



University of Valladolid
LANGUAGE ACQUISITION LAB

Departamento de Filología Inglesa



CONFERENCE

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Facultad de filosofía y letras, room 106

Acquiring Emotion Words



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Emotion adjectives label states that we experience individually and internally, and which are sometimes (but not always) made evident through facial expressions. Recent psychological evidence points to a role for emotion words in shaping our construction of emotion concepts, but this raises the question of how the emotion words themselves are learned in the first place. The Syntactic Bootstrapping literature on word learning tells us that property-denoting words (i.e. predicates) are learned most reliably through cues from sentence structure: the subcategorization frames in which a verb occurs restricts its lexical meaning to a large degree. But very little research has examined how this word-learning process might work for adjectives, in particular those that denote internal states.

In this talk I'll describe two word-learning experiments that examined the relative impact of sentence frames and situational context cues (short vignettes) on children's assumptions about the meaning of novel adjectives. I'll also discuss some preliminary results from a corpus study of emotion words in Child-Directed Speech. Finally, I'll talk about the cross-linguistic implications of the view that emotion words help construct emotion concepts, both in terms of people's experience of emotions and how the words are learned.