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TEACHING ECONOMIC COLLOCATIONS THROUGH DIGITAL GAME-BASED LEARNING

Fariz Kazimov

Lecturer

Azerbaijan University

fariz.kazimov@au.edu.az

Abstract: *Economic collocations such as economic growth, interest rate, and budget deficit are central to professional communication in business and finance. However, many learners struggle to use these combinations accurately because traditional vocabulary instruction often focuses on isolated words rather than naturally occurring lexical patterns. This article reviews recent research on digital game-based learning and gamification and applies these insights to the teaching of corpus-based economic collocations selected from the Academic Collocation List. Drawing on the Lexical Approach, Flow Theory, and Keller's ARCS model of motivation, the article proposes a practical framework for Business English teachers. Four game formats—Kahoot-style quizzes, Quizlet flashcard activities, business simulations, and digital escape rooms—are integrated into a three-phase instructional sequence moving from recognition to production. The article argues that carefully designed digital games can increase engagement, improve retention, and support the development of collocational competence while maintaining a strong focus on meaningful language use.*

Keywords: *economic collocations, digital game-based learning, gamification, Business English, vocabulary acquisition*

Introduction

Teachers of Business English frequently encounter a familiar problem. Learners may understand individual words such as budget and deficit, yet still struggle to combine them naturally in speech and writing. As a result, their language may be grammatically accurate but sound unnatural. This challenge is closely related to collocational competence, the ability to recognize and produce words that typically occur together.

Economic collocations play an important role in academic and professional communication. Expressions such as consumer confidence, fiscal policy, and economic recovery appear regularly in reports, presentations, news articles, and examinations. For learners preparing for careers in economics, finance, or business, mastery of such combinations is essential. Nevertheless, traditional vocabulary instruction often relies on word lists, definitions, and isolated exercises that do not provide sufficient opportunities for repeated contextualized exposure.

Recent developments in educational technology have encouraged teachers to explore digital game-based learning as a means of increasing engagement and improving retention. Rather than viewing games as distractions, contemporary research increasingly recognizes them as valuable pedagogical tools capable of supporting language learning. This article examines how digital games can be used to teach economic collocations effectively and proposes a practical framework for classroom implementation.

Purpose of the article. This article has three objectives. First, it presents a corpus-based collection of economic collocations drawn from the Academic Collocation List. Second, it reviews relevant research on gamification and digital game-based learning. Third, it proposes a practical instructional framework that Business English teachers can implement in secondary, tertiary, and adult learning contexts.

Theoretical foundations. Collocations have long been recognized as a key component of language proficiency. According to Lewis [8], language users rely heavily on lexical chunks rather than generating every sentence from individual words. From this perspective, fluency depends partly on the ability to retrieve common word combinations quickly and accurately. Similarly, Nattinger and DeCarrico [11] argue that formulaic sequences provide learners with ready-made building blocks that support communication. Nation [10] further emphasizes that repeated encounters with vocabulary in meaningful contexts are necessary for long-term retention.

The growing interest in gamification can also be explained through established theories of learning and motivation. Deterding et al. [4] define gamification as the use of game-design elements in non-game contexts. Kapp [6] notes that effective gamification involves more than points and rewards; it requires meaningful challenges, feedback, and progression.

Flow Theory provides another useful perspective. Csikszentmihalyi [3] describes flow as a state of deep engagement that occurs when individuals face challenges matched to their abilities. Educational games can create such conditions by combining achievable tasks with immediate feedback.

Keller's ARCS model [7] highlights four motivational dimensions: attention, relevance, confidence, and satisfaction. Digital games naturally support these dimensions through interactive design, real-world scenarios, feedback mechanisms, and visible progress. Consequently, game-based approaches may be particularly suitable for teaching collocations, which require repeated exposure and practice.

Recent research on digital game-based learning. Recent studies provide encouraging evidence regarding the effectiveness of gamification for vocabulary learning. Foroutan Far and Taghizadeh [5] found that both digital and non-digital gamification improved learners' collocation knowledge and promoted a stronger sense of flow. Their findings suggest that game elements themselves, rather than technology alone, contribute to learning outcomes.

A systematic review by Cigerci, Bozan and Gurel Cennetkusu [2] concluded that gamification generally produces more positive vocabulary-learning outcomes than traditional instruction. Likewise, Rofiah and Waluyo [13] reported that platforms such as Kahoot!, Quizizz, and Quizlet increased learner motivation while reducing anxiety.

Research has also explored more immersive approaches. Canepari [1] demonstrated that business simulations can support the acquisition of specialized economic vocabulary and communication skills. Mudure-Iacob [9] found that digital escape rooms function effectively as formative assessment tools in ESP contexts because they combine collaboration, problem-solving, and language practice.

Although the overall findings are positive, several limitations should be acknowledged. Many studies focus on short-term gains and recognition-based tasks rather than long-term productive use. Furthermore, sample sizes are often relatively small. Nevertheless, the collective evidence suggests that digital game-based learning can make a meaningful contribution to collocation instruction.

Methods and materials. The collocations used in this framework are drawn from the Academic Collocation List developed by Pearson Education. [12]. The list is based on the Pearson International Corpus of Academic English, a large corpus containing millions of words from authentic academic sources. For the purposes of this article, 50 economic collocations were selected according to three criteria: frequency, pedagogical usefulness, and relevance to Business English contexts. The selected items range from A2 to C1 level and include expressions such as *economic growth*, *market economy*, *interest rate*, *financial crisis*, *consumer spending*, *fiscal policy*, *public debt*, *stock market*, *supply chain*, and *capital market*. Together, these collocations provide learners with a foundation for understanding and discussing contemporary economic issues. Using corpus-based materials offers several advantages. First, learners are exposed to authentic language rather than invented examples. Second, teachers can be confident that instructional time is devoted to high-frequency and

professionally relevant expressions. Finally, corpus-based selection helps align vocabulary instruction with real-world communication needs. **Practical applications: four digital games.** The following section presents four digital game formats that can be used to teach economic collocations. **Game 1: Multiple-Choice Races.** Platforms such as Kahoot! and Quizizz are particularly useful during the recognition stage. Students identify correct collocations under time pressure and receive immediate feedback. For example, learners may be asked to select the expression that describes a situation in which government expenditure exceeds revenue. The competitive element increases engagement while repeated exposure reinforces retention.

Game 2: Flashcard Challenges. Quizlet provides opportunities for controlled practice through matching activities, timed exercises, and retrieval practice. Students can match words such as consumer with confidence or spending and compare related meanings. Because learners can practice independently, Quizlet also supports out-of-class learning.

Game 3: Business Simulations. Simulations such as Virtonomics or SimCompanies provide rich contextualized exposure to economic language. Students manage virtual organizations, interpret reports, and make decisions using authentic terminology. When learners repeatedly encounter collocations such as profit margin, interest rate cut, or labor market within meaningful scenarios, vocabulary acquisition becomes more natural.

Game 4: Digital Escape Rooms. Escape rooms created through platforms such as Genially encourage collaboration and problem-solving. Learners solve puzzles involving missing collocations, matching tasks, and economic scenarios. Because success depends on language knowledge, these activities provide an engaging form of assessment while promoting communication among team members.

Each game type serves a different instructional purpose. Recognition activities help learners notice collocations, controlled practice supports retrieval, simulations encourage contextualized use, and escape rooms integrate multiple skills within a collaborative environment.

Instructional Framework. Effective gamification requires more than simply introducing games into the classroom. Activities should be sequenced to support progressive learning.

Phase 1: Awareness. Learners are introduced to target collocations through teacher explanation, flashcards, and short quiz activities. The objective is recognition rather than production.

Phase 2: Controlled Practice. Students complete matching activities, sentence-building tasks, and collaborative challenges. At this stage, they begin producing collocations with support.

Phase 3: Productive Application. Learners participate in simulations, discussions, presentations, and report-writing tasks. They are encouraged to use collocations independently within realistic business contexts.

This progression reflects findings from the literature suggesting that learners benefit from moving gradually from recognition to productive use. By combining explicit instruction with repeated game-based practice, teachers can provide both structure and motivation.

Discussion and results

The framework proposed in this article suggests that digital game-based learning can address several common challenges associated with collocation instruction. First, games increase the frequency of exposure to target language. Second, they provide immediate feedback that helps learners notice errors. Third, they create opportunities for repetition without the monotony often associated with traditional vocabulary exercises.

At the same time, gamification should not be viewed as a replacement for sound pedagogy. Digital tools are most effective when integrated into broader instructional goals. Teachers should ensure that learners eventually use collocations in authentic speaking and writing tasks rather than relying exclusively on recognition activities. Practical considerations must also be acknowledged. Access to technology varies across educational settings, and some teachers may have limited experience with digital platforms. Fortunately, many game principles can be adapted to low-

technology environments through card games, classroom competitions, and collaborative problem-solving tasks.

Future research should investigate the long-term effects of gamification on productive collocation use and explore how different learner populations respond to various game formats. Such research would strengthen our understanding of how digital game-based learning contributes to vocabulary development.

Table 1. *Fifty Corpus-Based Economic Collocations (A2–C1) with Definitions.*

No.	Collocation	CEFR	Definition (Short, Friendly)
1	economic growth	B1	When a country's economy gets bigger and produces more
2	market economy	B1	An economy where prices come from supply and demand, not government
3	interest rate	B1	The percentage a bank charges to lend money (or pays you to save)
4	small business	A2	A company with few employees, often owned by one person
5	financial crisis	B2	A sudden time when banks, companies, or people lose a lot of money
6	budget deficit	B2	When a government spends more than it collects in taxes
7	consumer spending	B2	The total money people spend on goods and services
8	economic development	B1	Improving a country's economy and people's quality of life
9	price increase	A2	When something costs more than before
10	supply and demand	B1	Relationship between how much is available and how much people want it
11	unemployment rate	B2	Percentage of people who can work but cannot find a job
12	trade deficit	B2	When a country buys more from abroad than it sells
13	fiscal policy	C1	How a government uses taxes and spending to manage the economy
14	monetary policy	C1	How a central bank controls money and interest rates
15	gross domestic product (GDP)	B2	Total value of everything a country produces in one year
16	public debt	B2	All the money a government owes to lenders
17	capital investment	B2	Money a company spends on buildings, machines, or technology
18	economic indicator	C1	A statistic (like GDP) that shows economic health
19	real estate	B1	Land and buildings – houses, offices, shops
20	profit margin	B2	Difference between cost to make and selling price
21	competitive market	B2	A market with many sellers; none can control the price

No.	Collocation	CEFR	Definition (Short, Friendly)
22	business cycle	C1	Natural up-and-down pattern of economic growth and slowdown
23	economic policy	C1	A government's plan for managing the economy
24	labor market	B2	Supply of workers and demand from employers
25	emerging market	C1	A developing country's economy that is growing fast
26	currency exchange	B2	Changing one country's money into another's
27	stock market	B2	Place where people buy and sell company shares
28	sovereign debt	C1	Money borrowed by a national government
29	fiscal deficit	C1	Same as budget deficit: spending more than tax income
30	consumer confidence	C1	How optimistic people feel about the economy and their own money
31	economic recovery	B2	Period when the economy gets better after a recession
32	tax revenue	B2	Money a government collects from taxes
33	financial market	B2	General term for places where stocks, bonds, and currencies are traded
34	minimum wage	A2	Lowest hourly pay an employer can legally give a worker
35	economic downturn	B2	Period when the economy slows and unemployment rises
36	value added tax (VAT)	B2	Tax added at each stage of production, paid by the final consumer
37	purchasing power	C1	What a unit of money can buy; decreases with inflation
38	balance of payments	C1	Record of all money flowing into and out of a country
39	natural resources	B1	Materials from nature (oil, wood, water) used for economic gain
40	economic activity	B1	Any action that produces, buys, or sells goods or services
41	housing market	B2	Supply and demand for houses and apartments
42	interest rate cut	B2	When the central bank lowers the borrowing rate
43	tax cut	B2	Reduction in how much tax people or businesses pay
44	supply chain	B2	Network of people and companies that make and deliver a product
45	bond market	C1	Marketplace where governments and corporations borrow money by selling bonds
46	economic output	C1	Total value of what a country produces (similar to GDP)
47	fiscal year	B2	12-month period used for budgeting (not necessarily January–December)

No.	Collocation	CEFR	Definition (Short, Friendly)
48	savings account	A2	Bank account where you keep money and earn a little interest
49	trade agreement	B2	Deal between countries to make trade easier (e.g., lower import taxes)
50	capital market	C1	Financial system where companies raise long-term money by selling stocks or bonds

Source: Adapted from Pearson Education (2014). CEFR levels are estimated using CEFR descriptors.

Conclusion

Economic collocations are essential for effective communication in business, economics, and finance. Yet many learners struggle to acquire these expressions through traditional vocabulary instruction alone. Drawing on recent research and established theories of learning, this article has argued that digital game-based learning provides a promising alternative. By combining corpus-based collocation selection with engaging instructional activities, teachers can create learning experiences that promote attention, motivation, confidence, and retention. Kahoot-style quizzes, Quizlet activities, business simulations, and digital escape rooms each contribute unique benefits when integrated within a structured instructional sequence. The goal is not to replace good teaching with technology. Rather, it is to use digital tools strategically to support meaningful language learning. When learners can confidently understand and use expressions such as economic growth, consumer confidence, or fiscal policy in authentic contexts, they move closer to the communicative competence required in academic and professional environments.

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İQTİSADI KOLLOKASIYALARIN RƏQƏMSAL OYUN ƏSASLI TƏLİM VASİTƏSİLƏ TƏDRİSİ

Fariz Kazimov

Müəllim

Azərbaycan Universiteti

fariz.kazimov@au.edu.az

Xülasə. *İqtisadi artım, (economic growth) faiz dərəcəsi (interest rate) və büdcə kəsiri (budget deficit) kimi iqtisadi kollokasiyalar (söz birləşmələri) biznes və maliyyə sahəsində peşəkar ünsiyyətin mərkəzində dayanır. Ancaq bir çox dil öyrənənlər bu birləşmələri dəqiq işlətməkdə çətinlik çəkir, çünki ənənəvi lüğət tədrisi əsasən təbii şəkildə işlənən leksik modellərə deyil, təcrid olunmuş tək-tək sözlərə diqqət yetirir. Bu məqalə rəqəmsal oyun əsaslı təlim və oyunlaşdırma (qeymifikasiya) üzrə son tədqiqatları nəzərdən keçirir və bu baxışları Akademik Kollokasiya Siyahısından seçilmiş korpus əsaslı 50 iqtisadi kollokasiyanın tədrisinə tətbiq edir. Leksik yanaşma, Axın nəzəriyyəsi (Flow Theory) və Kelerin motivasiya üzrə ARCS modelinə əsaslanaraq, məqalə Biznes İngilis dili müəllimləri üçün praktiki çərçivə təklif edir. Dörd oyun formatı - Kahoot tipli viktorinalar, Quizlet fləşkart fəaliyyətləri, biznes simulyasiyaları və rəqəmsal quest otaqları (escape room) - tanımadan istehsalə doğru irəliləyən üç mərhələli tədris ardıcılığına inteqrasiya olunur. Məqalə sübut edir ki, diqqətlə hazırlanmış rəqəmsal oyunlar mənalı dil istifadəsinə güclü diqqəti saxlamaqla yanaşı, cəlb olunmanı artırır, yadda saxlamağı yaxşılaşdırır və kollokativ kompetensiyanın inkişafını dəstəkləyər bilər.*

Açar sözlər: *iqtisadi kollokasiyalar, rəqəmsal oyun əsaslı təlim, oyunlaşdırma, biznes ingilis dili, lüğətin mənimsənilməsi*

ОБУЧЕНИЕ ЭКОНОМИЧЕСКИМ КОЛЛОКАЦИЯМ С ПОМОЩЬЮ ЦИФРОВЫХ ИГРОВЫХ МЕТОДОВ

Фариз Казымов

преподаватель

Университет Азербайджан

fariz.kazimov@au.edu.az

Аннотация: *Такие экономические коллокации, как economic growth (экономический рост), interest rate (процентная ставка) и budget deficit (бюджетный дефицит) занимают центральное место в профессиональной коммуникации в сфере бизнеса и финансов. Тем не менее многие учащиеся испытывают трудности с точным использованием этих сочетаний, поскольку традиционное обучение лексике часто фокусируется на отдельных словах, а не на естественно встречающихся лексических моделях. В данной статье рассматриваются*

последние исследования в области цифрового игрового обучения и геймификации, а также предлагается применить полученные выводы к преподаванию 50 корпусных экономических коллокаций, отобранных из Академического списка коллокаций (Academic Collocation List). Опираясь на лексический подход, теорию потока (Flow Theory) и модель мотивации ARCS Келлера, статья предлагает практическую рамку для преподавателей делового английского языка. Четыре игровых формата — викторины в стиле Kahoot, карточные активности Quizlet, деловые симуляции и цифровые комнаты квеста (escape rooms) — интегрированы в трёхэтапную обучающую последовательность, которая ведёт от узнавания к продуктивному использованию. В статье обосновывается, что тщательно разработанные цифровые игры могут повысить вовлечённость, улучшить запоминание и способствовать развитию коллокационной компетенции, сохраняя при этом чёткую направленность на осмысленное использование языка.

Ключевые слова: экономические коллокации, цифровое игровое обучение, геймификация, деловой английский, усвоение лексики.