

Northumbria Research Link

Citation: Dabrowska, Ewa (2011) Learning words from context. In: Northumbria Research Conference, 5-6 May 2011, Northumbria University, Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

URL:

This version was downloaded from Northumbria Research Link:
<http://nrl.northumbria.ac.uk/id/eprint/1115/>

Northumbria University has developed Northumbria Research Link (NRL) to enable users to access the University's research output. Copyright © and moral rights for items on NRL are retained by the individual author(s) and/or other copyright owners. Single copies of full items can be reproduced, displayed or performed, and given to third parties in any format or medium for personal research or study, educational, or not-for-profit purposes without prior permission or charge, provided the authors, title and full bibliographic details are given, as well as a hyperlink and/or URL to the original metadata page. The content must not be changed in any way. Full items must not be sold commercially in any format or medium without formal permission of the copyright holder. The full policy is available online: <http://nrl.northumbria.ac.uk/policies.html>

This document may differ from the final, published version of the research and has been made available online in accordance with publisher policies. To read and/or cite from the published version of the research, please visit the publisher's website (a subscription may be required.)



**Northumbria
University**
NEWCASTLE



UniversityLibrary

Proposal for an oral paper

Learning words from context

Prof. Ewa Dabrowska
Department of Humanities
School of Arts and Social Sciences

In the early stages of language acquisition, children acquire the basic, most frequent words of their language in face-to-face contexts in which there is abundant non-linguistic information which enables them to infer the meaning of unfamiliar words. From middle childhood onwards, however, most words are learned from written texts. This raises an interesting learnability issue: since the referent is not present when the learner encounters a new word, how does he/she work out what the word means? In this talk, I argue that the main source of evidence about the meaning of non-basic relational words are their collocational patterns, i.e. the words that they typically co-occurs with in texts. I show that speakers have very detailed knowledge of collocations, even for relatively infrequent words, and that this knowledge is strongly correlated with knowledge about meaning.