

ENGLISH PREPOSITIONAL VERBS COLLOCATING WITH THE PREPOSITION FOR AND THEIR SLOVAK NON-PREPOSITIONAL COUNTERPARTS - Contrastive analysis based on the electronic corpus

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Abstract: The paper concentrates on the contrastive linguistic analysis of the specific English lexical verbs, which are collocating with the preposition *for*. The Slovak verbal counterparts, which are not followed by the prepositional object are also analysed. Corpus-based research has been applied. A sample of the verbs are generated from the English-Slovak Parallel Corpus, the sub corpus of the Slovak National Corpus. The threshold, occurrence of the examined verbs in the corpus should be more than 800. Therefore, the most frequent verbs are analyzed. The English-Slovak parallel corpus par-sken-4.0 contains 556 million tokens (261 million tokens in the Slovak half, 295 million tokens in the English one). The oral part of the corpus represents about 10%. The written part of the corpus consists of fiction as well as non-fiction texts. No Sketch Engine tool is used in the Slovak National Corpus to search for results. All examples from the corpus are examined in the context of the sentence from the morphological, syntactical and lexical point of view. The English verbs, followed by the preposition *for*, can be analyzed within two groups. The first group contains prepositional phrases in the function of the adverbial. The second group maintains prepositional phrases in the function of the prepositional object. It can be seen, that many lexical synonymous verbs can be found in the list. Lexical verbs with similar meaning collocate with the identical preposition and the prepositional phrases fulfills the identical syntactical function, i.e. prepositional object or adverbial, i.e. adjunct of time, adjunct of reason. All English prepositional verbs are compared with their Slovak verbal equivalents, which are taken from the Slovak part of the parallel corpus. Each prepositional verbs are analysed from the contrastive point of view. The Slovak verbs *naznačiť*, *kývať* are followed by the object in the Dative case. The verb *monitorovať*, *vybrať si*, *naznačiť*, *odporúčať*, etc. are followed by the object in the Accusative case, though. Due to the fact that each verb has a specific valence and specific lexical description, each pattern is studied, analyzed individually. From the total number of 93 verbs, 29 English verbs can have the Slovak non-prepositional counterparts. It seems, that the preposition *for* is transparent in meaning and number of the Slovak verbal-prepositional counterparts prevail over non-prepositional counterparts. There is an evident interplay between the meanings of the individual verbs and the meaning of the prepositions. This impact further influences specific valence pattern of the verb.

Keywords: prepositional verb, preposition *for*, prepositional object, adjunct, English language, Slovak language

1. INTRODUCTION

The study focuses on the English lexical verbs, which are followed by the prepositional phrase containing the preposition *for*. The syntactical analysis focuses on the prepositional phrases in the function of the prepositional object and adverbial, i.e. adjunct. The noun phrase, following the preposition, in the sentences with the specific lexical verbs is classified as a prepositional object. (Quirk, 1985). Bázlik (2000) „defines a prepositional phrase as a combination of a preposition and another syntactic unit, usually a noun phrase. The preposition is not its head, the phrase cannot be reduced to the preposition only.“ „The nature of the verb determines the clause type. There are different verb classes that might be complemented only by certain types of constituents.“ (Hudcovičová, 2017). Biber et al. (2007, p. 129) „divide prepositional verbs into two major structural patterns: with a single prepositional object (Pattern 1: I have never even thought about it.), and with a direct object and a prepositional object (Pattern 2: It remind me of some parts of Boston.).“

Dixon (2021) groups prepositions according to their meanings and functions. It means that the lexical criterion is the most important. Nghi and Phuc (2022) „analyse the preposition usages from the perspective of conceptual transfer in the English language.“ Hudáková (2017) „states that temporal prepositions are particularly common in academic writing, where precise temporal sequencing is required.“

Verbs can be classified according to valency patterns. Each verb should be scrutinised individually. There are polysemous verbs and each meaning can have different valency pattern. Verbs can occur with very different frequencies for the different patterns, i.e. V+ object; V+Adverbial.

„Prepositional phrases can be obligatory complements to verbs, adjectives, and nouns, and thereby part of their valence patterns.“ (Kristensen, Sørensen, 2025, p.281).

Headlandová Kalischová, Adam (2025, p.126)) „postulate that while verbo-nominal prepositional structures typically attribute qualities to context-dependent subjects, predominantly aligning with the Quality Scale (e.g. He had been on the run a mere two days), certain syntactic-semantic configurations allow these structures to introduce context-independent subjects, thus aligning with the Presentation Scale (e.g. A convicted murderer is on the run tonight).“

Dušková (1988) divides objects into three groups: direct, indirect and prepositional. She postulated that (p. 439, *ibid.*) “it is better to speak of the object of prepositional verbs as of the sole prepositional object because the verb forms with a preposition unity, lexical as well as formal.” The prepositional object is expressed by nouns or pronouns and can have the same form as the adverbial. Dušková (*ibid.*) “offers the following criteria to recognize objects and adverbials:

The first important feature is relation.

The relationship between the verb and the object is closer, whereas the relation between the verb and adverbial is freer.

The second important feature is position of the member in the sentence.

The object is an obligatory member of the sentence in contrast to the adverbial, which is an optional member of the sentence.

The third feature is independence of the form.

The form of the object depends on verbal rection, whereas the form of the adverbial is independent from the verbal rection.“

Furthermore, contrastive view was added when we focus on the group of the English verbs followed by the prepositional phrase and non-prepositional equivalences in the Slovak language. The verbs in the English language require complementation with a prepositional phrase which are equivalent to verbs with the direct object complementation in Slovak. There are verbs such as *listen to/ počúvať*, *charge with/poveriť čim*, *boast of/chváliť sa*, etc.

According to Heaton (1971) the preposition *for* is used after the verb to indicate 1. in place of, instead of, e.g. *The abbreviation M.A. stands for Master of Arts.* 2. at the cost of, e.g. *He could not sing for his wife.* 3. Used after verbs expressing departure or direction towards a place, e.g. *The ship sails for the Far East.* 4. used for, e.g. *The wardrobe is for clothes.* 5. used to denote a recipient of something, e.g. *What can I do for you?* 6. in certain expression such as *go for a walk*, *go for a holiday.* 7. in support of, in favour of, e.g. *How many are for the motion?* 8. during, e.g. *I have lived in Ceylon for two years.*

2. CORPUS-BASED APPROACH AND ENGLISH-SLOVAK PARALLEL CORPUS

„The corpus-based methods focuses on language use, the communicative function is the most important. The corpus-based approach analyses the natural language use in naturally occurring texts, which are characterised by an authentic character.“ (Hudcovičová, 2025). Sinclair (1991) „approaches language as a statistically measurable system of preferences estimated by data analysis.“ The presented research is based on precise data, statistical measures and frequency values in order to reach objective quantitative analysis. The English-Slovak parallel corpus par-sken-4.0 contains 556 million tokens. The corpus contains written and spoken language. NoSketch Engine searching tool is used to analyse the English and the Slovak part. To access the whole corpus, the web interface NoSketchEngine is applied to query the Slovak texts or the English texts. Texts in the electronic corpus are automatically aligned at sentence level. Slovak texts are described from the morphological point of view. For the purpose of the research, the English language was a source language. Sample of the verbs was not random. The English lexical verbs collocating with the preposition *for* with the occurrence more than 1000 in the corpus are selected for analysis in order to reach representative results. The Slovak verbal equivalents are analysed, which are not followed by the prepositional object from the syntactical point of view. Equivalence occurs between the English prepositional verb and the Slovak non-prepositional lexical verb of the type: *search for/hľadať*.

3. ANALYSIS

All analysed sentences are taken from the English-Slovak Parallel Corpus, version par-sken 4.0. The verb *wait* is followed by the preposition *for*. The prepositional phrase *for over an hour* expresses duration. The Slovak language uses non-prepositional pattern: *V+Adverb (vyše hodiny)*. From the syntactical point of view, the predicate is followed by the adjunct, adverbial of time, expressed by the prepositional phrase. The verb *čakať* is not complemented by the prepositional phrase when indicating duration in the Slovak language. *I waited for over an hour until Basil Rudd appeared at the window beside me. Čakal som vyše hodiny, kým sa v bočnom okne zjavila hlava Basila Mudda.* (English-Slovak Parallel Corpus, version par-sken 4.0).

The prepositional verb *work for* was translated into Slovak as *pracovať*. In the English sentence, the predicate is followed by the adverbial, ie. adjunct of time as in the previous example. *After we had worked for another two hours or so, I excused myself in hopes of catching the five o' clock shuttle. Približne po dvoch hodinách práce som sa vyhovoriť v nádeji, že chytím lietadlo o piatej.* (English-Slovak Parallel Corpus, version par-sken 4.0).

The verb *call* is complemented by the preposition *for*. The complete prepositional phrase *for the men in the white coats* indicates the object in the sentence. In the Slovak equivalent sentence, the verb *zavolať* is followed by non-prepositional object *mužov v bielom*.

Both noun phrases consist of the head: *men*, *mužov* and postmodifiers: *in the white coats*, *v bielom*. Structure of both noun phrases is identical in both languages. The English language uses articles, which is present in front of

the head in the English phrase. *You're also thinking it's about time you grabbed your cell phone and called for the men in the white coats. Už vám zrejme zišlo na um aj to, že chytíte mobil a zavoláte mužov v bielom.* (English-Slovak Parallel Corpus, version par-sken 4.0).

The verb *look* can be followed by the preposition *for* to express searching. The prepositional verb *look for* can be substituted by the lexical verb *search*. It can be translated by the Slovak non-prepositional verb *hľadať* followed by the object in Accusative case. *I'm looking for a quiet place to finish it. Hľadám pokojné miesto, kde by som to dokončil.* (English-Slovak Parallel Corpus, version par-sken 4.0).

The verb *go* can be followed by the dependent preposition *for* to indicate choice. In the Slovak language, non-prepositional lexical verb *voliť* with the meaning *to choose* is used. In both cases, the predicates are followed by the objects. The verb *voliť* is followed by the phrase in the Accusative case.

The Sabatini did not go for Cicero, and nor did the Publilia. Ani Sabatiniovci, ani Publiliovcí nevolili Ciceróna. (English-Slovak Parallel Corpus, version par-sken 4.0). The lexical verb *present* is followed by the adverbial of reason, which is expressed by the prepositional phrase *for your delectation and delight*. The Slovak translator used the phrase *nevýslovné potešenie* as equivalent one. In the Slovak sentence, non-prepositional objects followed the predicate, the first object *vám* is in the Dative case, represented by the special form of the personal pronoun *vy*. The second object *mademoiselle Yvonne Vouvrayová* is in the Accusative case. *I have the supreme pleasure to present for your delectation and delight Mademoiselle Yvonne Vouvray! Mám to nevýslovné potešenie predstaviť vám mademoiselle Yvonne Vouvrayová!* (English-Slovak Parallel Corpus, version par-sken 4.0).

The verb *need* can be followed by the prepositional object and non-finite verb phrase in the English language. This pattern corresponds with the Slovak non-prepositional equivalence, where the main clause is followed by the subordinate conjunction *aby* and subordinate clause. *Second, I need for you to sign some papers that will allow me to begin accumulating his medical records. Po druhé, potrebujem, aby ste mi podpísali nejaké papiere, aby som mohol dať dokopy jeho zdravotné záznamy.* (English-Slovak Parallel Corpus, version par-sken 4.0).

In the following example the verb *need* is followed by the *to* – infinitive clause in the English sentence, whereas in the Slovak sentence, the translator used periphrastic phrase *je nevyhnutné* to express the meaning of the verb *need*. The phrase is followed by the infinitive *zaviesť*. *As argued in point 5.3, penalties need to be established for Member States that do not comply with their security of supply obligations. Ako je uvedené v bode 5. 3, je nevyhnutné zaviesť sankcie pre členské štáty, ktoré si neplnia záväzky týkajúce sa bezpečnosti dodávok.* (English-Slovak Parallel Corpus, version par-sken 4.0).

The lexical verb *search* can collocate with the dependent preposition *for*. The Slovak lexical verb *hľadať* does not need a complementation by the dependent preposition. In this case, the English prepositional pattern *V search + preposition for* corresponds with the Slovak non-prepositional counterpart verb *hľadať*. *Wait. He seemed to be searching for words and not finding them. Počkaj. Zdalo sa, že hľadá a nenachádza slová.* In the English-Slovak parallel corpus, more examples of such pattern were found. There is a tendency to translate *search for* by the lexical verb *hľadať*, which is not complemented by the prepositional phrase. The Slovak verb *hľadať* is followed by the direct object in the Accusative case. *He walked casually towards her, his eyes searching for a place at some table beyond her. Nenútené kráčal k nej, očami hľadal miesto za niektorým stolom za ňou.* (English-Slovak Parallel Corpus, version par-sken 4.0).

The lexical verb *compensate* is complemented by the dependent preposition *for* in the English sentence. In the Slovak one, the lexical verb *vynahradiť* is used as a translational equivalence. The verb is not complemented by the preposition. The prepositional phrase *for her Friday absences* represents a prepositional object. The Slovak verb *vynahradiť* is followed by the direct object in the Accusative case.

Deborah did her best to compensate for her Friday absences by rehearsing her sermons with him on Thursday evenings and accepting his criticisms some of which were quite helpful. Debora sa všemožne usilovala vynahradiť piatkovú neprítomnosť tak, že vo štvrtok večer si nacvičovala s Elim kázeň a vypočula si jeho poznámky — a niektoré jej veľmi pomohli. A single word compensates for all the hardships of life. Jediné slovíčko vynahradí všetky útrapy života. (English-Slovak Parallel Corpus, version par-sken 4.0).

The lexical verb *recommend* can be followed by the preposition *for*. Usually, the Slovak translational equivalence is *odporúčiť pre*. The meanings of both lexical verbs, as well as the meaning of the preposition *for*, is transparent. The English prepositional pattern can represent a counterpart to the Slovak non-prepositional verb in cases, when the verb *recommend* is used in the passive voice. The prepositional phrase *for youngsters* functions as the object. *Well, there are a few options not normally recommended for youngsters still in school. Nuž, existuje niekoľko možností, ktoré obvykle neodporúčame mladistvým.* The Slovak verb *neodporúčame* is in the active voice followed by the Dative case, the object *mladistvým*. (English-Slovak Parallel Corpus, version par-sken 4.0).

In the following example, the English verb occurs in the passive voice, too. The prepositional object *na prácu* is in the Accusative case. Only the sentences containing the lexical verb *recommend* in the passive voice and with the objects in the Dative case represent non-prepositional equivalences. *The Calabrians had been recommended*

for the job by a zip in Nobilio 's crew. *Kalábrijcov odporučil na túto prácu Sicíľčan v Nobiliovom tíme.* (English-Slovak Parallel Corpus, version par-sken 4.0).

The English verb *indicate* followed by the prepositional object was can be translated by synonymous verbs *naznačiť* and *ukázať*. The Slovak verbs are postponed by the non-prepositional object in the Dative case, which expresses an addressee. In the English sentence the object is followed by to infinitive clause. There is a tendency in the Slovak syntax to use after the object in the Dative case subordinate clause with the conjunction *aby*. *With a sigh, he extended an arm, indicating for Ophelia to follow him inside. Vystrel ruku a vzdychnúc naznačil Ofélii, aby ho nasledovala dnu.* (English-Slovak Parallel Corpus, version par-sken 4.0).

4. CONCLUSION

The research concentrates on the contrastive evaluation of the specific lexical verbs in the English language, which are collocating with the preposition *for*. Subject to analysis were the Slovak verbal counterparts, which are not followed by the prepositional object. All analysed verbs were taken from the English-Slovak Parallel Corpus. All examined verbs from the electronic corpus occurred more than 800 times. Individual verbs were examined at the sentence level from the morphological, syntactical and lexical point of view. Furthermore, the English verbs, followed by the preposition *for*, were divided into two groups. The first group contains English verbs followed by prepositional phrases in the function of the adverbial, ie. adjunct of time. The second group maintains English verbs containing prepositional phrases in the function of the prepositional object. It can be concluded that many analysed verbs are synonymous, ie. the Slovak lexical verbs *ukázať*, *naznačiť* have similar lexical relations. Synonymous verbs collocate with the identical preposition and the prepositional phrases fulfills the identical syntactical function, ie. prepositional object or adverbial, ie. adjunct of time, the preposition *for* intruduces duration, eg. *to work for another two hours*. The Slovak verbs, which are not complemented by the preposition, are followed by the direct object in the specific case. The Slovak verbs *naznačiť*, *kývať* were followed by the object in the Dative case. The verb *monitorovať*, *vybrať si*, *naznačiť*, *odporúčať*, etc. are followed by the object in the Accusative case, though. Due to the fact that each verb has a specific valency and specific lexical description, each pattern was studied, analysed individually. From the total number of 93 verbs, 29 English verbs can have the Slovak non-prepositional counterparts. It seems, that the preposition *for* is transparent in meaning and number of the Slovak verbal-prepositional counterparts prevail over non-prepositional counterparts.

Figure 1: Analysed English verbs and their Slovak counterparts based on our own research

English verb	V+For+ non-preposit. O or A equivalence	
provide	O	zaopatrit' koho My father is a businessman trying to provide for his wife and children.
wait	A	čakať I waited for over an hour.
call	O	zavolať You called for the men in the white coats.
work	A	pracovať We had worked for another two hours.
go	O	vybrať si The Sabatini did not go for Cicero, and nodid the Publilia.
know	A	vedieť He looked so different from the man she had known for eighteen years, she was shocked.
look	O	hľadať koho I'm looking for a quiet place to finish.
search	O	hľadať koho He seemed to be searching for words and not finding them.
compensate	O	vynadhradiť Deborah did her best to compensate for her Friday absences.
recommend	O	odporúčať There are a few options not normally recommended for youngsters.
indicate	O	naznačiť He extended an arm, indicating for Ophelia to follow him inside.
stand	O	presadzovať Robbie Jenkins stood for states.
hope	O	očakávať čo All those years I hoped for a sign of warmth.
vote	O	voliť koho You vote for a man you play darts with.
reserve	A	rezervovať Every room had been reserved for months ahead.
speak	A	hovoriť Singleton spoke for the first time.
run	A	pracovať The battery,"Vittoria explained," will run for the full twenty-four hours.
think	A	myslieť I thought for a moment she might laugh at me.
open	A	byť otvorený The museum will be open for another half an hour or so.
opt	O	vybrať si He opted for " A " Squadron.
mean	A	znamenat' Lately means for about three years or so.
consider	A	uvažovať Consider for a minute.
see	A	vidieť Pap he had n't been seen for more than a year.
hold	A	vydržať This status quo will not hold for much longer.
motion	O	kývať komu He motioned for Frankie to enter.
last	A	trvať A drought that lasted for 2 years.
monitor	O	monitorovať The system also monitors for any electric failure of the emissions control system.
listen	A	počúvať He listened for a long time, staring at the pen.
watch	O	čakať Marina must have been watching for her.
say	A	hovoriť That's what I've been saying for years.

O-object
A-Adverbial

Source of the sentences: English-Slovak Parallel Corpus 4.0

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