LEXICAL COHESION

The cohesive resource of lexical relations refers to how the writer/speaker uses lexical items (nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs) and event sequences (chains of clauses and sentences) to relate the text consistently to its area of focus or its field.

So, lexical cohesion analysis derives from observing that there are certain **expectancy relations between words**.

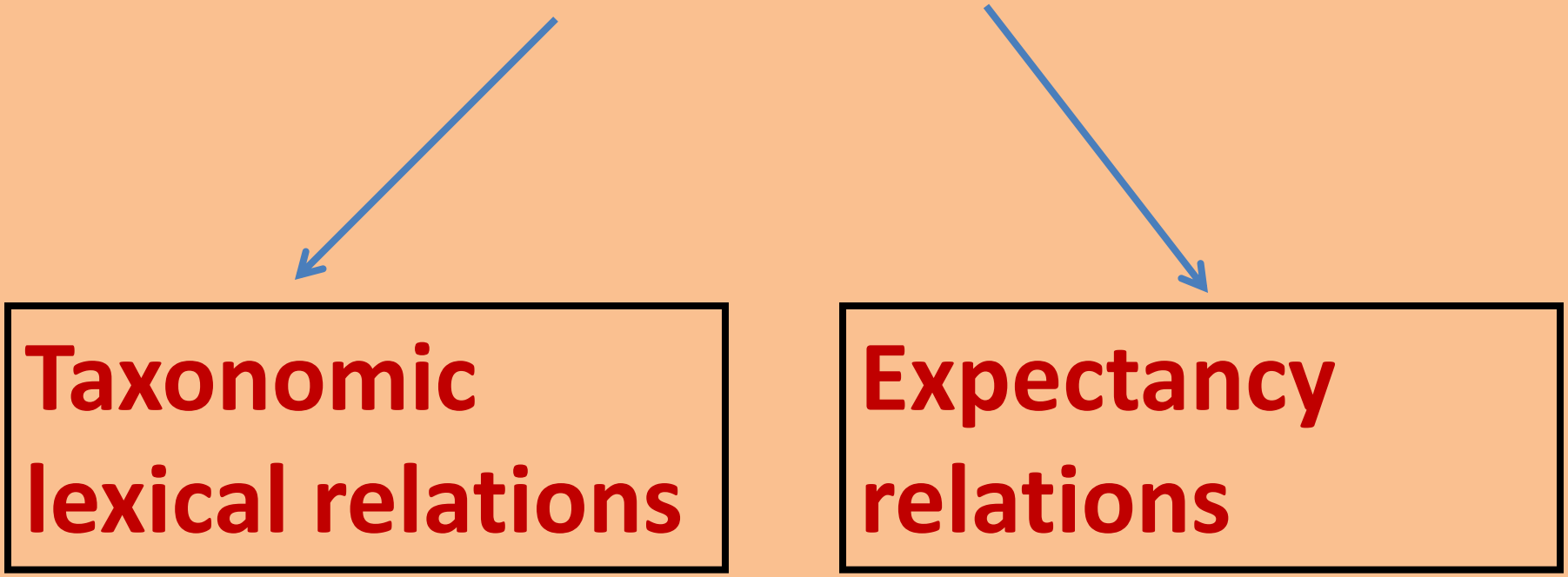
For example, if you read the word *mouse* in a text, you will not be surprised to come across the words *cheese*, *squeak, tail, rodent*, or even *computer* in a nearby text. But you would be much more surprised to come across the words *thunderstorm, bark* or *ironing board*.

Lexical relations analysis is a way of systematically describing how words in a text relate to each other, how they cluster to build up lexical sets or lexical strings. Lexical cohesion is an important dimension of cohesion.

Lexical cohesion operates between units which encode lexical content. These are what we call the **open-class items** of nouns, main verbs, adverbs and adjectives.

Grammatical words, or **closed-class items** (such as prepositions, pronouns, articles and auxiliary verbs) do not encode lexical content. This means that closed-class items do not contribute to lexical cohesion, even though they contribute to the grammatical relations in a text.

There are two main kinds of lexical relations that we can recognize between words:

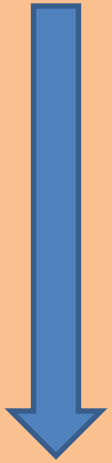


1) **<u>Taxonomic lexical relations</u>**: where one lexical item relates to another through either class/sub-class (*rodent-mouse*) or part-whole (*tail-mouse*) relations.

2) **Expectancy relations**: where there is a predictable relation between a process (verb) and either the doer of that process, or the one effected by it *(mouse-squeak*; *nibble-cheese*). These relations link nominal elements with verbal elements.

Words which are taxonomically related may be distinguished into either **classification** or **composition**.

CLASSIFICATION



This is the relationship between a superordinate term and its members, or hyponyms.

The main kinds of classification relations are:

- co-hyponymy;

- class/sub-class;

- contrast;

- similarity

- **Co-hyponymy**: when two (or more) lexical items used in a text are both subordinate members of a superordinate class.

For example: influenza – pneumonia (both terms are hyponyms of the superordinate class *illness*)

- **Class/sub-class**: when two (or more) lexical items used in a text are related through sub-classification.

For example: illness – pneumonia (here the relationship is superordinate term to hyponym)

- **Contrast**: when two (or more) lexical items encode a contrast relationship or antonymy.

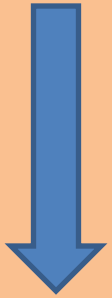
For example: clear – blurry / wet – dry / joy – despair (here the relationship is one of opposition)

- **Similarity**: when two (or more) lexical items express similar meanings. There are two main-types:

a) Synonymy: when two words essentially relate to each other (message – report; news – intelligence)

b) Repetition: when a lexical item is repeated (death – death)

The second main type of taxonomic relation is that of **COMPOSITION**



This is the part / whole relationship between lexical items which are meronyms or co-meronyms.

There are two possible types:

a) meronymy: when the two lexical items are related as whole to part (or vice versa): body – heart.

b) co-meronymy: when two lexical items are related by both being parts of a common whole: heart – lungs.

Expectancy relations are the second main type of lexical relation. They operate between a nominal element and a verbal element. For example, the relation may operate between an action and the typical (expected) "doer" of that action:
doctor – diagnose / baby – cry / sparrows – twitter.

We can capture the lexical cohesion in a text by listing all related lexical items, showing how they form **lexical strings** that add texture to text.

A lexical string is a list of all the lexical items that occur sequentially in a text that can be related to an immediately prior word (if possible) or to a head word either taxonomically or through an expectancy relation.