

**LEXICAL SIMILARITY, LEXICAL ASSOCIATION, LEXICAL SETS AND  
COLLOCATIONS AS CORE COMPONENTS OF VOCABULARY  
ORGANIZATION LEXICAL SIMILARITY, ASSOCIATION, LEXICAL SETS  
AND COLLOCATIONS DEPARTMENT OF PRACTICAL ENGLISH COURSE  
LECTURER**

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**Abstract**

This article examines four fundamental concepts in lexical semantics and vocabulary studies: lexical similarity, lexical association, lexical sets, and collocations. These phenomena reveal how lexical items are interconnected within the mental lexicon and how vocabulary is structured, processed, and acquired. The paper discusses theoretical foundations, cognitive mechanisms, and pedagogical implications of lexical organization. The findings demonstrate that understanding these concepts enhances vocabulary acquisition, communicative competence, and effective language teaching.

**Keywords**

lexical similarity, lexical association, lexical sets, collocations, mental lexicon, vocabulary acquisition.

**Introduction**

Vocabulary constitutes the foundation of language competence, and understanding how words are interconnected is a crucial aspect of linguistic analysis. Lexical relations such as similarity, association, lexical sets, and collocations reveal the internal organization of the mental lexicon and demonstrate how speakers categorize, store, and retrieve lexical items in communication.

In modern linguistics, the study of lexical relations has gained particular significance within **semantic theory**, **psycholinguistics**, and **cognitive linguistics**. Scholars such as Ferdinand de Saussure emphasized the relational nature of meaning, arguing that words derive their value from their position within a system of differences. Later, researchers like George Lakoff and Eleanor Rosch contributed

to the understanding of categorization, prototype theory, and associative networks in the mental lexicon.

Lexical relations are not limited to simple synonymy or antonymy; they also include hierarchical relations (hyponymy and hypernymy), part-whole relations (meronymy), and statistically significant word partnerships (collocations). These relationships play a central role in discourse production and comprehension, influencing fluency, coherence, and stylistic variation. Moreover, lexical organization reflects cultural and conceptual structures, making the study of vocabulary highly relevant for comparative and contrastive linguistic research.

Therefore, investigating lexical relations provides deeper insight into how meaning is constructed, structured, and processed in the human mind, and it contributes to broader discussions about language cognition, communication efficiency, and cross-linguistic variation.

### **Methods and results**

Lexical similarity refers to the degree of resemblance between words or languages in form and meaning. In comparative linguistics, it is used to estimate genetic relationships between languages. However, lexical similarity alone does not determine mutual intelligibility, as phonological, morphological, and syntactic factors also play crucial roles. Borrowing and language contact may increase similarity without indicating common origin.

Lexical association refers to psychological and cognitive links between words. Word association experiments demonstrate that vocabulary is structured as a system of semantic connections rather than isolated entries. Associations may be paradigmatic, syntagmatic, or phonological. Strong associative links enable faster lexical retrieval and more fluent speech production.

A lexical set is a group of words belonging to the same semantic field or conceptual category. Lexical sets reflect categorization processes inherent in human cognition and support efficient storage and retrieval of vocabulary. In language teaching, organizing vocabulary into lexical sets facilitates memorization and comprehension.

Collocations are habitual word combinations that occur more frequently than would be expected by chance. Mastery of collocations contributes to fluency, accuracy, and naturalness in communication. Corpus linguistics has demonstrated that language is highly formulaic and relies on prefabricated lexical chunks. A collocation is a natural combination of words that frequently occur together, such as “strong tea”, “heavy traffic”, or “make a decision”.

Lexical similarity, association, lexical sets, and collocations play a significant role in structuring vocabulary and shaping the mental lexicon. These concepts

enhance communicative competence and contribute to effective vocabulary acquisition. First is lexical similarity. Simply put, lexical similarity can be used to estimate the degree of genetic affinity between the two languages. I mean that higher percentages usually indicate that the two languages being compared are probably related dialects. Lexical similarity is only one indication of the mutual intelligibility of two languages, since the latter also depends on the degree of phonetic, morphological and syntactic similarity. This is affected by variations due to different word lists. For instance, the lexical similarity between French and English is considerable in the lexical fields related to culture, while their similarity is less in the main functional words.

Second is association. If I turn to word association, it is a connection between two or more words that demonstrate the semantic connection between them. The word that said or read is known as the stimulus word and the word that immediately comes to mind after the stimulus word is known as the response word. For example, the semantic relationship between the stimulus and response words may be examined.

Next concept which I would like to define is lexical sets. A lexical set is a collection of words that have a common theme, purpose or form. Some students find it helpful to look at new terminology using lexical sets. Students can participate in word games like chaining and the sorting game as well as class poster projects. Additionally, a lexical set can refer to the set which is made up of a collection of words that all pronounce the same sound in the same variation.

Last concept we should discuss is collocations. Collocations are words that are usually used with each other to form a stable word combination. For example, here are words form collocations( word combinations); best friend, make a mistake. The best way to build up your vocabulary is to study words in stable word collocations, using ready-made e=sentences as examples. Overall, collocations are the routine pairing of a word with another word or group of words a frequency higher than random. It is the process though which words work together in a language to create speech and writing that seem natural.

### Conclusion

Lexical similarity, lexical association, lexical sets, and collocations represent interconnected dimensions of lexical organization. Understanding these concepts enhances vocabulary acquisition and supports effective communication. Their study remains central to linguistic theory and language pedagogy.

In conclusion, lexical similarity, lexical association, lexical sets, and collocations represent fundamental concepts that shape the structure and functioning of the mental lexicon. Lexical similarity helps identify degrees of

relatedness between languages and contributes to understanding mutual intelligibility. Lexical association reveals how words are mentally linked through semantic, psychological, and cultural factors, playing an essential role in word retrieval and language processing. Lexical sets demonstrate how vocabulary is organized around shared themes, enabling learners to categorize and retain new words more effectively. Collocations, as natural and frequent word combinations, ensure fluency, accuracy, and native-like language production.

Together, these four concepts offer valuable insights into how vocabulary is stored, connected, and used in communication. Their study is crucial for improving vocabulary acquisition, enhancing language teaching methodologies, and developing deeper linguistic competence across different languages.

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