

A CORPUS-BASED STUDY ON PREPOSITIONAL PHRASES IN LEGAL VOCABULARY IN ENGLISH AND BULGARIAN

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Abstract: An examination into the linguistic specificities of legal terminology and phraseology asks for an in-depth expertise of legal vocabulary and profound awareness of the distinctive features of legal matters and procedures. Since it is a strict formulaic language that is used in legal papers and documents, the majority of single-word terms, notions and concepts are literally translated into the target language, that is, word-for-word interpretation without losing or lacking any grammatical or semantic meaning of the source language. Nevertheless, there is a group of lexical items, namely, particular prepositional phrases, which require a particular research approach while being transferred to the receptor language (Alcaraz, Hughes 2002, Muller 2016). In this case the grammatical form often cannot be reproduced though the meaning and content may remain intact. Furthermore, there could be a case for saying that the source language may represent a number of prepositional phrases bearing the same prepositional attitude while the target language may reveal only a limited set or no identical phrase at all (Bajcic 2017). The present article focuses on two corpora of database taken from the official legal framework concerning the European investigation order and its Bulgarian translation with regards to particular formulaic linguistic conventions, multiword prepositional phrases, in particular. As the study is both corpus-based and corpus-driven it does not only validate or refute previous theoretical research findings but also involves the inductive reasoning to draw conclusions (Iglíkova 2017). Specifically, the paper dwells on six prepositional phrases in English which are a typical and integral part of any legal file though their translation equivalents may vary in grammatical meaning and deviate from the source language prepositional meaning (Alexandrova 2018). They are as follows: *in accordance with*, *pursuant to*, *for the purpose of*, *without prejudice to*, *subject to*, *according to*. Additionally, the paper makes an attempt to identify their translation variants in the target language corpus considering the level of identity, their similarities and discrepancies. The expressions are analyzed and examined quantitatively and qualitatively, the latter focusing on the syntax and semantics of the phrases.

The paper initiates with a brief theoretical overview of prepositional and multiword prepositional phrases regarding their grammatical form and structure followed by an analytical part divided into two sections examining English and Bulgarian corpora separately. The same pattern of analysis is used in evaluating and interpreting both sets of data. The paper targets primarily MA students in Linguistics and Translation and aims to help learners get a closer look into prepositional phrases which do not bear a central meaning in a sentence but can turn to be a stumbling block if not translated adequately.

Keywords: corpora, legal vocabulary, prepositional phrases, semantics, syntax

1. INTRODUCTION

In the study of examining the character of prepositional phrases in a particular linguistic context and content a number of criteria are considered to be important, namely, certain grammatical structures and propositional attitudes so that the exact group of linguistic items can be properly investigated and analysed.

In linguistics a prepositional phrase (PP) is assumed to be a collective generalized term (Terzieva 2017) for adpositional phrases with a preposition as a central element of the phrase. The adpositional phrase functions as a prepositional head complex (PHC) which initiates with a preposition as a head of the phrase or ends with a preposition (Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech, Svartvik 1985). What remains out of the preposition is sometimes called the object of the prepositional complement which can be either a noun, pronoun, clause or gerund. The phrase can act as an adjectival or adverbial modifier (Freidin, Lasnik, 2006).

The adpositional phrases are divided into three main groups:

- 1) **prepositional phrases:** the adpositional phrase starts with a preposition, as in: *in this respect*;
- 2) **post-positional phrases:** the word or morpheme which corresponds to a preposition succeeds its complement: *pursuant to*, *subject to*, *according to*;
- 3) **circumscription phrases:** the adpositional phrase comprises both a preposition and postposition while the complement is between the two: *in accordance with*, *for the purpose of*, *without prejudice to*, *by virtue of*, *in view of*.

English language is considered to be head-initial using mainly prepositional phrases, though in the article postpositional and circumpositional phrases prevail. Additionally, in linguistic studies, syntax, in particular, adpositional

phrases are regarded as complex units that function as adjuncts or arguments. As adjuncts they may only add to or complete the meaning of another word, but cannot be a main structural component. As arguments they may complete the meaning of the predicate (Graffi 2001; Talasiewicz 2009)

2. RESEARCH AND DATA ANALYSIS

Turning to the linguistic material examination the main entries in both corpora of data and their respective syntactic patterns are investigated on the basis of the quantitative and qualitative corpus analysis. The study follows two steps of exploration which refer to the two sets of data. First, the phrases are discussed with a view to their syntactic models and second – according to their propositional content.

2.1 Multiword prepositional phrases (MPPs) - source corpus

In the original English file of the European Investigation Order six separate multiword prepositional phrases were extracted with their own peculiar choice of vocabulary. The phrases share linguistic conventions of Legal English and do not become explicit in any other grammatical form or pattern, nor undergo any structural transformations. The paper investigates the following phrases:

- *in accordance with*
- *for the purpose of*
- *without prejudice to*
- *subject to*
- *pursuant to*
- *according to*

The overall number of MPPs (source language) and their percentage value are illustrated in the table below:

multiword prepositional phrases	number of occurrences	percentage rate
<i>in accordance with</i>	56	48.2%
<i>for the purpose of</i>	24	20.6%
<i>without prejudice to</i>	18	15.5%
<i>subject to</i>	13	11.2%
<i>pursuant to</i>	3	2.58%
<i>according to</i>	2	1.72%
Total	116	100%

➤ *in accordance with*

There are 56 *in accordance with* cases identified in the corpus, which make well under half of all multiword prepositional phrases in the set of data. The phrase will first be discussed with respect to its syntactic structure, then analysed in a view to its semantic content.

In accordance with is an ad-positional phrase which falls into the group of circumscription expresses, that is, it consists of pre-position (P1) plus a complement (C) plus a postposition (P2):

PP = P1 + C + P2
 /in/ /accordance/ /with/

Since any ad-positional phrase has a head, it is not clear or obvious which of the two ad-positions should be regarded as the head of the expression. However, many researchers into English syntax claim that English language is a head-initial language and that should be taken into account when speculating on any exact prepositional syntactic model (Freidin, Lasnik, 2006). In the case of *in accordance with* the preposition ‘in’ occupies an initial position and is viewed as the head of the phrase, while the postposition ‘with’ can be characterized in terms of dependents which in the exact phrase is a post-dependent of a nominal phrase /noun/, namely, the noun *accordance*:

head (P1) → complement (NP) → dependent (P2)
in *accordance* *with*

The given ad-positional phrase functions as an adjunct in the clause or noun phrase that it appears. For example:

ex. The Union may adopt measures in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity as set out in Article 5
 (an adjunct to a noun phrase)

ex. The EIO completed in accordance with Article 5 shall be transmitted ... (an adjunct at a clause level)

The phrase also functions as an adverbial modifier in all cases from the corpus in that it answers the questions ‘how’, ‘under what conditions’. If it is an adjectival modifier it should provide more information about a noun or a pronoun and should answer the questions ‘what kind’, ‘how many’, ‘which one’.

With regard to propositional meaning (semantic) of the phrase, the latter is defined as “according to a rule or in a way that agrees or follows something, in conformity with” (Oxford Dictionary 2013). It is used in more formal contexts to introduce the notion of conventionality and consent. In legal texts it is preferred for stating/claiming that an issue is in conformity with the law or any legal matter. Practically, the phrase does not convey any information which may be incorrect.

Similar in content meaning are:

- **pursuant to** and **according to**, with a respective number of excerpted expressions three and two in the corpus.

In legal vocabulary both expressions are considered to be prepositional phrase conventions (Gubby 2004), though according to scientists the phrases are not ad-positional expressions. The issue is rather problematic and may provoke controversies.

In the case of **pursuant to** the expression consists of two components, an adjective and a post-position. If ‘to’ is assumed to be the postposition (P1), it should entail a complement. However, the latter, the object of the preposition can either be a nominal phrase, or a gerund, in some cases, a clause. In the exact structure ‘pursuant’ is supposed to be a complement possessing the specific characteristics of an adjective (Talasiewicz 2009). However, a prepositional phrase with an adjective as an object of the preposition is not viable. Consequently, the combination **pursuant + to** is a pure preposition, but not a prepositional phrase. On the other hand, since it is a two-constituent grammatical structure functioning as a preposition there is a case for saying that it is a multi-word prepositional structure instead of multi-word prepositional phrase. For example:

ex. ... *the bilateral agreements concluded pursuant to Article 26 thereof...*

Regarding **according to** next, structurally it follows the grammatical pattern of **pursuant to**, in that, it is a combination of an adjective and a preposition. The word *according* derives from the verb *accord* and bears the grammatical aspects of an adjective with a content meaning “in harmony, in agreement”. In BNC (British National Corpus) and COCA (Corpus of Contemporary American English) no examples of the adjective *according* were found which is also the case with *pursuant*. It becomes obvious that the two elements in the structure cannot be separated. Following this, the structure is considered and claimed to be a preposition.

ex. ... *this term should be understood according to the relevant definition of Article 3 ...*

Syntactically, the two expressions should be examined as multi-word prepositions, not as phrases. Turning to the semantic aspect, though quite similar in content meaning to *in accordance with*, it becomes clear from corpus database that they are not that favoured in legal vocabulary. *According to* seems to be used primarily if we aim at restating someone’s words or utterances. It is mainly used in reporting and there is every likelihood that the information might not be accurate, which is not the case with *in accordance with*. Taking **pursuant to** next, although it conveys the same semantic meaning as *in accordance with* and *according to*, it implies a further nuance “as a follow up to” (Oxford dictionary 2013). According to Gubby (Gubby 2004) it is already out of fashion being viewed as obsolete.

In all, the three sets of wordings denote equal semantic meanings and in legal lexis *in accordance with* ranks first in the scale of formality and pragmatic usage. Additionally, only one out of three is a phrase (*in accordance with*), while **pursuant to** and **according to** are mere prepositions, though multi-component.

- **for the purpose of**

Given the corpus set of data, 24 cases of *for the purpose of* were collected and analysed, which makes it a rather common convention in legal vocabulary.

Syntactically, it is a typical ad-positional phrase comprising the particular aspects of a circumscription prepositional expression. It has three basic elements: a preposition (*for*), a complement (*the purpose*) and a postposition (*of*):

head (P1)	→	complement (NP)	→	dependent (P2)
for		the purpose		of

The phrase follows a similar analysis compared to *in accordance with* in that, the preposition *for* functions as the head of the structure whereas *of* is a dependent post-position being of secondary importance. The object of the phrase is a nominal component. An interesting fact is that in 14 out of 24 utterances the phrase functions as an adjunct to an adjectival phrase:

ex. ... *the requested information relevant for the purpose of the criminal proceedings concerned ...*

In 8 cases it functions as an adjunct to a clause (gerundial):

ex. ... *When the EIO is issued for the purpose of executing an investigative measure ...*

There are two examples of the phrase acting as an adjunct to a noun:

ex. ... *on the prevention of the use of the financial system for the purpose of money laundering ...*

The phrase also functions as an adverbial modifier in all cases.

With respect to its propositional meaning, it becomes explicit with the meaning “when considering one particular thing, in a particular situation or when being considered in a particular way” (Oxford dictionary 2013). The object of the phrase plays a crucial role in determining the content meaning of the phrase as in the exact situation the noun *purpose* conveys the semantic meaning of an intended, desired result; the aim.

➤ **without prejudice to**

The next prepositional phrase in the chart is *without prejudice to* at 15.5% which makes 18 out of 116 extracted expressions from the set of data. It follows a similar grammatical pattern to *in accordance with* and *for the purpose of* in that it includes there elements: a preposition (*without*) – object of the preposition (*prejudice*) – a postposition (*to*). The object in the phrase is a noun complement.

head (P1)	→	complement (NP)	→	dependent (P2)
without		prejudice		to

ex. ... *Without prejudice to the exercise of its rights vis-à-vis third parties and with the exception ...*

ex. ... *Access to such data shall be restricted without prejudice to the rights of the data subject.*

In 9 cases the phrase initiates a sentence or a clause whereas in the other half of the expressions it follows a verb phrase. In all 18 extracts the expression is always succeeded by a nominal phrase. It functions as an adverbial modifier.

Considering its propositional meaning, it is mainly used in law and legal papers and becomes explicit with the semantic meaning: “without abandonment of a claim, privilege, without detriment to any existing right”. It actually says that what is to follow or to take place next in a legal matter or case, cannot be used as evidence.

The semantic connotation derives from the object of the phrase *prejudice* which means “preconceived, unfair opinion of judgement” (Oxford Dictionary 2013).

➤ **subject to**

There are 13 cases indicated in the corpus. The expression is two-dimensional, in that, it can either be regarded as a verb phrase or as a prepositional phrase. As the current study does not focus on verb phenomena and structures, all utterances revealing the verbal character of the phrase have been excluded from the survey.

As a prepositional phrase *subject to* is a two-component ad-positional phrase with a complement and a post-position:

complement (NP)	→	post-position (P)
subject		to

The phrase functions as an adjectival modifier following a noun phrase as in:

ex. ... *including the rights of defence of persons subject to ...*

Semantically, the meaning of the phrase derives from its object which according to Oxford dictionary means “a person or thing that is being discussed, described, or dealt with”. In all extracted cases the object of the phrase refers to an entity which bears the semantic features [+animate], [+human].

The speakers explicitly undertakes an obligation which increases the degree of the sincerity condition trying to convince the other party of the validity of the proposition.

2.1 Multiword prepositional phrases (MPPs) – target corpus

In this section a comparison is made with respect to target corpus translation variants and their source language base components with a view to grammatical structure and semantic aspects. The analysis reveals certain similarities and a number of discrepancies.

In the target corpus three prepositional phrases are declared with the meaning ‘in conformity with’: *in accordance with*, *pursuant to* and *according to*, the latter two are considered to be multi-component prepositions.

The Bulgarian translation equivalent of the English phrase ‘in accordance with’ is *v saotvetsvie s*, which bears similar semantic and propositional connotations and follows the same grammatical pattern, that is:

head (P1)	→	complement (NP)	→	dependent (P2)
v		saotvetsvie		s

The object of the preposition is a nominal followed by a post-position. In English grammar the post-position is assumed to be dependent to the complement and of less emphasis and significance compared to the preposition (P1) whereas in Bulgarian language such a distinction cannot be guaranteed, in that, both the preposition and the post-position can have equal power even the latter can have a higher degree of severity as it complies with the succeeding lexical item /which is supposed to be highlighted/. As for its propositional meaning it can be regarded similar to the English variant. In 24 out of 56 cases the Bulgarian translation copies the grammatical pattern of the target phrase.

➤ **pursuant to**, in the Bulgarian version of the EIO it is translated as *saglasno* and is present in 3 utterances

/the same number as in the source file/. It is neither a prepositional phrase nor a multi-word preposition. It is a single-constituent preposition. It is strictly and mainly used in legal vocabulary and copies the propositional content of the source language expression.

➤ **according to**, on the other hand, is translated in the file as **spored** and **saglasno**. **Spored** is a preposition and does not correspond to the grammatical pattern of **according to**, though both expressions are prepositions not phrases.

In all, whereas in English corpus *in accordance with* gain significant prominence over *pursuant to* and *according to*, in Bulgarian set of data *in accordance with* is illustrated with the three Bulgarian phrases. The table below shows the respective number of translation variants and their percentage rate:

MMP (Eng)	number of occurrences	MMP (Bg)	number of occurrences
<i>in accordance with</i>	56	<i>v saotvetstvie s</i>	24
<i>pursuant to</i>	3	<i>saglasno</i>	28
<i>according to</i>	2	<i>spored</i>	4

Obviously, in Bulgarian language *saglasno* is more favoured than *v saotvetstvie s*, though by a narrow margin whilst *spored* is considered not characteristic of legal language.

Going further into the discussion,

➤ **for the purpose of** is translated into Bulgarian in the official file as **1.s tsel da / 2. za tselta na** having the same semantic meaning as in the target phrase. Though grammatically they share similar structural patterns, there are certain disparities that should be considered. The translation equivalents as ad-positional phrases both consist of a preposition, a complement and a post-position.

The first expression **s tsel da** consists of the preposition *s* and the complement *tset* whereas **da** in the given case is not a preposition but a *to-infinitive form* which requires a verb phrase after it. Compared to the English base expression in which the noun complement requires the preposition *of* and can either be followed by a gerundial phrase or a noun phrase, and cannot be substituted by any other particle or preposition, *da* preposition in the particular case asks for an infinitive form in passive voice:

ex. (Bg) ... *s tsel da se poluchat dokazatelstva* ... /with the purpose to be obtained evidence/

Regarding 2. **za tselta na**, it is a direct word-for-word translation equivalent to the English expression which requires a nominal after the complement. Overall, it becomes obvious that the main discrepancy refers to the post-position which is represented by two translation variants: *da* and *na*, the former is a *to-infinitive particle* whereas the latter being a *post-position*.

➤ The expression **without prejudice to** is translated into Bulgarian as **bez da se zasyaga** /without to be regarded in Eng./ which is a completely different grammatical expression that does not comply with the English syntactic structure:

preposition – *da*-particle + passive infinitive
bez **da** **se** **zasyaga**

The expression is not a prepositional phrase though it initiates with a preposition (*bez*). Propositionally, the content meaning is relatively preserved but it is not and cannot be a direct word-for-word translation as the object of the preposition lacks in the Bulgarian variant.

➤ The phrase **subject to** from the source database is rendered in Bulgarian with a translation word-for-word equivalent **obekt na** which is also a combination of a complement noun phrase *obekt* and the post-position *na*. It is a two-component post-positional phrase bearing the same semantic meaning as the source language expression. Interestingly, the phrase can function both as an adjectival and adverbial modifier in a clause. For example:

ex. ... *moje da bade obekt na obsajdane* ... /can be subject to discussions, in Eng./ - adverbial modifier

ex. ... *litseto obekt na razsledvane* ... /the person subject to investigation, in Eng./ - adjectival modifier.

There are no disparities with respect to propositional translation meaning.

III. CONCLUSION

To sum up, the prepositional expressions in English and their Bulgarian translation equivalents share almost identical grammatical /syntactic/ structures and semantic meanings with a few distinctions.

- In English legal vocabulary the three propositionally related expressions, *in accordance with*, *pursuant to* and *according to* share different degree of preference with *in accordance with* gaining prominence over the other two.
- *Pursuant to* and *according to* are considered multi-word prepositions but cannot be regarded as phrases.

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- In Bulgarian legal vocabulary *in accordance with* reveals two translation equivalents, *v saotvetstvie s* and *spored*, the former ranks first with respect to the degree of frequency.
 - *For the purpose of* and its target language translation variant share identical syntactic constructions, though the preposition and the post-position components become explicit in two translation variants: *s tsel da* and *za tselta na* whereas in the English expression the pre- and the post-position remain stable.
 - There is a marked difference in the Bulgarian translation of the phrase *without prejudice to* and its Bulgarian version, *bez da se zasyaga*. The latter does not render the same syntactic structure compared to source language expression, only the preposition is the same.
 - *Subject to* phrase and its Bulgarian transfer does not indicate any structural and content deviations.

In both languages the phrases are considered routinized, formulaic patterns that can mainly be used in legal context. Any modifications or aberrations of their syntactic format can chance the meaning and interpretation of the adjacent words.

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