

The role of emotion

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In the talk I will present and discuss the hypothesis that learning, representing and processing words and concepts referring to abstract entities (e.g., idea, freedom) is critically linked to emotion. In particular, given that abstract concepts tend to have more affective associations than concrete ones, and the first abstract concepts learnt by children are affectively loaded, we argue that emotion, alongside sensory-motor information, plays a key role in grounding our conceptual knowledge, especially for abstract concepts. I will present results from a programme of research that has addressed this hypothesis both looking at processing and its neural circuitry in adults and learning in children aged 6-12 (the age in which the majority of abstract concepts are acquired).