The Use of Software for the Analysis of Lexical Properties of Legal Discourse

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Abstract. The use of computational tools in linguistic research is at the core of corpus linguistics. Currently, specialised lexical software contains elaborate statistical measures that enable a detailed quantitative analysis of corpus data. This paper analyses typical collocations frequently used in the appellate judgments of the European Court of Justice (ECJ). Right verbal collocates of Court are analysed in terms of frequency, statistical significance and characteristic semantic patterns. The WordSmith Tools program, Version 5.0 was used to measure the frequency and significance of the collocations; specialised computational tools were also used to compare the use of selected collocations with the use of corresponding collocations in the British National Corpus, which was used as the source of general English. The research results show that typical collocations used in the appellate judgments of the ECJ differ from the general English language in terms of frequency and statistical significance and exhibit unique semantic characteristics, therefore suggesting that there are considerable lexical differences between legal and general English that should be taken into account in teaching and learning.

Keywords: collocation, corpus, frequency, negative stance, statistical significance.