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Technical Terminology in Standard Terms and Conditions of Sale: A Corpus-Based Study of High Frequency Nouns and their Collocations

Abstract

Technical terminology, which comprises individual words and various kinds of more or less fixed word partnerships, constitutes an important part of professional discourse. A good command of domain specific collocations adds to the proficiency in specialist communication in any domain, including commerce. The aim of this paper is to present the findings of a corpus-based study of the most common collocations of 16 high-frequency nouns in 'standard terms and conditions of sale' as authentic, commerce-related documents. Our research shows that the most frequent nouns form a substantial number of significant collocations which can be considered technical terminology in the field of commerce. In turn, these findings can be used as the basis for designing teaching syllabi and teaching materials for courses in English for commerce and trade.

Keywords: Business English, technical terminology, 'standard terms and conditions of sale', corpus analysis, collocations, teaching.

1. Introduction

Technical terminology is an important element of scientific and professional discourse and is specific to various scientific disciplines and various professional fields (Chung and Nation, 2004). One of the goals of teaching languages for specific purposes is to provide the students with relevant technical terminology which they will use in their professional careers. For that reason, technical terminology of any given discipline or field should be researched.

In recent years, English terminology used in a number of different professional contexts and for different purposes has been studied extensively. Frequently, such studies have been performed on a wide range of different types of specialized corpora. According to Patiño (2011), corpora of specialized texts are not only a useful resource for studying language in various contexts but are, at the same time, an excellent source of technical terminology and phraseology. A common feature of corpus-based research of technical terminology is that it has been performed for teaching purposes. That is, the research into technical terminology of a particular scientific discipline or profession is considered to be a helpful starting point for defining the contents of English for specific purposes (ESP) courses. For example, Curado-Fuentes (2001) shows how an analysis of lexical units (individual words and collocations) in academic and technical corpora (i.e., English for information science and technology) can facilitate ESP development. Chung and Nation (2003) examine and compare the quantity and the nature of technical terminology in corpora of anatomy and applied linguistics texts. They propose that learning common collocations of technical words facilitates a productive use of this type of vocabulary. By focusing on collocations in a pharmacology corpus, Fraser (2009) argues that in terms of productive language use, the ESP learners may find collocations more useful than the lists of individual words.

English terminology related to economics and business has also been studied. A very broad yet detailed comparison of business lexis and lexical patterns found in business English learning materials and 'real-life' business texts is performed by Nelson (2000), who observes that Business English vocabulary is closely related to the world of business as it defines business-related concepts. By building and investigating a corpus of texts taken from business English textbooks, Konstantakis (2007) sets out to establish a business word list, i.e., business-related technical vocabulary, to be used alongside the General Service List and Academic Word List when teaching business terminology.

Other examples of corpus based studies of English for business purposes include more narrow research topics. Skorczynska Sznajder (2010), for example, looks into the metaphoric language used in business contexts by comparing the metaphors found in business English textbooks and business periodicals while Walker (2011) concentrates on collocations of key lexis in management. Popescu-Furnea (2005) investigates business collocations in business press, specialist literature and dictionaries and shows how these resources can be used for creating teaching materials. Patiño (2011) studies Free Trade Agreements to determine specialized collocations in the field of international trade. He demonstrates how such studies can prove useful for language professionals, for LSP language teachers and learners as well as for LSP lexicographers.

1.1. Technical collocations and ESP learning

Learning languages for specific purposes inherently comprises the acquisition of technical terminology, which consists of individual technical words and more or less

fixed word partnerships. Lewis (1997) claims that word partnerships form a significant part of language knowledge. Therefore, the emphasis should be placed (where possible) on the acquisition of word partnerships instead of on the individual words since the use of the former increases language fluency. According to Hill (2000), the students who have a good collocational competence have an advanced level of fluency in English and a high level of communicative competence.

By focusing on the use of specialist language, Bartsch (2004) claims that in order to be proficient in specialist communication, one should have the knowledge of the domain specific collocations. Also, as stated by Curado-Fuentes (2001), collocations introduce specialised knowledge in ESP. To illustrate, *force majeure* and *competent jurisdiction* are examples of collocations that denote legal concepts while *contract price*, *full price*, *combined entity*, *investment entity*, *market value*, *monetary value*, *value added tax*, *delivery date*, *invoice date* are examples of business-related concepts and learning entire collocations would be much more useful than learning individual words that these collocations consist of.

1.2. Technical terminology in the professional domain of commerce

English for business purposes comprises a vast range of technical terminology which is connected to various areas of business, such as accounting, marketing, finance, management, tourism, international trade, etc. Since commerce forms an integral part of business, its related terminology should also be considered when planning and delivering the courses of English for business purposes.

Relevant technical terminology for business and economics can be found in research articles, textbooks and course books on economics and business sciences as well as in authentic documents that are used by professionals on a daily basis (e.g. business reports and proposals, business correspondence, financial reports, etc.). As legally binding documents in the field of commerce, 'standard terms and conditions of sale', are also a type of authentic business-related texts. They define particular arrangements, rules and specifications related to the delivery and payment terms agreed between a seller as the provider of goods and/or services and a buyer of these goods and/or services in a way that they impose obligations on and confer rights to both parties. They usually include provisions on the following: definitions and interpretation, basis of sale, orders and specifications, price, payment, delivery, risk and retention to title, assignment, right to return goods and receive a refund, guarantees, confidentiality, publications and endorsements, communications between the buyer and the seller, *force majeure*, waiver, severance, law and jurisdiction, etc. In short, they address a number of aspects of commercial transactions. As such, they are a valuable resource for studying English terminology for commerce and trade.

Based on the importance of technical terminology for ESP learners, the role of collocations in language fluency and proficiency and with the applicability of our findings for the teaching of commercial English in mind, we set out to determine the collocations of high-frequency nouns which denote key concepts of commerce by

analysing 'standard terms and conditions of sale' as authentic sources of commerce-related terminology.

2. Method

2.1. Data collection

Data for the present study came from a 1,000,645 word corpus consisting of two sub-corpora of 'standard terms and conditions of sale', one comprising the documents of companies from the UK (494,430 words) and the other comprising the documents of companies from the USA (506,215 words). The 'UK' sub-corpus included 179 documents with the average length of 2,733 words while the 'USA' sub-corpus comprised 154 texts whose average length was slightly longer, i.e., 3,213 words.

2.2. Data processing

First, a list of the most frequent nouns in the corpus was generated with ConcGram (Greaves, 2009). Then, 16 nouns from the top 20 nouns in the corpus were selected for further study, i.e., *seller, company, buyer, customer, purchaser, goods, products, product, price, payment, order, delivery, date, time, warranty* and *liability*. The selection of these nouns was founded on the definition of commercial transactions as interactions between two or more parties in which something valuable (i.e., goods) is sold and bought at a certain price at a defined time and place and under certain legal obligations.

The next step was to identify the collocations of these 16 nouns by the help of corpus analysis software AntConc (Anthony, 2011). After the collocations were established, the t-scores¹ for only those collocations that occurred at least 5 times per million words were calculated. The t-test was applied in order to establish the most significant collocations² of the 16 nouns. The results of our analysis are given below.

¹ We used the software ConcGram (Greaves, 2009) to calculate t-scores (significance cut-off 2). Based on our research question, we decided to apply the t-test because it highlights frequent collocations in a corpus.

² The phrase *significant collocation* can be defined in statistical terms as the probability of one lexical item (the node) co-occurring with another word or phrase within a specified linear distance or span being greater than might be expected from pure chance (Oakes, 2003: 163).

3. Results

The corpus of 'standard terms and conditions of sale' comprised 10,998 different word types. The 20 highest-ranking nouns based on their frequency in the corpus are presented in Table 1 below. Table 1 includes 7 words that can function in sentences either as nouns or as verbs, i.e., *terms, conditions, order, contract, time, price* and *date*. Prior to calculating the overall frequencies of these words functioning as nouns, the concordance lines were analysed to establish how many times they functioned as nouns and how many times they functioned as verbs. The words *terms, conditions, time, price* and *date* functioned only as nouns whereas the words *order* and *contract* functioned also as verbs. The verb *to contract* occurred only twice whereas the verb *to order* occurred 23 times.

RANK	NOUN	FREQ.	%	RANK	NOUN	FREQ.	%
1	<i>seller</i>	18,223	1.82	11	<i>company</i>	3,128	0.31
2	<i>buyer</i>	10,115	1.01	12	<i>product</i>	2,938	0.29
3	<i>goods</i>	9,145	0.91	13	<i>time</i>	2,812	0.28
4	<i>products</i>	5,583	0.56	14	<i>payment</i>	2,631	0.26
5	<i>terms</i>	5,419	0.54	15	<i>warranty</i>	2,624	0.26
6	<i>order</i>	5,212	0.52	16	<i>price</i>	2,534	0.25
7	<i>delivery</i>	4,738	0.47	17	<i>liability</i>	2,382	0.24
8	<i>conditions</i>	4,384	0.44	18	<i>date</i>	2,273	0.23
9	<i>customer</i>	4,104	0.41	19	<i>purchaser</i>	2,215	0.22
10	<i>contract</i>	3,925	0.39	20	<i>agreement</i>	2,159	0.21

Table 1: 20 highest-ranking nouns in the corpus

Overall, 248 significant collocations of the 16 researched nouns were found in the corpus. The results were grouped into 5 categories based on the concept of a commercial transaction:

1. parties to the contract (*seller, company, buyer, customer, purchaser*);
2. articles meant for sale (*goods, products, product*);
3. financial aspects of a commercial transaction (*price, payment*);
4. from ordering to the delivery of goods (*order, delivery, date, time*);
5. legal responsibilities of parties to the contract (*warranty, liability*).

3.1. Parties to the contract

The nouns denoting parties to the contract are *seller* and *company* as the parties offering the goods in exchange for money, and *buyer*, *customer* and *purchaser* as the parties receiving the goods in exchange for money. Our data showed that the nouns *seller* and *company* together formed 6 significant collocations³. The collocations including the noun *company*, for example, referred to the legal form of companies (i.e., *parent~*, *holding~*) and other legal requirements (i.e., *~ registration number*). Sentences 1 and 2 illustrate their use in the context of commerce⁴:

1. Seller may assign this order and any release to any other division, subsidiary, *parent company*, or affiliate that it deems in its reasonable discretion is capable of fulfilling this order.
2. Our *company registration number* is 6209662.

As regards the nouns describing the receivers of goods (i.e., *buyer*, *customer*, *purchaser*), we found that the noun *buyer* did not form any significant collocations, the noun *purchaser* formed only 1 such collocation (i.e., *original purchaser*) while the noun *customer* formed 4 significant collocations. The collocations *customer service* and *commercial customer* had the highest t-scores. Examples of their use in commerce are presented in sentences 3 and 4:

3. Our *customer service* will send you instructions on where and how to return your purchase for a refund of its purchase price.
4. With respect to *Commercial Customers*, the Limited Warranty extends only to Products sold to such *Commercial Customer* for either resale by *Commercial Customer* or use in *Commercial Customer's* business.

3.2. Articles meant for sale

The 3 nouns which refer to the articles meant for sale are *goods*, *products* and *product*. In our corpus, they occurred in 15, 22 and 35 significant collocations respectively. Most collocations that were found with these 3 nouns were the descriptions of goods or products. We also found that these 3 nouns frequently collocated with the same words. For instance, all 3 nouns collocated with the following 9 words, i.e., *returned*, *defective*, *ordered*, *replacement*, *damaged*, *custom*, *non()conforming*, *substitute* and *repaired*. Examples of such collocations with the adjective *defective* are given below:

5. Seller shall repair, or in its sole discretion, replace *defective* Goods free of charge within 12 months [...].
6. Seller's sole obligation shall be to repair or replace the *defective* Product during the applicable Warranty Period [...].
7. During the warranty period, the Company will repair or replace *defective products* free of charge [...].

³ All significant collocations of the 16 nouns (including their t-scores) are provided in Appendix 1.

⁴ The sentences in the examples 1 to 56 are taken from our corpus.

The noun *product* was also found in 16 collocations that do not describe different characteristics of products but they denote different acts and statements related to products (e.g. *product return*, *product shipments*, *product use*; *product specifications*, *product descriptions*, *product information*, *product warranty*, *product availability*). Examples 8 to 11 show their use in the context of commerce:

8. All transport fees in respect of *product return* whether within or outside of *product warranty* shall be paid by the Buyer [...].
9. All *product shipments* will be made FOB origin.
10. All *product specifications* stated in product literature are subject to revision without prior notice.
11. *Product availability* may be limited. Products may not be available for immediate delivery.

3.3. Financial aspects of a commercial transaction

The two most frequently occurring terms which refer to financial aspects of a commercial transaction in our corpus were the nouns *payment* and *price*. As regards the term *payment*, we found that it occurred in 21 significant collocations. The 5 collocations with the highest t-scores were *payment terms*, *full payment*, *late payment*, *partial payment* and *payment method*. Examples 12 to 16 present how they are used in the context of commerce:

12. *Payment terms* are net thirty (30) days from the date of the invoice.
13. Ownership of the Goods will not pass to You until We have received *full payment* for them.
14. In case of *late payment* on any amount payable by the Buyer to the Seller under this agreement, interest shall accrue on late payments at a default interest rate of 1.5% [...].
15. Seller may accept *partial payment* in an amount less than the full amount of any invoice.
16. Payment for products and services will be made by credit card, wire transfer, or some other pre-arranged *payment method*.

The noun *price* was found in 30 significant collocations. The terms *purchase price*, *price list*, *contract price*, *quoted price* and *correct price* had the highest t-scores. Sentences 17 to 19 provide examples of their use in 'standard terms and conditions of sale':

17. Seller will, at its option, repair, replace, or refund the *purchase price* of goods found defective during the warranty period defined below.
18. The *contract price* is based on prices and rates, terms and duties applying at the time of quotation.
19. If we find an error in the price of Goods you have ordered, we will [...] offer you the option of reconfirming your Order at the *correct price* or cancelling your Order.

Our data also revealed the presence of a number of collocations of the noun *price* in the corpus that may seem similar to students at first sight (i.e., they are made up of

similar or identical words), but in fact their meanings differ. These collocations are *invoice price* and *invoiced price*, *price list* and *list price*, and *price quotation* and *quoted price*.

Thus in the examples 20 and 21 below, *invoice price* stands for the amount of money charged for goods that is stated on the invoice whereas *invoiced price* simply refers to the price that has been sent to the buyer:

20. In the event that any goods are to be delivered to the Buyer or to his order outside England and Wales, the Seller shall be entitled to add to the *invoice price* a reasonable sum in respect of carriage charges.
21. The cost of packaging for normal domestic shipment is included in the *invoiced price*.

In the next pair of seemingly identical collocations, *price list* refers to a list of prices of goods while a *list price* is the advertised price of a product:

22. The price of the goods shall be as advertised in our current *price list* set out in our catalogue and on our website.
23. Unless otherwise agreed, the price for any goods shall be the Seller's advertised *list price* at the time the goods are invoiced to the Buyer.

There is also a substantial difference in meaning between *price quotation* and *quoted price*. That is, a *quoted price* is the price of goods on a quotation whereas a *price quotation* is a document stating the price of goods or services, as it can be seen in example sentences 24 and 25 below:

24. Transportation shall be by common carrier, at Buyer's risk and expense, with the transportation, insurance and related charges added to the *quoted price*.
25. These Terms and Conditions supersede and replace all prior verbal or written *price quotations* and agreements between the parties [...].

3.4. From ordering to the delivery of goods

Every commercial transaction involves the process of ordering and the delivery of goods, which happens in a certain period of time. That is why the terms *order*, *delivery*, *date* and *time* were grouped into a single category. We found that the noun *order* occurred in 31 significant collocations with the 5 most significant collocations being *purchase order*, *order confirmation*, *order acknowledgement*, *sales order* and *order form*, all of which refer to different documents. Examples of their use in the context of commercial transactions are provided in sentences 26 to 29:

26. Buyer is required to provide a written *Purchase Order* to include at a minimum product quantity, price and requested delivery date.
27. The price that Customers have to pay will be shown on Seller's *Order Confirmation* and invoices.
28. Unless otherwise specified on a *sales order*, Seller reserves the right to increase the selling price of any and all goods by Seller's supplier.
29. After your *order form* has been submitted, Seller will process your order.

Our results also showed a number of collocations denoting either other types of orders (i.e., *standing order*, *blanket order*), ordering methods (i.e., *online order*, *mail order*), the financial value of orders (i.e., *minimum order*, *order value*) or the actions related to orders (e.g., *order acceptance*, *order placement*, *order verification*, etc.). Examples of their use in the context of commerce are given in sentences 30 to 33:

30. *Standing Orders* will be renewed automatically at the end of the Initial Term (and at the end of any subsequent Term) unless You notify Us in writing not less than 14 days before the expiry of the Term [...].
31. A *minimum order* of \$250.00 is required.
32. The order verification will specify the quantity of the Goods available for delivery at the time of sending out the order verification.
33. If the Seller is not able to deliver within 28 calendar days [...] of *order placement*, then you will be notified [...].

The noun *order* also formed one collocation denoting a form of payment, i.e., *money order*, and 3 collocations that are not related to trade but are legal terms (i.e., *administration order*, *court order* and *bankruptcy order*). That is, the noun *order* in these phrases stands for an official statement of a competent authority that something either must be done or proclaiming a certain fact, and not for a written or oral request for goods or services, which is the prevailing meaning of this noun in our corpus. Sentences 34 to 36 show the use of these collocations in 'standard terms and conditions of sale':

34. Payment is accepted by credit card, UK cheque in sterling or sterling *money order*.
35. The Company may by Written Notice terminate the Contract [...] if a petition is made for an *administration order* under the Insolvency Act 1986 or the Buyer or any other person takes any steps [...].
36. Customer's right to possession of goods will terminate immediately if: a *bankruptcy order* is made against Customer; or [...].

The term *delivery* appeared in 28 significant collocations, most of which are related to the time aspect of deliveries (e.g., *delivery date(s)*, *delivery schedule*, *delivery times*, *expedited delivery*, *delayed delivery*), the financial aspect of deliveries (e.g. *delivery charges*, *delivery cost*, *delivery fee*), the location where the goods are to be delivered (e.g., *delivery address*, *delivery point*, *delivery location*) and the delivery documents (e.g., *delivery note*, *delivery advice*, *delivery receipt*). Overall, the 5 most significant collocations of this noun were *delivery date*, *delivery dates*, *delivery charges*, *delivery address* and *delivery schedule*. We show some of these collocations in examples 37 to 39:

37. Where a specific *delivery date* has been agreed, and if this *delivery date* cannot be met, the Buyer will be given the option to agree a new *delivery date* or receive a full refund.
38. Payment of the total purchase price (including VAT and any other *delivery charges*) must be made in full before despatch of the Goods.
39. We will send the Goods to you at the *delivery address* indicated on your Order Confirmation.

The other 2 nouns in this group, i.e., *date* and *time*, occurred in 14 and 6 significant collocations respectively. The top 5 collocations for the noun *date* were *delivery date*, *due date*, *invoice date*, *shipment date* and *order date* whereas the top 5 collocations of the noun *time* were *reasonable time*, *time period*, *lead time*, *relevant time* and *sufficient time*:

40. Invoices are due and payable within 30 days of *invoice date* ("due date") unless otherwise expressly indicated.
41. The seller will use its reasonable endeavours to deliver goods by the agreed *delivery dates* or if no dates are stated, within a *reasonable time*.
42. We will endeavour to deliver all products you have ordered within the *time period* specified on your Order Confirmation Email.
43. Delivery will be accomplished within the time specified on the face of this quotation or if no time is specified within the normal *lead time* necessary for the Seller to deliver the products in question.

As regards the noun *date*, similar collocations referring to the concept of sending the goods (i.e., *shipment date*, *shipping date* and *ship date*) and to the date when something will end (i.e., *expiry date* and *expiration date*) were found in the corpus. The collocation *expiry date* was found mainly in the documents in the 'UK' sub-corpus, referring to the time after which the goods or products cannot be used any more or to the validity of a payment card. There was one instance of this collocation in the 'USA' sub-corpus where it referred to the date when a letter of credit is no longer valid. The collocation *expiration date* was found in the 'USA' sub-corpus only, where it was used only with reference to products. Examples of the sentences in which these collocations occur are given below:

44. For orders scheduled to ship within 59 days of the current date, the *shipment date* may be pushed out by a maximum of 30 calendar days from the original *shipment date*.
45. If no *shipping date* is specified, shipment will be made on date(s) selected by Seller.
46. Seller reserves the right to impose additional charges on Buyer in the event that Buyer requests an extension or acceleration of a scheduled *ship date* or specifies special [...].
47. You will not be charged for items until they are dispatched and, for this reason, please ensure that the *expiry date* of your payment card is after the anticipated dispatch date.
48. Goods have an *expiry date*. The licence for the goods will expire one year after purchase.
49. *Expiration date*: On dated products, the expiration date is shown as a month and year, e.g., August 2012, 8/12.
50. [...] Buyer shall provide the Seller with an acceptable letter of credit in the amount of the purchase price [...] with *expiry date* 30 days after shipment [...].

3.5. Legal responsibilities of parties to the contract

The 2 nouns denoting legal responsibilities of parties to the contract (i.e., the guarantees and obligations) were the nouns *warranty* and *liability*. *Warranty* is a legally binding promise that goods are fit for use and not defective and *liability* is, in general, a legal responsibility for something (e.g. a debt, consequences of one's actions).

The noun *warranty* occurred in 20 significant collocations, which mostly referred to types of warranties (e.g. *implied warranty*, *express warranty*, *foregoing warranty*, *manufacturer warranty*, *standard warranty*, *product warranty*, etc.). The 5 collocations with the highest t-scores were *warranty period*, *implied warranty*, *express warranty*, *foregoing warranty* and *manufacturer warranty*. Their usage can be seen in sentences 51 to 53:

51. If any such product proves defective under the *foregoing warranty* during this *warranty period*, Seller, at its option, either will repair the defective Product without charge for parts and labor or [...].
52. Seller's *express warranty* is strictly for the benefit of Purchaser and does not extend to any third party.
53. All warranty service or technical support provided on a Product under a *manufacturer warranty* is provided by the manufacturer, not by seller.

The term *liability* formed 10 significant collocations mainly denoting the extent of liability (e.g., *total liability*, *entire liability*, *aggregate liability*, *maximum liability*) and the type of liability (e.g., *strict liability*, *financial liability* and *product liability*). Sentences 54 to 56 provide examples of their use in the domain of commerce:

54. In any event, the *total liability* of the Seller in respect of the breach of any contract for the sale of goods [...] shall be limited to the purchase price for the goods.
55. The following provisions set out the entire *financial liability* of the Company [...] to the buyer in respect of [...].
56. Seller's liability for any other claim, whether based on breach of contract, negligence or *product liability*, relating to the Products shall not exceed the price paid by Buyer for such Products.

4. Discussion and conclusions

Our analysis of the corpus of 'standard terms and conditions' has revealed some interesting points concerning the selected 16 nouns which address various core aspects of commercial transactions. In general, our findings have shown the richness of technical terminology in these authentic, commerce-related documents. Even though we have examined only 16 highly frequent nouns in 'standard terms and conditions of sale', we have established that they are used in almost 250 significant collocations which can be seen as commerce-related terminology. Overall, the

highest-ranking collocations in our corpus were *purchase order*, *purchase price*, *warranty period*, *delivery date*, *order confirmation*, *payment terms*, *due date* and *delivery dates*. The noun with the highest number of collocations was the noun *product*, followed by the nouns *order*, *price* and *delivery*, which together made up for 50 per cent of all significant collocations of the 16 nouns. On the other hand, the noun with the smallest number of significant collocations is the noun *purchaser* while the noun *buyer* does not appear in any significant collocations at all. These findings correspond well to the general aim of commerce as defined in this paper. That is, the main concerns of both the sellers and the buyers in any commercial transaction are the products, the ordering of these products, the price of the ordered products, the price and payment for the products as well as their delivery to the buyers. In order to carry out a successful and transparent commercial transaction these elements have to be defined in detail. This is evident from the number of significant collocations in which the nouns *product*, *order*, *price* and *delivery* occur.

As regards the applicability of our findings for teaching Business / commercial English, we would particularly like to focus on two ways of their usage in practice. They can be either used as the basis for the development of *teaching syllabus* or *reference works* and *teaching materials* (Römer, 2008). That is, although limited in scope, our findings can serve as a starting point for teachers who wish to set the learning objectives and to design and deliver courses in English for commerce as it would help them focus on the instances of the most frequently occurring commerce-related noun collocations. Further, the results of our research can be used as a source for the development of supplementary teaching materials for commercial English courses in the form of different vocabulary tasks (e.g., matching, gap fill, cloze tests, translation activities, etc.) as well as writing and speaking activities (e.g., writing commercial correspondence, role play – discussing terms and conditions of sale with business partners and customers)⁵ either as principal materials or supplementary tasks for “teaching those items which do not seem to be adequately dealt with in traditional teaching materials” (Gavioli, 2005, p. 23). This would, in turn, enhance the linguistic fluency and proficiency of the students in terms of their ability to communicate in the field of commerce as they would improve their command of the specialised language of commerce.

To conclude, the main aim of this paper has been to determine the most frequent nouns and their significant collocations in the professional field of commerce based on a corpus study of one specific type of authentic documents, i.e., ‘standard terms and conditions of sale’. Our investigation can be seen as a contribution to the understanding of the complexity of technical terminology of commerce. The principal value of our study lies in the fact that it (1) highlights the usefulness of authentic texts such as ‘standard terms and conditions of sale’ as a source of commerce-related collocations, and (2) shows how an investigation of a specialised corpus can aid the teachers of English for business purposes to establish relevant subject specific terminology. If used in a Business English course, our findings would also be useful for the students as they would have the opportunity to learn relevant commerce-related terminology.

⁵ We give examples of tasks in Appendix 2.

We see this study as one small step towards the establishment of technical collocations in the field of commerce. Further research of the terminology in 'standard terms and conditions of sale' and other domain-related documents is needed in order to get an even broader understanding of its full scope.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Collocations of 16 selected nouns

NOUN (NO. OF COLLOCATIONS)	COLLOCATIONS (t-scores)
SELLER (3)	~quotation (7.74), ~website (5.00), ~account (2.35)
COMPANY (3)	parent~ (2.57), ~registration number (2.19), holding~ (2.16)
BUYER (0)	/

CUSTOMER (4)	<i>~service (7.03), commercial~ (5.09), business~ (3.58), end~ (2.66)</i>
PURCHASER (1)	<i>original~ (4.17)</i>
GOODS (15)	<i>returned~ (9.71), defective~ (9.69), ordered~ (8.5), damaged~ (4.20), undelivered~ (4.07), replacement~ (4.06), substitute~ (3.54), nonconforming~ (3.40), custom~ (3.33), finished~ (3.23), non-conforming~ (2.82), misdescribed~ (2.59), consumable~ (2.44), repaired~ (2.27), faulty~ (2.19)</i>
PRODUCTS (22)	<i>returned~ (8.62), ordered~ (7.13), defective~ (6.58), standard~ (6.23), software~ (4.79), custom~ (4.35), infringing~ (3.60), certain~ (3.48), replacement~ (3.44), non-conforming~ (3.34), damaged~ (2.98), faulty~ (2.88), substitute~ (2.74), undelivered~ (2.67), non-infringing~ (2.62), repaired~ (2.62), unwanted~ (2.57), specific~ (2.47), affected~ (2.45), consumable~ (2.32), nonconforming~ (2.27), non-standard~ (2.11)</i>
PRODUCT (35)	<i>defective~ (8.89), returned~ (6.46), specific~ (4.99), ~orders (4.70), replacement~ (4.68), ~specifications (4.32), custom~ (3.90), standard~ (3.85), ordered~ (3.53), ~availability (3.50), ~descriptions (3.47), non-conforming~ (3.43), ~return (3.09), ~shipments (3.02), individual~ (2.94), finished~ (2.91), ~names (2.84), ~images (2.80), ~use (2.80), ~manufacturer (2.65), ~price (2.56), ~information (2.55), ~order (2.49), substitute~ (2.48), ~warranty (2.45), damaged~ (2.34), ~unavailability (2.33), work~ (2.33), infringing~ (2.31), particular~ (2.29), alternative~ (2.27), ~literature (2.26), relevant~ (2.26), non-equivalent~ (2.25), repaired~ (2.05)</i>
PRICE (30)	<i>purchase~ (20.33), ~list (9.96), list~ (9.96), contract~ (7.51), quoted~ (7.21), correct~ (6.72), ~quotation (5.01), stated~ (4.99), current~ (4.98), ~lists (4.86), full~ (4.79), ~increase(4.36), incorrect~ (4.12), total~ (4.01), published~ (3.90), unit~ (3.74), ~changes (3.73), ~quotations (3.54), sales~ (3.37), ~adjustment (3.18), best~ (3.16), invoice~ (3.14), fixed~ (3.10), selling~ (2.98), ~adjustments (2.59), product~ (2.57), new~ (2.52), ~change (2.26), invoiced~ (2.25), retail~ (2.18)</i>
PAYMENT (21)	<i>~terms (13.20), full~ (8.66), late~ (7.58), partial~ (6.03), ~method (4.38), ~card (4.09), due~ (3.75), advance~ (3.42), overdue~ (3.14), timely~ (3.04), ~obligations (2.92), pending~ (2.78), ~record (2.74), actual~ (2.64), ~details (2.56), ~schedule (2.39), cash~ (2.33), immediate~ (2.31), ~charge (2.22), final~ (2.15), prompt~(2.07)</i>
ORDER (31)	<i>purchase~ (22.26), ~confirmation (13.21), ~acknowledgement (10.78), sales~ (8.24), ~form (7.30), minimum~ (6.57), administration~ (5.83), ~date (5.39), ~acceptance (5.38), ~number (5.02), ~value (4.26), bankruptcy~ (4.25), accepted~ (4.20), product~ (4.07), money~ (3.82), ~placement (3.65), confirmed~ (3.62), court~ (3.58), ~process (3.35), ~verification (3.21), mail~ (3.07), special~ (2.73), online~ (2.53), cancelled~ (2.52), standing~ (2.52), schedule~ (2.35), written~ (2.16), blanket~ (2.14), original~ (2.04), ~quantity (2.04), receiving~ (2.03)</i>

DELIVERY (28)	<i>~date</i> (14.66), <i>~dates</i> (11.25), <i>~charges</i> (9.03), <i>~address</i> (7.15), <i>~schedule</i> (5.79), <i>~charge</i> (5.65), <i>late~</i> (5.50), <i>~terms</i> (5.39), <i>actual~</i> (5.21), <i>~instructions</i> (4.57), <i>~times</i> (4.54), <i>~point</i> (4.27), <i>~cost</i> (4.16), <i>recorded~</i> (4.13), <i>~note</i> (4.02), <i>short~</i> (3.91), <i>~schedules</i> (3.63), <i>~fee</i> (3.39), <i>delayed~</i> (3.06), <i>~location</i> (2.92), <i>~advice</i> (2.85), <i>expedited~</i> (2.60), <i>~details</i> (2.41), <i>failed~</i> (2.16), <i>~service</i> (2.16), <i>~delays</i> (2.09), <i>~receipt</i> (2.07), <i>~method</i> (2.01)
DATE (14)	<i>delivery~</i> (14.66), <i>due~</i> (12.17), <i>invoice~</i> (7.86), <i>shipment~</i> (6.29), <i>order~</i> (5.39), <i>effective~</i> (4.95), <i>shipping~</i> (4.36), <i>ship~</i> (4.27), <i>agreed~</i> (2.98), <i>scheduled~</i> (2.98), <i>expiry~</i> (2.96), <i>start~</i> (2.60), <i>expiration~</i> (2.53), <i>expected~</i> (2.13)
TIME (6)	<i>reasonable~</i> (9.08), <i>~period</i> (5.07), <i>lead~</i> (4.95), <i>relevant~</i> (3.45), <i>sufficient~</i> (3.34), <i>~limit</i> (3.18)
WARRANTY (20)	<i>~period</i> (15.45), <i>implied~</i> (9.67), <i>express~</i> (8.40), <i>foregoing~</i> (7.00), <i>manufacturer~</i> (6.11), <i>extended~</i> (4.73), <i>original~</i> (4.51), <i>~service</i> (4.43), <i>~claim</i> (4.39), <i>standard~</i> (4.07), <i>~terms</i> (3.99), <i>~statement</i> (3.73), <i>foregoing limited~</i> (3.56), <i>~repair</i> (3.20), <i>~disclaimer</i> (3.17), <i>~obligation</i> (2.76), <i>~repairs</i> (2.47), <i>product~</i> (2.45), <i>~returns</i> (2.35), <i>~cover</i> (2.34)
LIABILITY (10)	<i>strict~</i> (9.73), <i>total~</i> (7.49), <i>entire~</i> (6.79), <i>sole~</i> (5.36), <i>products~</i> (5.29), <i>aggregate~</i> (4.31), <i>exclusive~</i> (4.20), <i>maximum~</i> (4.07), <i>financial~</i> (2.92), <i>product~</i> (2.14)

Appendix 2: Examples of commercial terminology tasks

A) VOCABULARY REVISION – 'ORDER'

Task: Match the words on the right with their definitions on the left:

- 1 **blanket order** a) an arrangement by which a person or a company regularly sends an agreed quantity of goods to a customer or performs agreed services for a customer without the customer having to place an order each time
- 2 **mail order** b) a document that asks a company to supply goods or services, and that gives details such as the price to be paid and the method and date of payment
- 3 **money order** c) a seller-generated document that authorizes sale of the specified item(s), issued after receipt of a customer's purchase order
- 4 **purchase order** d) a document that can be bought at a post office as a way of sending money through the mail
- 5 **sales order** e) a way of buying goods in which you choose what you want, usually from a catalogue or from a website, and it is sent to you by mail

- 6 **standing order** f) confirmed long-term order by a buyer to a seller for supplying specified good(s) or service(s), for a fixed period or in a fixed quantity, at agreed-on prices or pricing method

**sources of definitions – online dictionaries (Business Dictionary Online, Cambridge Online Dictionary)*

B) VOCABULARY REVISION – 'COLLOCATIONS'

Task: Match the words on the right with the words on the left to form phrases related to sales. Translate the phrases into Slovenian.

				Translation
1	defective	a)	price	1 _____
2	product	b)	liability	2 _____
3	customer	c)	buyer	3 _____
4	original	d)	date	4 _____
5	warranty	e)	product	5 _____
6	limited	f)	list	6 _____
7	delivery	g)	specifications	7 _____
8	price	h)	support	8 _____
9	purchase	i)	payment	9 _____
10	cash	j)	period	10 _____

C) ROLE PLAY – Trade fair

Work in pairs. Prepare a short dialogue based on the information below:

.....

Student A: Visitor

You are a visitor at an international trade fair in London. You see a stand of the company XYZ, Ltd., which is exhibiting the products you are interested in. Talk to the 'Company sales representative' and ask him/her about their offer.

Try to use all of the following phrases:

product prices, minimum order, payment terms, delivery dates, delivery charges, delivery terms, product warranty, product literature.

.....

Student B: Company sales representative

You are representing the company XYZ, Ltd. at an international trade fair in London. Talk to the 'Visitor' and try to answer his/her questions about your company's offer.

Try to use all of the following phrases:

price list, minimum order, cash payment, full payment, delivery address, delivery dates, extended warranty, product descriptions.

.....

D) WRITING – COMMERCIAL CORRESPONDENCE

Write a letter in English based on the following information. Use the phrases below:

sales price payment terms minimum order delivery date warranty period
fixed price invoice date delivery charges overdue payment price list

Odgovorite podjetju ABC, Ltd. na njihov dopis, v katerem se zanimajo za nakup izdelkov vašega podjetja. V svojem odgovoru navedite naslednje informacije: prodajno ceno za izdelke (EUR 20/kos – ta cena je fiksna), pogoje plačila (plačilo 30 dni od datuma na fakturi), minimalno naročilo (400 kosov), stroške dostave (EUR 20 za naročila do 300 kosov / če je naročilo večje, je dostava zastonj). Omenite, da je datum dobave običajno 15 dni od dneva naročila. Navedite tudi, da za nepravočasna plačila zaračunavate obresti ter da imajo vsi vaši izdelki garancijsko dobo 1 leta.

Dopisu priložite še cenik.

V zaključku izrazite upanje, da se bo kupec odločil za naročilo.