

## **TRANSLATING GRAMMATICAL COLLOCATIONS FROM MACEDONIAN INTO ENGLISH IN JOURNALISTIC TEXTS<sup>1</sup>**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study deals with grammatical collocations, and investigates how successfully these are translated from Macedonian into English in journalistic texts. A small-sized parallel corpus was compiled for the purposes of this study, comprising 14 long news articles (7 originally written in Macedonian and their respective translations into English) all of which were published in the Macedonian daily newspaper “Nezavisen”. Somewhat over 100 grammatical collocations have been extracted from the original texts and these were consequently compared with their renderings in English. In analyzing the results both the qualitative and quantitative paradigm were considered.

The study was based on two hypotheses: 1) a considerable number of erroneous translations of the grammatical collocations will occur in the target texts, and 2) the lexical patterning of the Macedonian collocations differ greatly from the lexical patterning of their English counterparts. The research yielded some interesting and unexpected findings as both hypotheses were proven wrong.

**KEY WORDS:** grammatical collocations, journalistic texts, translation

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<sup>1</sup> original scientific paper

## INTRODUCTION

Collocations are a fascinating linguistic phenomenon and a key constituent of the lexicon of all natural languages. Collocations occur when two or more words combine, forming a lexical unit (e.g. *take a photo, have lunch, make a mistake or extremely happy*). Cruse (1986) defines collocation as "sequences of lexical items which habitually co-occur". Their presence is marked in both oral and written discourse, or, to put it differently, "no piece of natural spoken or written English is totally free of collocation" (McCarthy 2005). Native speakers use collocations spontaneously and instinctively, whereas non-native speakers, often times, struggle really hard with collocations. Incorrect or unusual collocations constantly occur in language learners' speech as well as in translated texts (Munday 2009, 171; Stubbs 1995, 245). One of the reasons why this happens is that many collocations are language- and culture-specific, and there is no one-to-one translation equivalence in the learners' L1 and L2 (Culler 1976).

Mastering the collocation patterning of the foreign language is an imperative for translators, since collocations guarantee a near native-like language proficiency; natural sounding speech and writing; precise and effective communication, etc. (Sarikas 2006, 36).

Grammatical collocations, which are combinations of content words and prepositions or certain grammatical structures, are in the focus of this study. More specifically, the aim of this study is to discover whether the grammatical collocations used in journalistic texts are rendered correctly from Macedonia into English. The study also seeks to establish the frequency with which various grammatical collocation patterns appear in the newspaper articles, and, whether the original collocations and their English equivalents bear any similarities in terms of their collocation patterning.

For the purposes of this study, a corpus of newspaper articles from a Macedonian daily newspaper was compiled. The selected articles were originally written in Macedonian and then translated into English; both the original texts and the translations were published within the same issues of the newspaper. Given that this is a daily newspaper, it is only logical to assume that both the journalists who write the articles and the translators who translate them in English, work under a serious time

pressure—the influx of news stories is constantly high and the newspaper has to be filled with new contents and released in a timely manner each coming day. As far as the translators are concerned, this practically means that their chances of returning to the translated material, at a later stage, for revision and correction are rather slim, and, consequently, that could affect the quality of the translated material<sup>2</sup>. This can especially be expected if the source and target language display huge linguistic differences, as it is the case with Macedonian and English, the former being a Slavic language, whereas the latter a language descending from the Germanic family of languages.

The subsequent sections include: a brief theoretical background on collocations and translation of collocations; a presentation of the research methodology used in this study; a discussion of the results obtained, and, finally, some conclusions and recommendations for future research.

## THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

As mentioned previously, the concept of collocation is normally viewed as “word co-occurrence, where certain words appear predictably next to or within a certain number of words from each other; the usual string considered is of four words to either side of the node word, sometimes known as a nine-word span” (Sinclair 1991). Being fixed to some degree, but not completely (Nesselhauf 2004, 11), collocations are considered the major building block of the lexical and syntactic structure of languages. Benson, Benson and Ilson in their BBI Dictionary (1986) classify them into two broad categories: *grammatical* (henceforward GC) and *lexical collocations* (henceforward LC). Unlike LC, which consist only of combinations of lexical or content words (e.g. noun + noun, adjective + noun; verb + noun; etc.), GC contain a content word (noun, adjective or verb) and a preposition or a particular structural pattern such as an infinitive or a clause. More specifically, the major types of GC, according to Benson et al. (1986), are as follows:

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<sup>2</sup> Some translation theoreticians argue that the quality of translation greatly depends on leaving the translated material to ‘rest’ for awhile, since that enables the translator to return to it and view it detached from the source text (Baker 1992).

- noun + preposition/ to infinitive/ that clause (e.g. *access to, agreement that...*)
- preposition + noun (e.g. *in advance, by surprise*)
- adjective + preposition/ to infinitive/ that clause (e.g. *aware of, necessary to, afraid that...*)
- verb + preposition/ infinitive with to/ infinitive without to/ verb form ending in -ing/ that clause (e.g. *adjust to, begin to, keep doing, think that*).

Evidently, collocations present quite a versatile and wide-ranging category, and, consequently, should be approached with much deliberation, especially in the process of translation. A precise translation will always stand out as awkward, if the collocation preferences of the target language are somehow violated (Shammas 2013), since what is regarded culturally acceptable in one language may be considered totally obscure and strange in another (Dweik 2000, 224).

Various studies have attempted to shed light on what makes the translation of collocations so troublesome. Apart from the cultural and linguistic gaps that exist between the source and target language, which are the prime instigators of confusion and difficulties<sup>3</sup>, the source language interference, which may escape unnoticed even to experienced translators, can decidedly lead to producing very unnatural collocations (Shraideh & Mahadin 2015). In addition, what complicates the matter further is the fact that along with the collocations that are common and used by all language users of a particular language regardless of their occupations, special interest or hobbies, there are collocations that are typical only of specific registers (Baker 1992). Some translators easily fall into the trap of not checking the specific meaning of a given collocation used in a particular register and translate the collocation

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<sup>3</sup>Al-Rawi (1994, 3) (in Shraideh & Mahadin 2015) instantiates this by pointing out that the collocational systems of Arabic and English are very much different. Thus, in Arabic, there is a collocation that translates into English as *Friday prayer*, but in English the closest collocation in that specific religious context would probably be *Sunday Mass*.

rather literally, thus, producing an incorrect collocation.<sup>4</sup>Newmark (1988) attributes the difficulty in translation of collocations to “two major reasons—first, there is only an arbitrary relation between the components of a collocation and its meaning, and, second, at least one of these components has secondary meaning”.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The main aim of this study was to determine what happens to the grammatical collocations when they are transferred from Macedonian into English. For the purposes of this study, a corpus of newspaper articles from the Macedonian newspaper, “Nezavisen” (*Independent*), was compiled. The reason why “Nezavisen” was selected as the primary source for our corpus was that a selection of the articles published in each new issue are also translated into English, which opens an opportunity for compiling a parallel corpus quite effortlessly. The corpus compiled for the purposes of this study consisted of seven news articles on domestic and regional politics, originally written in Macedonian, as well as the translations of these articles into English, which means 14 texts in total. The articles were extracted from two issues of “Nezavisen” released at the end of June and the beginning of July 2018 (see Appendix).

The first step of the analysis was to detect and extract the GC from the original texts as well as to determine their specific lexical patterning. The identification of the G Cused in the selected texts drew heavily on Benson et al. (1986) classification, according to which they are mainly combinations of content words (verbs, nouns, adjectives) and prepositions.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Such is the case with *dull headlights* and *vigorous depressions*, which may sound odd in everyday English, but are common in the field of photography and meteorology, respectively (Sinclair 1966 in Baker 1992).

<sup>5</sup> In order not to stretch the boundaries of this paper too much we excluded from the analysis the combinations of content words with clauses and to infinitive structures, which are also treated as grammatical collocations by Benson et al. (1986).

The subsequent step in the analysis included tracking down the translation equivalents of the selected grammatical collocations in the translated articles in English, and inspecting whether the offered translational equivalents were correct and acceptable in English. Finally, the English translation equivalents were also inspected from the perspective of their lexical patterning, in terms of whether they were of the same type as their Macedonian counterpart or not.

Considering the time constraint under which these articles are translated into English, as well as the fact that Macedonian and English are completely dissimilar languages, the following two hypotheses were set at the beginning of the study:

**Hypothesis 1.** The translated texts contain a significant number of incorrectly rendered grammatical collocations, and

**Hypothesis 2.** The lexical patterning of the Macedonian grammatical collocation differs from the lexical patterning of their translation equivalents in English.

## RESULTS

### CORRECTLY VS. INCORRECTLY RENDERED GC

In the analyzed corpus of Macedonian newspaper articles, 104 GC were identified and extracted, but in the English corpus, the number of GC was 102, as two of the original collocations were not rendered in target text.

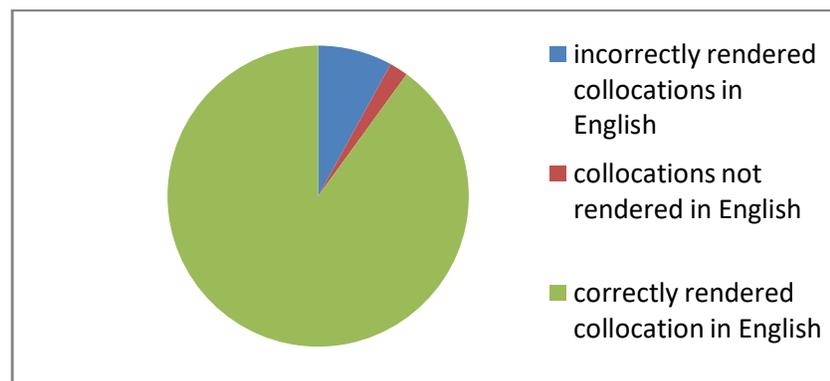


Figure 1 Correctly vs. incorrectly rendered GC

Contrary to what was initially expected and predicted with the first hypothesis, a vast majority of the collocations, i.e. about 90% were rendered correctly in English. Some instances of successful translation of the collocations are presented below (Table 1).

Table 1 Instances of correctly rendered GC in English

Macedonian collocations	English collocations
Центар за економска анализа	Center for Economic Analysis
Ратификација на спогодбата	Ratification of the treaty
Систем за одбрана	A defense system
Министер без ресор	Minister without portfolio
Кабинетот на претседателот	The Cabinet of the president
Нанесува штета на државата	To inflict damages on the state

This result implies that the translators who translated these texts in English were well-versed into the specificities of the politics-related journalistic register in the target language and practically did not come across any serious difficulties in rendering the GC correctly in their L2.

Looking at the other side of the coin, the results obtained from this research reveal that only 7.6% of the collocations translated in English were somewhat questionable, i.e. were not rendered very precisely or correctly (Table 2).

Table 2 Incorrectly rendered GC in English

Macedonian corpus	English corpus	
доаѓа до висока позиција	*to come to a high position/ <b>correct:</b> to take a high position	word –for –word translation
излез од кризата	*solution to the crisis / <b>correct:</b> exit of the crisis	too liberal /free translation

криза во владеачката коалиција	*government crisis/ <b>correct:</b> the government coalition crisis	too liberal /free translation
лесно дојде до победа	*to score good results/ <b>correct:</b> to score an easy victory	too liberal /free translation
да излезат на референдум	*to come out in a referendum/ <b>correct:</b> to vote in a referendum	word –for –word translation
да стаса до целта	*to reach a goal/ <b>correct:</b> to reach the destination	too liberal /free translation

As presented in Table 2, the analysis disclosed two reasons why these grammatical collocations were marked as incorrect: 1) they were either a product of word-for-word translation from Macedonian to English, and the resultant collocations in the target language were non-existent (e.g. *излегува на референдум*—\*to come out in a referendum), 2) they were a product of too liberal/free translation and did not fully reflect the meaning of the original collocations (e.g. *носителите на организираните криминални злочинства*—\*the carriers of organized crime).

Finally, it is worth noting that there were few instances (1.9%) where no translation of the collocations was offered at all, probably because the translator did not find the collocation in question crucial for the meaning of the sentence in the target language and he/she found another more convenient manner of conveying approximately the same meaning (1) and (2).

- (1) *Во последно време се зборува за **можноста за импичмент** на Иванов....*  
(Lately, we hear that he **may even be impeached**....)
- (2) *Во последно време се чини дека **на политичката сцена** нема потраги-комична фигура од онаа на претседателот Ѓорѓе Иванов.*  
(Lately, it seems that there is no bigger tragic-comic **political** figure than President Ivanov.)

Overall, the analysis of the results obtained from this research, without any doubt, proved our first hypothesis completely wrong. Now, let's proceed and discuss the results in light of our second hypothesis—the lexical patterning of the Macedonian grammatical collocation differ from the lexical patterning of their translation equivalents in English in the journalistic texts.

#### DIFFERENCES AND SIMILARITIES IN THE LEXICAL PATTERNING OF GC IN MACEDONIAN AND ENGLISH

The analysis of the corpus showed that Benson et al.'s (1986) classification of GC needed to undergo expanding with new types of GC as, both in Macedonian and in English, only rarely were the GC composed of merely one content word and a preposition as stipulated by this classification. Namely, in most of the cases, the noun + preposition combination; the verb + preposition combination, and the adjective + preposition combinations, as proposed by Benson et al. (1986), were combined with additional lexical components (Table 3).

Table 3 The lexical patterning of GC in the Macedonian corpus

GC with a noun as a node GCNN	<b>Noun + Preposition + Noun</b>	<b>40</b>
	Adj. + <b>Noun</b> + Preposition + <b>Noun</b>	<b>6</b>
	<b>Noun</b> + Preposition + Adj. + <b>Noun</b>	<b>9</b>
	Preposition + <b>Noun</b>	<b>4</b>
	Preposition + Adj. + <b>Noun</b>	<b>3</b>
	Preposition + <b>Noun</b> + Preposition + <b>Noun</b>	<b>5</b>
	Preposition + <b>Noun</b> + Noun	<b>1</b>
	Total	<b>68</b>
Grammatical collocations with a verb as a node GCVN	<b>Verb</b> + Preposition + Noun	<b>13</b>
	<b>Verb</b> + Preposition + Adj. + Noun	<b>4</b>
	Adverb + <b>Verb</b> + Preposition + Noun	<b>3</b>
	<b>Verb</b> + Noun + Preposition + Noun	<b>9</b>

	<b>Verb + Adj. + Noun+ Preposition + Noun</b>	<b>1</b>
	<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>
GC with an adjective as a node	<b>Adjective + Preposition+ Noun</b>	<b>4</b>
GC with an adverb as a node	<b>Adverb + Preposition</b>	<b>2</b>
	<b>Total</b>	<b>104</b>

The analysis showed that all grammatical collocations in the analyzed corpus can be divided into two broad categories—*grammatical collocations with a noun as a node (central element) (GCNN)*, and *grammatical collocations with a verb as a node (GCVN)*. More precisely, as Table 4 shows, seven different subtypes of GCNN were identified in the analyzed corpus and these were, in fact, the most predominant grammatical collocations in the corpus (65%). The GCVN were considerably less frequent (29%), i.e. less than a third of the total number of collocations. Five subtypes of such collocations were detected in the analyzed material. The collocations with an **adjective as a node** (e.g. *обвинет за—accused of*), or an **adverb** as a node (e.g. *паралелно со—in parallel with*), were very infrequent in the analyzed corpus, namely, only 4% and 2%, respectively (Table 3).<sup>6</sup>

The most pervasive type of GC in the entire corpus was the N+P+N combination. With this type of GC we actually made another significant departure from Benson et al.'s classification which treats this combination as lexical collocation, despite the fact that it contains a preposition, *of*, which is generally not the case with lexical collocations. This study showed that this particular type of collocation is quite common in both Macedonian and English and that apart from the preposition *на* ('*of*'), other prepositions can be used in the same position,

<sup>6</sup>The original classification consisted only of noun, verbs and adjectives plus prepositions combinations, but our classification also includes an adverb plus preposition collocation as well (e.g. *паралелно со—in parallel with*).

joining two nouns together in a single collocation (e.g. *дијалог за името*—a dialogue **about** the name; *реферндум за договорот*—referendum **about** the agreement, *борба **против** корупција*—fight **against** corruption; *датум за преговору*—the opening **of** the accession talk; *подготовка за преговору*—to prepare the negotiations, etc.). Consequently, all these collocations in this classification were treated as one single type—N+P+N.

Regarding the N+P+N combination, it is worth noting that, in more than half of the cases, the English collocations have preserved the same structure as their corresponding Macedonian collocations – N+P+N (e.g. *борба **против** корупцијата*—fight **against** the corruption) (Table 4). Nevertheless, less than half of the N+P+N combinations were rendered with a completely different lexical patterning in English, most probably due to: a) the language differences between English and Macedonian (e.g. *датум за преговору*—the opening **of** the accession talk), and b) translator’s preference (e.g. *подготовките за преговору*—to prepare the negotiations (V+N), this GC could have been rendered as preparations **for** the negotiations (N+P+N)).

Table 4 Similarities and differences in the lexical patterning of GCNN in Macedonian and English

Macedonian GCNN	English translation equivalents	
	the same	different
<b>Noun + Preposition + Noun</b>	22	15
Adjective + <b>Noun</b> + Preposition + <b>Noun</b>	3	2
<b>Noun</b> + Preposition + Adjective + <b>Noun</b>	5	3
Preposition + <b>Noun</b>	1	3
Preposition + Adjective + <b>Noun</b>	1	1
Preposition + <b>Noun</b> + Preposition + <b>Noun</b>	2	3
Preposition + <b>Noun</b> + Noun	/	1
////	<b>34</b>	<b>28</b>

Apart from the N+P+N combination, there were several other patterns of GCNN detected in the analyzed corpus. For instance, in some cases,

the already discussed collocation of N+P+N was further enriched by an adjectivemodifying the first noun of the collocation (*политичката карта на Македонија - the **political** map of Macedonia; целосно интегрирање на државата - to fully integrate the country into; партиските лидери на опозицијата - the opposition **party** leaders*). Interestingly, the same combination, N+P+N was sometimes enriched by an adjective modifying the second noun in the collocation (e.g. *темелот на македонската нација/the foundation of the **Macedonian** nation; остварување на **стратегиските** определби/ to achieve the **strategic** commitments; носителите на **организираниот** криминал /**organized** crime, etc.*). Here, as well half of these collocations were rendered in English with completely the same structure (e.g. *политичката карта на Македонија—the **political** map of Macedonia*); whereas, the other collocations in English were quite different from the originals (e.g. *целосно интегрирање на државата—to fully integrate the country into*).

Another slightly different type of GCNN from the previous one that was detected in the corpus was P+N (e.g. *во целост—fully; до денес—to this day*, etc.) whose presence was rather infrequent in the analyzed corpus. Here, as well half of the collocations were rendered with the same structure in English (e.g. *до денес—to this day*) and the other half had different lexical patterning (e.g. *во целост—fully*). The noun in this combination was sometimes modified by an accompanying adjective (e.g. *во **вториот** круг—in the **second** round*). Finally, instances of P+(N+P+N) were also detected in the corpus although they were quite rare (e.g. *во одбрана на земјата—in defending the country, со помош на владата—with the help of the government*).

Now, let's turn our attention to the GCVN. In most of the GCVN, the verbs were mainly followed by a preposition and a noun (V+P+N) (e.g. *излезе со барање—to ask for; прогласува за потомци—to be declared as descendants; се откажаа од потеклото—to **renounce** their origin*). In this combination the noun was sometimes further modified with an adjective (e.g. *доаѓа во **официјална** посета—is on an **official** visit*). Sometimes this same combination (V+P+N) was further modified by an adverb, usually at the very beginning of the collocation (Adv.+(V+P+N))(e.g. *лесно дојде до победа—to score good results*) (Table 5).

Table 5 Similarities and differences in the lexical patterning of the GCVN in Macedonian and English

Macedonian GCVN	English translation equivalents	
	the same	different
<b>Verb</b> + Preposition + Noun	5	7
<b>Verb</b> + Preposition + Adjective + Noun	2	
Adverb + <b>Verb</b> + Preposition + Noun	1	1
<b>Verb</b> + Noun+ Preposition+Noun	6	3
<b>Verb</b> + Adjective + Noun+ Preposition + Noun	1	
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>11</b>

In the analyzed corpus, there were also instances of a verb followed by N+P+N combination (e.g. *става фокус на преговорите*—*to focus on the negotiations*).

On the basis of the discussion above regarding the similarities and differences in the lexical patterning of the GC in Macedonian and English, we can infer that our second hypothesis was also wrong. Namely, the analysis of the results showed that some 56% of the English collocations, offered as translation equivalents of the Macedonian collocations, retained the same lexical patterning as their Macedonian counterparts (e.g. *владеење на правото* (N+P+N)—*the rule of law* (N+P+N); *ги исполнува потребите на граѓаните* (V+N+P+N) —*to meet the needs of the citizens* (V+N+P+N)). The rest of the collocations, 44% in total, displayed differences in their lexical patterning in comparison with the original GC (e.g. *целосно интегрирање на земјата* (Adj.+N+P+N) —*to integrate the countryfully* (V+N+Adv.); *го става фокусот на прашањето*(V+N+P+N) —*to focus on the issue* (V+P+N), etc.). This finding is quite surprising as it demonstrates that despite the fact that the Macedonian and the English language are quite dissimilar and belong to two completely different language families, still when it comes to GC, they display more similarities than differences.

## CONCLUSION

The findings of this research were rather unexpected to a large extent as the two major hypotheses set at the beginning of this research were proved wrong. Namely, in spite of our negative expectations, the translation of the analyzed news articles was delivered very professionally, and no truly serious errors, jeopardizing the quality of the translation, were detected in the rendering of the GC from Macedonian into English. The insignificant instances of problematic renderings of the Macedonian collocations in English is in fact a strong indication that the translators, generally speaking, despite the time constraint and the fast tempo with which they are expected to deliver their translations, still cope with their assignment in an excellent manner. Another likely explanation for the successful rendering of the news articles in English, is that in the final stage, prior to releasing the newspaper, the articles are submitted to proofreading, i.e. maybe despite the serious lack of time still the newspaper places the translations in the hands of a lector who intervenes and discards all unnatural and unacceptable collocations from the translated texts in English. Another likely option is that these translators are assisted by modern day technologies and make use of some software translation tools and workstations that greatly alleviate and improve their work.

Furthermore, the translation equivalents in English of an unexpectedly large number of GC were identical with their corresponding Macedonian counterparts in terms of their lexical patterning. The fact that no huge differences were detected in that respect can be attributed to the following two factors: a) some of the grammatical collocations are, in fact, typical of this specific politics-related journalistic register and are, consequently, cross-linguistic, meaning their presence in the same form (lexical patterning) is preserved the same across different languages (e.g. *владеење на правото*—*the rule of law*), and b) although sometimes the same collocation can undergo some slight modifications in terms of its internal structure, still the translators choose to use the collocation whose lexical patterning was closest to the one of the collocation typically used in their mother tongue (e.g. *со помош на владата*—*with the help of the government*, but it could have been rendered as *with the government's help*).

One must not disregard the fact that for a significant number of the Macedonian GC, the translation equivalents offered in English were collocations with a completely different patterning. We also must acknowledge the fact that the different patterning was sometimes obligatory as it drew on the differences of the linguistic systems of English and Macedonian (e.g. *datum za npegovopu*—*the opening of the accession talk*), but sometimes it was purely the choice of the translators, as they could have as well utilized grammatical collocations with the same lexical patterning as their original counterparts (e.g. *podgotovkume za npegovopu*—*to prepare the negotiation*, but it could have been translated as *the preparations for the negotiations*).

The GCNN were the most numerous type of GC, if fact, the frequency with which they were used was considerably greater than the frequency of all the other types of GC in both Macedonia and English.

As to the recommendations, further research is definitively needed to disclose what happens to the other types of grammatical collocations which consist of a content word and an infinitive or a clause, as well as the lexical collocations, when transferred from Macedonian to English. Apart from journalistic texts, the same research can be conducted in a completely different linguistic setting, (e.g. literary texts, students' essays, etc.), in other words, registers other than the journalistic register can be taken into consideration. Last but not least, much larger corpora should serve as a basis for the future research endeavors in order to arrive at much more reliable and objective results.

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## APPENDIX

Newspaper articles excerpted from “Nezavisen”:

1. Претседателот и натаму против алатката за отчетност: Иванов одбива да ги покаже трошоците/The President still against the tool for accountability: Ivanov refuses to release his public expenditures (29.06.2018)

2. СДСМ го впери прстото во Иванов и за амбасодорите: Шефот на државата ја опструира дипломатијата/SDSM points its finger to Ivanov concerning the Ambassadors: The head of State obstructs diplomacy(29.06.2018)
3. Кој го избра Иванов?/Who elected Ivanov?(29.06.2018)
4. Можат ли да се договорат Македонците со Македонците?/Can Macedonians come to an agreement with the Macedonians?(29.06.2018)
- 5.Рускиот претседател во посета на Србија/Russian President on an official visit to Serbia (02.07.2018)
6. На Македонија и треба нова преродба/ Macedonia needs a new revival(02.07.2018)
7. Зошто НАТО и ЕУ?/Why NATO and EU?(02.07.2018)