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LEXICAL COLLOCATIONS IN THE PROFESSIONAL TRAINING OF ECONOMICS AND MANAGEMENT STUDENTS

English has become increasingly important in professional education, particularly in economics, finance and management. Graduates are expected not only to understand professional content but also to communicate effectively in international academic and business contexts. As a result, the quality of foreign

language training directly affects their professional readiness.

Despite strong grammatical knowledge and knowledge of core professional terminology, many economics, finance and management students demonstrate limited fluency in spoken and written communication. Their language often appears fragmented, largely due to limited control of lexical collocations. In economics and management discourse, recurrent word combinations such as *make a decision*, *economic growth*, *financial performance*, and *risk management* function as essential lexical units that structure professional communication. From a linguistic perspective, collocations are central to fluent language use. They reflect habitual word associations acquired naturally by native speakers but often difficult for foreign language learners. In professional contexts, collocations are not merely stylistic choices but essential for precise meaning and disciplinary coherence. In economics and management, key concepts are typically expressed through stable lexical patterns rather than isolated words. Expressions such as *market demand*, *strategic planning*, or *cost efficiency* recur in professional discourse. Research indicates that knowledge of such collocations significantly improves comprehension and productive skills in ESP contexts (Lacková, 2025). Professional language competence can be defined as the ability to use typical lexical patterns of a specific field. Collocational competence helps learners move beyond word-by-word production and supports more automatic and confident language use contributing to professional credibility. Although collocations are widely recognized as important in applied linguistics, they often receive limited systematic attention in ESP classrooms. Vocabulary instruction tends to prioritize terminology lists, leaving collocations to be acquired incidentally through professional texts. For economics and management students, this approach is rarely sufficient. Professional texts in these fields are lexically dense and conceptually abstract and are often used primarily for content learning rather than linguistic analysis. As a result, students may recognize frequent collocations but struggle to use them accurately in presentations, reports or discussions. Another challenge is cross-linguistic interference as learners transfer collocational patterns from their first language, producing combinations that are grammatically correct but pragmatically inappropriate in English. Research confirms that such errors persist even at higher proficiency levels if collocations are not explicitly addressed (Wang & Park, 2023).

These challenges highlight the need for more systematic work with collocations in professional language training. Effective instruction in ESP courses requires a balance between clear guidance and communicative practice. Corpus-based approaches, which expose students to authentic professional language data, help learners identify frequent collocational patterns and understand their function in economic and managerial discourse. Collocations should be integrated into task-based, professionally oriented activities. Business cases, presentations, negotiations and report writing provide natural contexts for practicing target expressions. When students use phrases such as *competitive advantage*, *financial risk*, or *market entry strategy* to address realistic problems, collocations become practical tools rather than abstract language items.

Focused instruction is particularly important at the initial stages of collocational development. Brief explanations of common verb–noun and adjective–noun patterns, combined with analysis of typical learner errors, can improve accuracy. Research also shows that structured grouping and practice support long-term vocabulary development (Breslaw & Laufer, 2026). Beyond linguistic accuracy, collocational competence shapes students' professional self-perception. By using language patterns typical of economists and managers, learners begin to see themselves as legitimate participants in professional communication. This is particularly important in higher education where language learning is closely linked to career development. The ability to operate with professional collocations increases students' confidence in academic discussions, internships and international mobility programs. It also supports interdisciplinary learning enabling students to engage more effectively with subject-specific content delivered in English. In this way work with collocations supports both linguistic development and professional socialization. Lexical collocations are a key component of professional foreign language competence in economics and management training. Their role goes beyond vocabulary expansion, influencing fluency, accuracy, and professional credibility. Without systematic work on collocations even advanced learners may struggle to communicate effectively in professional contexts.

Corpus-based methods, task-oriented activities and targeted instruction effectively support collocational competence. Incorporating these approaches helps foreign language education respond to the communicative needs of future economists and managers and bridge the gap between academic training and professional practice.

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