the following guidelines to reduce the |
| Compulsory (either from institutions or person in authority or as a must) | the rules relating to health and safety, the principles of predictability, even had to the principles of equal rights and self-determination. Marxism-Leninism is the following guidelines to reduce the |
| Others | a strict moral code for years (while others, Marxists and Leninists, had their principles of predictability, even had to the principles of equal rights and self-determination). How far this reorientation will go is now being decided. Marxism-Leninism is the following guidelines to reduce the |

Table 8. Right collocates of adhere to
As can be seen from Table 8, similar to 遵守 zunshou and abide by, adhere to is also frequently followed by a noun phrase at the colligational level. Table 9 below presents the categorization of the right collocates of adhere to in terms of the two criteria stated above. Note that the raw frequencies of the collocates are listed in the brackets in Table 9 and we also give one example of a wider context (e.g. ethical standards) for some words to justify our classification.

| Criteria | Right collocates of adhere to |
|----------|-------------------------------|
| Authoritative & compulsory (but not so authoritative as laws) | policy (9), rule(s) (7), regulations (5), treaty (4), sanctions (2), resolution(s) (2), protocol (1), etc |
| Non-compulsory | standards (9) (e.g. ethical standards), principle (7), code (5) (e.g. moral code), doctrine(s) (3), guidelines (2), norm(s) (2) (e.g. cultural norms), disciplines (2) (e.g. the economic and financial disciplines), school of thought (1), Marxism (1), Marxism-leninism (1), Pluralism (1), structuralism (1), ethic (1), code of practice (1), sector (1), ideals (1), scheme (1), etc |
| Non-authoritative | requirements (4), specification (2), demands (1), instructions (1), restrictions (1), etc |
| Personal | idea (2), position (2), convictions (1), arrangements (1), opinion (1), schedule(s) (2), timetable (1), lifestyle (1), etc |
| Others | practice(s) (6), procedure (5), programme (5), interpretation (2), values (1), etc |

Table 9. Right collocates of adhere to

As can be seen from Table 7 in Section 3.3.1 and Table 9 above, abide by and adhere to share a few right collocates. However, a closer look at the modifiers of these shared collocates reveals marked differences between these two node words. Let us take standards for example. There are three cases of co-occurrences of abide by with standards in BNC. Let us look at a wider context as follows.

1. The American Mining Congress has lambasted the report as “a gross distortion of the truth”, arguing that its members at least abide by government-imposed standards.
2. Ramprakash is a lad who could be a superb player, but there are standards you have to abide by. If you are an England player you have to behave in a certain way.
3. At the same time, the integrity of the profession was maintained by offering membership only to those who were willing to abide by prescribed standards.

In Example 1, standards is premodified by government-imposed which indicates that the standards in question must be obeyed. In Example 2, abide by follows have to which shows that the standards are compulsory. In Example 3, abiding by prescribed standards is required as a must for offering membership.

In contrast, with regard to adhere to, we can find a set of collocation such as proper standards of behavior, general standards of decency, ethical standards, etc. It can be seen that adhere to typically co-occurs with non-authoritative and non-compulsory standards. In addition to standards, we also find marked differences in other shared collocates such as code, rule, principles, etc. Here the point is that the shared collocates of abide by and adhere to co-occur with different modifiers whose meaning is in harmony with the whole environment, especially in harmony with the meaning indicated by the node words.

3.3.3 Observe with Its Right Collocates

The usage of observe is more complicated than that
of abide by and adhere to due to the reason that observe is a polysemous word. It has five senses in Collins COBUILD Advanced Dictionary of English (2009), but only one meaning – “If you observe something such as a law or custom, you obey it or follow it” is relevant for the present study. In BNC, there are 1,623 instances of observe in total. Manually removing those concordances lines carrying the irrelevant senses, we got 248 instances for observe. Table 10 below presents ten randomly selected instances from the overall data to show the patterning of observe.

1. ion qua members of the Commission had to observe the rules in performance of the treaty. The
2. then, although, as in the former case, they observe the law, the government is a pure
3. again, can the citizens of a city properly observe the laws by habit only, and without
4. sion or assembly and knowingly failing to observe the conditions, and knowingly taking part
5. then, that it would be far more advisable to observe the treaty, which their sagacious
6. principle, which provides that a firm should observe high standards of integrity and fair dealing
7. necessity. The wardens of the agora shall observe the order appointed by law for the
8. instructions, labels or markings. You shall observe the requirements of UK legislation and any
9. wanted with the landlord to pay the rent and observe the covenants during the residue of the term
10. the question “What causes the peasant to observe this ethic?”; a question that can not really

Table 10. Concordance lines of observe

As shown in Table 10, similar to abide by and adhere to, at the colligational level, observe is also typically followed by a noun phrase. In Table 11 below, we present the categorization of the right collocates of observe in terms of the two criteria defined in Section 3.2. Note that the raw frequencies of the collocates are listed in the brackets in Table 11.

| Criteria                  | Right collocates of observe |
|---------------------------|----------------------------|
| Authoritative & compulsory| rule(s) (70), law(s) (12), covenants (12), conditions (12), terms (3), treaty (2), truce (2), articles (2), provisions (2), stipulation (1), code (1), regulations (1), contract (1), etc |
| Non-compulsory            | principle(s) (5), procedures (3), conventions (2), standards (2), ethic (1), methods (1), custom (1), routine (1), etc |
| Non-authoritative         | order(s) (5), directions (4), requirements (3), instructions (2), commands (1), injunctions (1), request (1), etc |
| Others                    | restrictions (3), limitations (1), constraint (1), proprieties (1), faith (1), maxim (1), etc |

Table 11. Right collocates of observe

4 Discussion

This section proposes an analysis of the four node words (i.e. 遵守 zunshou, abide by, adhere to and observe) in terms of their semantic preference and semantic prosody. Semantic preference and semantic prosody are crucial in establishing collocational translation equivalents; only when they are equivalent will a collocation be available as a possible choice to a translator. Semantic preference refers to the semantic sets into which the collocates fall. The corpus evidence presented in Section 3 shows that 遵守 zunshou, abide by, adhere to and observe allow collocates that fall into different semantic sets:

1. 遵守 zunshou usually collocates with things that must be or need to be obeyed or done.
2. Abide by allows collocates which are things that must be obeyed or done.
3. Adhere to is typically followed by things that need to be obeyed or done but not all of them are compulsory.
4. Observe allows collocates with a wider meaning. They are things that must be or need to be obeyed or done, either compulsory or non-compulsory.

In addition to the comparison of semantic preference, the matching of equivalents has to be
verified when all the components that are necessary for the unit to function have been identified (Tognini-Bonelli, 2001). That is, equivalence also needs to be achieved at the level of the ultimate pragmatic function – the semantic prosody. In terms of semantic prosody, we can see that *abide by* is used to impose an obligation in various forms such as *laws, regulations* and *rules*.

The function associated with *adhere to* is to ask people to obey something but still leaving some freedom for people to choose to follow it or not. *Observe* has an integrated function, incorporating the function of both *abide by* and *adhere to*. The semantic prosody of 遵守 zunshou is, in fact, the combination of that of its three English equivalents.

### 5 Conclusion and Implications

Taking account of the right collocates, the semantic preference and semantic prosody of the four node words, we can finally establish the following sets of de facto collocational translation equivalents in English and Chinese (see Table 12 below), the matching of which is not only at the formal and semantic level but also at the functional level.

| Chinese collocations | English collocations            |
|----------------------|--------------------------------|
| 遵守宪法 zunshou xianfa | abide by the Constitution      |
| 遵守法律 zunshou falv   | abide by/observe the law(s)    |
| 遵守法规 zunshou fagui  | abide by/observe the code(s)   |
| 遵守政策 zunshou zhengce| abide by/adhere to the policy  |
| 遵守条例 zunshou taoli  | abide by/adhere to/observe the regulation(s) |
| 遵守条约 zunshou tiaoyue | abide by/adhere to/observe the treaty |
| 遵守条款 zunshou tiaokuan| abide by/observe the provisions/term(s) |
| 遵守规则 zunshou guize  | abide by/adhere to/observe the rule(s) |
| 遵守原则 zunshou yuanze | abide by/adhere to/observe the principle(s) |
| 遵守纪律 zunshou jilv   | adhere to/observe the discipline(s) |
| 遵守道德 zunshou daode   | adhere to/observe a moral code |
| 遵守命令 zunshou mingling| abide by/observe the order(s)   |
| 遵守要求 zunshou yaoqiu | adhere to/observe the requirement(s) |

Table 12. De facto translation equivalents

Obviously, in some cases, English offers more than one possible equivalents for Chinese. It has been shown that *abide by, adhere to* and *observe* are used together with a specific set of words and encoded with an inherent semantic prosody. By taking into collocation into consideration, we are able to establish bilingual equivalence with more accuracy. Also, semantic preference and semantic prosody is found to play a vital role in establishing cross-linguistic equivalence.

The present contrastive study of collocation has potentially useful implications for foreign language teaching and learning. It can enhance learners’ awareness that the correspondence across different languages needs to be identified not only at the formal and semantic level but also at the functional level. There is certainly danger if learners are totally ignorant of the semantic preference and semantic prosody of the lexical items or sequences. With parallel and monolingual corpora at hand, contrastive studies of collocation can also shed new light on contrastive linguistic and translation studies, as well as bilingual lexicography. However, the study of collocation across languages from a contrastive angle is still in its infancy. The present study is only a smallscaled tentative attempt and it is desirable that further explorations in this direction can be done in the future.

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