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“Words as constructions: Some reflections from a contrastive (English-Spanish) perspective”

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Constructionist approaches assert constructions (all types of lexico-grammatical units) as free-standing theoretical entities, in sharp contrast to the Chomskyan position that these are mere taxonomic artifacts devoid of any explanatory power. Chomskyan reasoning conceives of grammar and the lexicon as two distinct modules, while Construction Grammars conceive these components as forming a continuum, albeit with a soft dividing line.

The main goal of this talk is to illustrate the descriptive and explanatory convenience of regarding specific words (or combinations of words) as constructions in a contrastive (English-Spanish) constructionist analysis. Specifically, we will concentrate on a number of otherwise puzzling asymmetries involving cognition verbs (e.g. know, saber ('know')).