

**THE ENGLISH ABSOLUTE CONSTRUCTION WITH ADVERBIAL
PREDICATIVE ELEMENT
AND ITS BULGARIAN FUNCTIONAL EQUIVALENTS**

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The absolute construction with adverbial predicative element is one of the four non-verbal subtypes of absolute constructions in English. The present paper briefly outlines the main characteristic features of this construction and focuses further on its functional equivalents in Bulgarian. The latter are classified and analysed according to several criteria, i.e. their syntactic structure, morphological representation and semantic function in the sentence. A dominant functional equivalent is identified and some conclusions are drawn with respect to the degree of translation correspondence between the absolute construction under observation and its functional equivalents.

Key words: *absolute construction, AC, Bulgarian functional equivalents, FE, contrastive study, dominant functional equivalent, non-verbal predicative element, adverb phrase, AdvP, translation correspondence*

The English absolute construction (further referred to as AC) has a specific structure resembling that of a sentence¹. It consists of two elements – nominal and predicative. The nominal element (NE) is generally expressed by a noun phrase (NP) functioning as the overt subject of the AC, while the predicative element (PE) can have either verbal or non-verbal head bearing the predicativity of the construction.

¹ Barhudarov (1966: 128) points out that the AC cannot be considered sentence since it lacks the typical subject-verb structure – the verbal form is not finite and the two constituents do not agree in person and number.

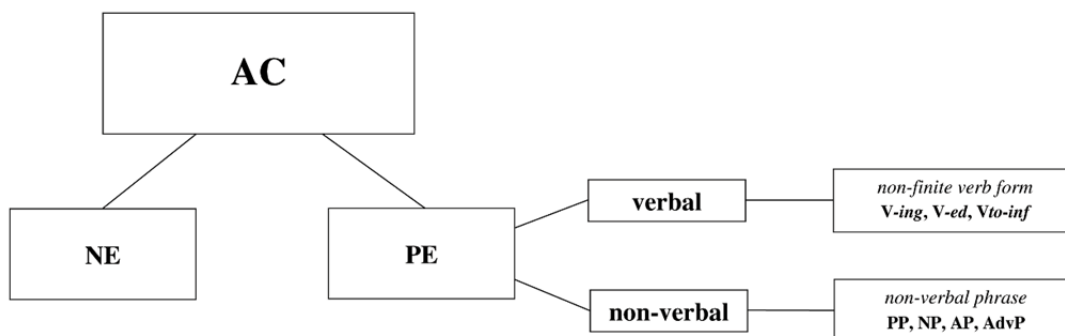


Figure 1. Structure of the English AC

Verbal PEs have as their heads non-finite verb phrases (VPs), while non-verbal PEs have NPs, prepositional phrases (PPs), adjective phrases (APs) and adverb phrases (AdvPs) as their heads. According to the type of the PE, ACs fall into two major classes – verbal and verbless. On their part these two types of ACs can be further subdivided “with respect to the nature of the head of their predicative element” (Kortmann 1991: 10). Thus, seven structural patterns of ACs are distinguished – three verbal and four verbless².

The AC with adverbial PE is one of the four verbless subtypes of ACs functioning in Present-day English. Its structure is *NP + AdvP* and it can be introduced into its matrix clause syndetically, as in (1), or be augmented by the prepositions *with* or *without*, as in (2) and (3), respectively.

- (1) With Evelyn beside her, she drove off, *head forward*, lips pursed, with an air of almost sacerdotal dignity. (EN: EJ, 150)³
- (2) John Dowling runs **with** *his head low* under the amber lights. (EN: AJ, 131)
- (3) I’m sure it’s much too cold and damp for you to be out there **without** *a coat on*. (EN: ACr, 170)

Furthermore, the AdvPs constituting the heads of the adverbial PEs can be either unextended (4), or extended, with PPs in postmodifying function, as in (5).

- (4) Boo had drifted to a corner of the room, where he stood *with his chin up*, peering from distance at Jem. (EN: HL, 277)

² For more information, see Todorova 2011, 2013.

³ For full reference to the authors and their works, see the SOURCES OF THE EXCERPTED MATERIAL section at the end of the paper.

- (5) And by his side *with his head up in the air* and his eyes full of laughter walked as strongly and steadily as any boy in Yorkshire – Master Colin. (EN: FHB, 239)

ACs with adverbial PEs are not among the most frequently occurring verbless ACs in English⁴. Fifteen English sentences containing ACs of this type have been identified in the corpus⁵ in the process of investigation. Their Bulgarian translations have been carefully examined and analysed in terms of their syntactic structure, morphological representation and semantic function (interpretation) in the sentence.

Since the English AC has no formal analogue in Bulgarian syntax the only way to render it in Bulgarian is to find its functional equivalents. As Lyudskanov (1969: 113) defines them, “functional equivalents are such constructive units of translation, linguistic devices, that function in the system of context in the same way as the corresponding device(s) of the original function in the system of the whole, and altogether they confer the same ideas and aesthetic and emotional functionality to the translation as is contained in the original, i.e. they help transfer invariant information” (my translation).

Five types of Bulgarian FEs of the English AC with adverbial PE have been identified in the course of this contrastive study: separate sentence, finite independent clause, finite subordinate clause, adverbial modifier and attribute. Below, they are presented in a detailed classification illustrated with examples and comments on them.

⁴ The frequency profile of ACs has been made according to the number of occurrences of the various types of ACs in the corpus. “Thus, the ones constituting more than 50 % of the examples are labelled as *most frequent*; *less frequent* are those whose occurrences vary from 10 to 40 %, and *least frequent* are the ones amounting to less than 10 % of the examples” (Todorova 2013).

⁵ An English-Bulgarian corpus of examples has been constructed specially for the purposes of my contrastive study of the English AC and its Bulgarian FEs. The examples have been excerpted predominantly from written literary sources, i.e. fictional literature in English and the corresponding Bulgarian texts translated by professional translators. 1044 examples in pairs have been subjected to a thorough contrastive analysis in order to identify the Bulgarian FEs of the English AC from a syntactic, morphological and semantic point of view.

1. Separate sentence

There is one example of this type of Bulgarian FE of the English AC with adverbial PE identified in the corpus. The source sentence (6) is an exclamative one. Such sentences are used to express strong feelings, strong emphasis or emotion. The target sentence (7) offers a pretty free translation of the English AC. This translation, however, can be justified since it successfully renders the emphatic meaning of the original.

(6) She shakes her head. “No way, not *with Lulu around...*” (EN: SK, 111)

(7) – Как пък не! – клати глава тя. – Нали Лулу веднага ще нададе вой?! (BG: AADS, 120)

It is worth pointing out that there is not necessarily a one-to-one relationship between the form of a sentence and its discourse function. Thus, the sentence in (7) is a rhetorical question and has interrogative form but practically it is a real statement.

2. Finite independent clause

The Bulgarian functional equivalent *finite independent clause* which corresponds to the following examples of English ACs with AdvP as their PEs – (8), (10) – are realized within a complex-compound (9) and a compound sentence (11), respectively.

If we take a close look at the first English example, we see that there are two coordinated ACs in it, ‘with a little collar of foam in front’ and ‘a long swirling wake behind’, and they are rendered in Bulgarian with the help of two coordinated finite independent clauses, linked to each other with the copulative conjunction ‘и’. To avoid the heaping of several subordinate clauses, the translator has skillfully chosen to break the original sentence and make the first subordinate non-finite clause of the English example a main finite clause in the Bulgarian translation. The complex transformation has resulted in two separate sentences in Bulgarian, the first simple, the second mixed, with the two finite independent clauses as correspondents of the two English ACs pushed to final position.

(8) Here and there high serpent heads projected out of the water, cutting swiftly through it with a little collar of foam in front, *and a long swirling wake behind*, rising and falling in graceful, swan-like undulations as they went. (EN: ACD, ch. 14)

- (9) Тук-таме високо над повърхността се подаваха змийски глави. Те бързо пореха водата, като се издигаха и спускаха с грациозни движения на лебедовите си шии, а пред тях се образуваше малка яка от пяна *и зад гърба им оставаше дълга кипяща следа.* (BG: ASh, 299)

The second example also contains two coordinated ACs but it is the first of them that has an AdvP as head of its PE. The finite independent clause functioning as its Bulgarian equivalent is in medial position within the compound sentence and is joined *asyndetically* to the clause in precedence.

- (10) Dickon sat cross-legged *with his rabbit asleep on his arm* and a hand resting on the lamb's back. (EN: FHB, 196)
- (11) Дикън седеше с кръстосани крака, *заекът беше заспал на едната му ръка*, а другата беше отпуснал на гърба на агнето. (BG: SKK, SV, 222)

3. Finite subordinate adverbial clause of cause/reason

The two coordinated ACs in (12) express causal adverbial meaning which is accordingly rendered in Bulgarian (13) with the help of finite subordinate adverbial clauses of cause/reason introduced by the causative preposition 'понеже' and joined together *syndetically* by 'а'.

- (12) I never thought it as much fun as Tarzan, and I played that summer with more than vague anxiety despite Jem's assurances that Boo Radley was dead and nothing would get me, *with him and Calpurnia there in the daytime and Atticus home at night.* (EN: HL, 39)
- (13) Според мен Тарзан беше много по-занимателен и през цялото лято играех с тревога, *въпреки уверенията на Джем, че Бу Редли е вече умрял и че нищо не може да ми се случи, понеже денем той и Калпурния са с мене, а вечер Атикус си е в къщи.* (BG: TsS, 55)

4. Adverbial modifier

4.1. Of manner

Morphologically it is realized through PPs headed predominantly by the preposition 'с' (15), (17), (19), (25).

- ‘с’ + NP

The meaning of the adverb functioning as PE of the English AC is expressed in Bulgarian with the help of a past passive participle functioning as modifier of the noun in the NP. Thus, the AC ‘head up’ (14) and its variations (18), (24) have their correspondents ‘с вирната глава’ (15), (19) and ‘с високо вдигната глава’ (25), and the AC ‘with his head down’ (16) is translated ‘с наведена глава’ (17).

- (14) The moment she was out of sight Francis came out *head up* and grinning. (EN: HL, 84)
- (15) Веднага щом се скри, Френсис излезе *с вирната глава*, захилен до уши. (BG: TsS, 116)
- (16) He sat *with his head down*, and I never saw anybody glare at anyone with the hatred Mayella showed when she left the stand and walked by Atticus’s table. (EN: HL, 188)
- (17) Седеше *с наведена глава* и никога през живота си не бях виждала човек да поглежда друг човек с такава ненавист, както Майела го погледна, докато напускаше свидетелската банка и минаваше покрай неговата маса. (BG: TsS, 255)
- (18) When the next day they set out on their journey to Yorkshire, she walked through the station to the railway carriage *with her head up* and trying to keep as far away from her as she could, because she did not want to seem to belong to her. (EN: FHB, 9)
- (19) Когато на другия ден тръгнаха за Йоркшир, Мери отиде до вагона *с вирната глава*, като се опитваше да върви подалече от нея, за да не личи, че са заедно. Би се разсърдила много, ако хората си помислеха, че е нейно момиченце. (BG: SKK, SV, 15)
- (20) Boo had drifted to a corner of the room, where he stood *with his chin up*, peering from distance at Jem. (EN: HL, 277)
- (21) Бу беше отишъл в ъгъла и отдалеч *с вдигната брадичка* гледаше към Джем. (BG: TsS, 376)
- (22) She lay on her back, *with the quilts up to her chin*. (EN: HL: 107)
- (23) Лежеше в кревата *с издърпани до брадичката одеяла*. (BG: TsS, 148)

The following example is interesting because the translators have chosen to use a detached adverbial modifier, separating it with dashes from the rest of the sentence, thus achieving high expressiveness of the

narration. In the original sentence the author has not used punctuation to detach the ACs from the rest of the sentence.

- (24) And by his side *with his head up in the air* and his eyes full of laughter walked as strongly and steadily as any boy in Yorkshire – Master Colin. (EN: FHB, 239)
- (25) А до него – *с високо вдигната глава* и засмени очи – стъпваше здраво и сигурно като всяко друго момче в Йоркшир господин Колин. (BG: SKK, SV, 271)

- ‘с’ + NP + PP

- (26) But luckily Luke was awake too, and he made me a cup of hot chocolate to calm me down and said it was really unlikely we’d ever be stuck in a snowdrift *with twins about to be born* and no doctors for two hundred miles. (EN: SK, 293)
- (27) За щастие обаче Люк също стана, направи ми чаша горещ шоколад, за да ме успокои, и изтъкна, че за нас надали съществува вероятността да затънем в някоя снежна пряспа *с близнаци на път* и никакъв доктор на триста километра наоколо. (BG: AADS, 332)

Two more prepositions were observed as heads of the PPs functioning as adverbial modifiers of manner in the Bulgarian examples – ‘без’ (28) and ‘по’ (30). Here, it should be pointed out that ‘без’ can be accepted as the first and most logical translation equivalent of the English *without*-augmented ACs an example of which is (29), whereas the other Bulgarian preposition, ‘по’, is part of the set phrase ‘по гръб’ functioning as adverbial modifier of manner in the Bulgarian example (31), and must not be considered a productive pattern but rather an isolated case.

- ‘без’ + NP

- (28) I’m sure it’s much too cold and damp for you to be out there *without a coat on*. (EN: ACr, 170)
- (29) Сигурно е прекалено влажно и студено да стоите навън *без палто*. (BG: LTP, 151)

- ‘по’ + NP

- (30) They tied us up – the fellow who handled me could tie like a bosun – and there we lay *with our toes up*, beneath a tree, while a great brute stood guard over us with a club in his hand. (EN: ACD, ch. 13)
- (31) Вързаха ни – приятелят, който се зае с мене, връзваше като боцман – и ето че легнахме *по гръб* под някакво дърво. Над нас стоеше на пост голям звяр с тояга в ръка. (BG: ASh, 281)

4.2. Of place

The English AC ‘with thick brushwood between’ from (32) is rendered in Bulgarian (33) with the adverbial modifier of place ‘всред гъстия храсталак’. The latter is realized morphologically by a PP headed by the locative preposition ‘всред’ which helps express this type of relation within the sentence.

- (32) The huge trees of the alluvial Amazonian plain gave place to the Phoenix and coco palms, growing in scattered clumps, *with thick brushwood between*. (EN: ACD, ch. 8)
- (33) Огромните дървета на алувиалната амазонска равнина отстъпиха мястото си на финиковите и кокосовите палми, които растяха, пръснати на групи, *всред гъстия храсталак*. (BG: ASh, 218)

5. Attribute

There is one example where the AC is translated with a postposed coordinated attribute modifying ‘Дженифър Фортескю’. The meaning of the English AC ‘with her outdoor clothes on’ supplementing the information in the first part of the sentence is rendered in Bulgarian with the attribute ‘облечена като за излизане’ organised around the past passive participle ‘облечена’.

- (34) She was rather surprised to see Jennifer Fortescue *with her outdoor clothes on*. (EN: ACr, 77)
- (35) Бе доста изненадана при вида на Дженифър Фортескю *облечена като за излизане*. (BG: LTP, 71)

In conclusion, more than half of the examples (nine out of fifteen) containing ACs with AdvP as head of their PEs have been rendered in Bulgarian with the help of adverbial modifiers of manner as their

correspondents. Thus, the adverbial modifier of manner can be considered the dominant Bulgarian FE of this type of English AC.

Partial translation correspondence has been observed between *with-* and *without-*augmented ACs from (16), (18), (20), (22), (24) and (28) and their FEs of the type ‘с’/‘без’ + NP from (17), (19), (21), (23), (25) and (29).

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