

The Language of Emotions

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Volume 4

The Language of Emotions. The case of Dalabon (Australia)
by Maïa Ponsonnet

The Language of Emotions

The case of Dalabon (Australia)

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To Dalabon speakers.

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Preface

This volume documents and analyzes the linguistic devices available to the speakers of the Dalabon language, a severely endangered Australian language, to express and describe emotions, assessing how these devices relate to local representations and practices about emotions. The study is based on first hand data collected between 2007 and 2012 in south-western Arnhem Land (Northern Territory), where Dalabon is spoken.

Chapter 1 sets the theoretical framework; Chapters 2 and 3 the ethnographic and linguistic backgrounds respectively. Chapter 4 presents expressive emotional devices, which include diminutives, interjections, and various prosodic features. Expressive features are prominent in terms of frequency, and relate to culturally central categories such as compassion.

Nevertheless, descriptive emotional features also play an important part. The emotion lexicon is large: at least 160 emotional lexemes, most of them adjectives or verbs. A lot of these lexemes are morphologically compound, often involving a body-part noun. Having discussed the morphology and syntax of emotion words in Chapter 5, and their semantics in Chapter 6, Chapters 7 to 11 examine the roles played by body-part nouns in the Dalabon emotion lexicon.

Like most languages in the world (and like many Australian languages) Dalabon uses metaphors grounded in physical and physiological metonymies in order to describe emotions. The linguistic and conceptual status of these tropes is discussed in Chapter 7. Chapter 8 presents Dalabon emotion metonymies and metaphors related to the body. One of the particularities of Dalabon metaphors of emotions is that in spite of their metaphorical dimension, they remain partly metonymic to the extent that they always represent emotions as states or parts of the person, not as independent entities. As a result, emotions are never represented as forces or opponents. In Dalabon, a metaphor like 'overwhelmed by love' for instance, is impossible. Explaining this limitation is a goal for future cross-linguistic research. Chapter 9 presents emotion metaphors that do not involve body-related nouns, in particular metaphors for anger. These metaphors come closer to representing emotions as independent entities – although such representations remain marginal.

Chapter 10 adopts an alternative perspective on Dalabon emotional compounds, and shows that metonymies and metaphors are not the only things body-part nouns 'do' in the Dalabon emotion lexicon. While nouns denoting abdominal body-parts endorse a figurative dimension, nouns denoting visible body-parts are used to specify which parts of the person are involved in emotional behaviors. For instance, it is

possible to use a compound to say that someone is ‘angry from the hands’, when someone is gesticulating in anger. Here, the body-part noun serves a descriptive, rather than figurative function. Such compounds rely on analogy and compositionality, with metonymies and metaphors playing minor roles in their production. In fact, analogy and compositionality produce compounds which, in turn, may suggest new metaphors to the speakers.

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Abbreviations and conventions

Abbreviations used in interlinear glosses

ABL:	ablative case	INTJ:	interjection
APPR:	apprehensive mood	IRR:	irrealis mood
ASSOC:	associative case	LIM:	limitative particle
BEN:	benefactive	LOC:	locative case
COM:	comitative	MASC:	masculine prefix
CONJ:	conjunction	NEG:	negation
CSTVZR:	causativizer	NOM:	nominative case
DAT:	dative case	NPST:	non-past tense
DEM:	demonstrative	ONOMAT:	onomatopoeia
DET:	determiner	PART:	particle
DIM:	diminutive	PCUST:	customary past
du:	dual	PI:	past imperfective
DYAD:	dyadic suffix	pl:	plural
dys:	dysharmonic	POSS:	possessive
EFF:	effective	PP:	past perfective
EMPH:	emphasizer	PR:	present tense
ERG:	ergative case	PRIV:	privative suffix
excl:	exclusive	PST:	past tense
FEM:	feminine	PURP:	purposive mood
FILL:	morphological filler	R:	realis mood
FOC:	focus prefix	REDUP:	reduplication
FUT:	future tense	RR:	reflexive/reciprocal
GEN:	genitive case	SEQ:	sequential
h:	high(er) on scale of animacy	sg:	singular
HESIT:	hesitation	SUB:	subordinate marker
INCH:	inchoative marker	TIME:	time case marker
incl:	inclusive	TR:	transitive marker
INST:	instrumental case	VBLZR:	verbalizer
INTERR:	interrogative		

Speakers' initials

JW	Jimmy Wesan
LB	Lily Bennett
MT	Maggie Tukumba
ND	Nikipini Dalak
PA	Philip Ashley
QB	Queenie Brennan

Data types

[ContEl]	contextualized elicitation
[ConvEl]	conversation in the course of elicitation
[DD]	Dalabon Dictionary
[El]	standard elicitation
[Narr]	narratives
[RPF]	comment on <i>Rabbit-Proof Fence</i>
[Sc]	cultural script
[SD]	comment on <i>Samson and Delilah</i>
[Stim]	response to elicitation stimuli
[TC]	comment on <i>Ten Canoes</i>
[Tr]	comment in the course of translation

Other abbreviations

ANIM	animate	M	mother
B	brother	NMNLZR	nominalizer
BP	body-part	PA	part-of-animate noun
D	daughter	PI	part-of-inanimate noun
EXP	experiencer	RECIP	reciprocal
F	father	REDUP	reduplicated form
GEN	generic noun	REFL	reflexive
INAN	inanimate	S	son
INST	instrument	THMTC	thematics
KIN	kin-terms	Z	sister

Recordings

In the following paragraphs:

'####' are meaningless file numbers.

'SS' means speakers' initials.

'annot' means the annotation number in ELAN (transcription software).

The 'data type' is indicative of the context in which the data was collected (see abbreviations above.)

Data collected in 2007 and 2008:

30024/2007 - 14' (JW) [ContEl]

####/yyyy - min (SS) [data.type]

These recordings have not been transcribed under ELAN.

The minute reading indicates where the segment is located in the recording.

These files are archived with the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Studies, Canberra, audio-visual archives:

<http://www.aiatsis.gov.au/collections/ava.html>

Data collected in 2009:

270909_93OK 0400 (LB) [ContEl]

ddmmyy_#### annot (SS) [data.type]

These recordings have been transcribed under ELAN.

They are archived with the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Studies, Canberra, audio-visual archives:

<http://www.aiatsis.gov.au/collections/ava.html>

Data collected between 2010 and 2013:

20110613_002_ND_LB 027 (LB) [Stim]

yyyymmdd_###_SS_SS annot (SS) [data.type]

These recordings have been transcribed under ELAN.

They are archived with ELAR, the Endangered Languages Archive (Endangered Languages Documentation Program, hosted by the School of Oriental and African Studies, London):

<http://elar.soas.ac.uk/deposit/ponsonnet2012dalabon>

Orthographic conventions

Table 1. Dalabon consonants and their orthographic notation.

	Bi-labial	Apico- alveolar	Apico-post-alveolar (retroflex)	Lamino- palatal	Dorso- Velar	Glottal
Short plosive	b	d	rd	dj	k	h
Long plosive	bb	dd	rdd	djdj	kk	
Nasal	m	n	rn	nj	ng	
Lateral		l	rl			
Trill		rr				
Approximant	w		r	y		
Fricative						H ¹

1. The status of the sound represented by ‘H’ is not clear yet. It is probably not a phoneme but rather a realisation of the glottal stop in some environments. When following or preceding a nasal, the glottal stop is realised as a voiceless nasal. It has become very systematic within some words. It is particularly frequent in words related to breathing, as in *bruH(mu)* ‘blow’, *ngerH-no* ‘heart, breath’. This sound even occurs occasionally in such words where it is not triggered by the environment (e.g. *ngadjdjiHun* for *ngadjdjibun* ‘sneeze’, also words for coughing, breathing...). This suggests that speakers exploit the iconic dimensions of this phoneme. I follow other authors who have published on Dalabon in transcribing voiceless nasals as ‘H’. While transcribing non-phonemic sounds is a non-standard practice, in this case it presents the advantage of keeping track of the occurrence of voiceless nasals before the status of the sound can be clarified. This is all the more relevant that the phenomenon is relatively remarkable (this sound is unusual in Australian languages).

Table 2. Dalabon vowels and their orthographic notation.

	Front	Central	Back
High	i	(ú) ²	u
Mid	e		o
Low		a	

Table 3. Dalabon diphthongs and their orthographic notation.

Final target	Initial target				
	i	e	a	o	u
w [u]	iw	ew	aw	ow	
y [i]	iy	ey	ay	oy	uy

2. Not all speakers have a high central vowel. In fact, none of the speakers who contributed significantly to the data in this work have it. Instead, they normally use the [u] phoneme, often with central realisation. The high front vowel [i] can also be realised as more central. I have decided not to use the ‘ú’ representation, because it confuses spellings and is irrelevant for the speakers who contributed to this work. There may be some exceptions, for instance the clan name *Búlaldjja*, where the high central epenthetic vowel is never realised as any of the standard Dalabon vowels. Since the symbol ‘ú’ occurs in some previous publications, it is worth mentioning it to provide a more exhaustive sound inventory, also covering conventions used in other publications on *Dalabon*.

Introduction

This volume describes and discusses the language of emotions in Dalabon, a threatened language of Northern Australia, and considers what this description might teach us with respect to local representations and practices about emotions. A simple, but crucial contribution of this work consists of filling in a descriptive gap. There exist a few linguistic works dealing with emotions in Australian languages (Gaby, 2008; Goddard, 1991; Harkins, 1990a, 2001; Peile, 1997; Turpin, 2002), and many publications provide fragmented information. Several anthropologists have written about emotions in Aboriginal Australia (the most prominent contributions are Myers (1979, 1986, 1988), but see also, for instance, Camfoo et al. (2000), Cowlishaw (1979, 1999), Moisseeff (1999), Tamisari (2000, 2006), Glaskin et al. (2008), Musharbash (2009, 2010a, 2010b), Blakeman 2014)). However, to my knowledge, no detailed and systematic description of the language of emotions in an Australian language has been carried out so far, and none has been published. This volume provides such an account for the Dalabon language.

With empirical studies on this topic, there are usually some expectations that understanding the linguistic encoding of emotions will tell us about speakers' concepts and representations of emotions, or about their experience of and practices about emotions. This study also questions this assumption and seeks, wherever possible, to evaluate its adequacy, with respect to the Dalabon language. Although studying how emotions are linguistically encoded surely tells us *something* about shared representations and practices about emotions (Palmer, 1996; Scherer, 2000, p. 152; Sharifian, 2014), it is not obvious which aspects of a language are relevant in this respect, and to what extent (Enfield, 2002b; Levinson & Gumperz, 1996; Lucy, 1992, 1996; Ogarkova, 2013). That is, what aspects of language should we attend to in order to draw conclusions not only about the *language* of emotions, but also about the associated 'culture' of emotions? The correlations between language on the one hand, and cultural representations and practices on the other hand, can go both ways. Representations and practices may contribute to the shaping of linguistic resources; conversely, linguistic resources may influence representations and practices (Lucy, 1992; Whorf, 1956). How does language contribute to shape the way its speakers construe emotions? Do the nature of the resources available, and the distribution of labor between them, make a difference in the way speakers experience or construe emotions? These are some of the questions that constitute the background of the present empirical description.

I do not aim to bring definite answers to any of these questions. Nevertheless, the present work sheds some light on the matter, for instance by showing that emotional vocabularies are not, in Dalabon, the best indicators of culturally significant concepts. While the existence of a word in a language warrants that the associated concept is readily accessible to its speakers, the reverse is not true: the absence of a word does not imply that the associated concept is unavailable (Malt, Ameel, Gennari, Imai, & Majid, 2011). Besides, the existence of a word for a concept does not tell us about the cultural salience of this concept – it may be backgrounded. A number of authors have relied partly (and often implicitly) on lexical distinctions as guides to shared cultural representations of emotions (Lutz, 1986; Myers, 1979, 1986; Wierzbicka, 1999). Myers (1979), for instance, maps the Pintupi (Central Australia) ‘moral order’ upon the analysis of a number of key Pintupi emotion words, mostly nouns. While this is valid and effective for Pintupi, the method would fail in the Dalabon context. Firstly, Dalabon has very few emotion nouns. The emotion lexicon is large, but comprises mainly verbs and adjectives. More importantly, while the lexicon does encode some culturally important emotion categories, not all important categories correspond to clear lexical distinctions.

Some categories (compassion for instance, one of the key Pintupi nouns), are more commonly encoded by non-lexical features such as diminutives or prosodic contours. The meanings of such ‘expressive’ features are usually far less accessible to speakers’ metalinguistic awareness than words, especially nouns. Yet, in Dalabon, expressive features are crucial conveyors of speakers’ moral assessment of emotions. These expressive resources are much more widespread in emotional speech than ‘descriptive’ lexical resources, and they also encode culturally prominent emotional categories. Thus, as suggested by Wilce (2009), the case of Dalabon confirms that if linguistic description is going to be a guide to speakers’ shared representations of emotions, this description should be broader than just lexical, and fine enough to encompass features less accessible to speakers’ metalinguistic awareness. Such expressive resources are harder to document and describe. So far, they have attracted far less attention than lexical features, especially for Australian languages (but see Evans (1992) and Wilkins (1992) on interjections, and Grandi & Kortvelyessy (2015) on diminutives). The present volume describes expressive emotional resources for Dalabon, and also indicates where to look, and how to search for such features.

Another area where researchers have searched for correlations between language and shared cultural representations is figurative language, i.e. tropes, namely metaphors and metonymies. According to the now classic framework of cognitive linguistics (Kövecses, 2002; Lakoff, 1987; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), conceptual metaphors are representations of a target domain structured by analogy with a source domain. That is, the fact that I can say ‘he was consumed by anger’ relies on a metaphorical representation of anger as fire. Thus, our language suggests associations between things of a different nature, and these linguistic associations often match shared conceptual representations (Keesing, 1979, 1985). The domain of emotions is particularly rich in

metaphors and metonymies (Kövecses, 2000), where emotions are often represented as things, natural forces, opponents, etc. Dalabon is interesting in this respect, because metaphors that reify or personify emotions (i.e. treat them as things or persons respectively) are absent – although they occur in most languages for which we have data on the matter, across continents, including in Australia. The quasi-absence of reification and personification metaphors in Dalabon correlates with the scarcity of emotion nouns and the quasi-systematic encoding of emotions as predicates, with the experiencer as their first syntactic argument. Thus, in this language, emotions are mostly represented metonymically as states of the person, rather than metaphorically as entities independent of the person. In other words, Dalabon avoids reifying emotions by encoding them as nouns.

Why is Dalabon different in this respect? This, again, raises the question of what language tells us about shared representations and practices. Does the absence of reification and personification metaphors correlate with a different way of construing emotions, and/or of dealing with them? Or, is this limitation imposed by grammatical properties of Dalabon, which may in turn impose constraints on shared representations of emotions?

While the range of emotion metaphors is somewhat limited in Dalabon, there are other tropes. Dalabon makes broad use of somatic metonymies and some use of body-based metaphors. Like most (if not all, see Wierzbicka (1999, p. 36), Ogarkova (2013, p. 50)) languages in the world, Dalabon uses body-part words in emotional expressions. Across languages, these expressions often exemplify metonymies whereby body-parts are represented as the seat or container of emotions (Sharifian, Dirven, Yu, & Niemeier, 2008b) – thus, in English, ‘to be kind-hearted’, where the heart is represented as part of the person experiencing empathy and sympathy. However, while many authors have expanded upon such figurative usages of body-part words, the status of body-parts with respect to emotions remains a matter of debate. For instance, Enfield (2002a) and Goddard (Goddard, 1994, 1996a) have expressed reservations about figurative interpretations. They argue that the body-part words in question are polysemous rather than figurative, i.e. that they denote emotions ‘directly’, so to speak, without any figurative reference to the body.

Dalabon emotion expressions feature a large number of body-part words. This is unsurprising, since Australian languages make extensive use of semantic extensions inspired by body-part words in the domain of emotions as in other domains (for instance kinship, see Kendon (1988) (1988, pp. 330–366)). Yet, the exact role of body-part words in the emotion lexicon has not been thoroughly analyzed for any Australian language. Turpin (2002) and Gaby (2008) indicate that metaphors must play a role for Kaytetye (Central Australia) and Kuuk Thaayorre (North Queensland) respectively, and Turpin (2002) suggests that body-part words may also be involved in lexical descriptions of emotions intimately linked with behaviors. However, both works are short articles providing insightful but partial analysis of the role of body-parts in linguistic descriptions of emotions. The present study of Dalabon demonstrates that

although some body-part words do contribute metaphors to the Dalabon emotion lexicon, this is by no means their only role with respect to emotions.

A couple of Dalabon words denoting internal organs – the belly and the heart – serve a clearly figurative role. They exemplify consistent networks of tropes inspired by somatic metonymies, i.e. by invisible physiological responses to emotions – an important aspect of the intimate relation between body and emotions. There is ample evidence that these tropes do match shared representations, also reflected in other shared semiotic practices such as ritual for instance. However, a larger number of words denoting visible body-parts (not internal organs) are used to specify the nature of emotional behaviors – for instance ‘be angry from the hands’ for someone gesticulating in anger, ‘be ashamed from the cheek’ for someone turning their head to avoid embarrassing looks, etc. This usage of body-part words in descriptions of emotions does not relate to the somatic dimension of emotions, but relies on another intimate association between emotions and the body: the fact that observable behavioral responses to emotions are our main access to other people’s emotions. This usage of body-part words in emotion descriptions is presumably a universal possibility, possibly explaining the presence of some body-part words in emotional expressions in other languages as well. In Dalabon, body-part-based descriptions of emotional behaviors seem particularly widespread – which raises the question of the cultural and linguistic parameters channeling this usage of body-parts.

The description of Dalabon emotional resources presented in this volume unfolds and expands the questions outlined above. Starting with expressive features and their prominence in relation to the lexicon, I then discuss the Dalabon emotion lexicon, showing how verbs and adjectives, that are used exclusively as predicates, predominate in the lexicon, rather than nouns. The following chapters analyze the functions of body-part nouns in the lexicon. While they do instantiate some metaphors, Dalabon mostly represents emotions metonymically, i.e. as states of the person rather than independent entities – in line with the lexical bias towards adjectives and verbs as opposed to nouns. The remaining chapters focus on non-figurative functions of body-part words in Dalabon descriptions of emotions, exploiting the close connection between emotions and behavioral responses.

Before I embark upon the description of Dalabon emotional resources, a few definitions and theoretical clarifications are in order. In the above paragraphs, I have used the word ‘emotion’ somewhat unreflectively. However, the sense of the term is not straightforward. Neither its everyday nor its scientific senses can be taken for granted. The following section (Section 1) presents my working definition of emotions, situating it with respect to various theoretical perspectives on ‘emotions’. In Section 2, I present my methodological approach and how it relates to various linguistic currents. Section 3 spells out the content and structure of the volume.

1. Defining emotions

Being a common English word used by all English speakers with few hesitations does not warrant that the term ‘emotion’ can serve to identify the object of a scientific study without further elaboration. Everyday-language definitions are usually context dependent, and therefore versatile and impractical for scientific purposes. Wierzbicka (1999, 2010) points out that scientific definitions do not necessarily match everyday definitions. In my view, this should not be regarded as a problem (see Putnam (1975) on the ‘division of linguistic labor’). There is no pre-defined ‘emotion’ category, no pre-established ‘essence’ that we should try and be faithful to – searching for it either among our own categories, or among emic categories met in other languages. In this work, I do not attempt to identify, or to be faithful to, folk theories of emotions, whether that of English speakers or that of Dalabon speakers (see Ponsonnet (2010) for a reflection on this matter). Rather, I use and define the label ‘emotion’ so as to identify a workable range of phenomena for my empirical descriptions. What is adequate here is determined in part by my own research agenda and interests. It is obviously reasonable to devise a definition that bears some resemblances with the way the word is used in English, so as to avoid unnecessary confusion. Thus, the definition set out in 1.2 relates to the sense of the English word ‘emotion’, but it is devised as a methodological or working definition that serves my research purposes. As a result, it may evolve in the view of empirical findings. As pointed out by Scarantino (2012, pp. 365–366) and Majid (2012b, p. 380), scientific definitions are ‘prescriptive’ rather than ‘descriptive’. That is, they serve to *prescribe* a definition of their object, rather than *describe* a somehow preexisting category or object. This explains why, as pointed out by Izard (2010), Widen & Russell (2010), and Wierzbicka (2010), scientific definitions of the term vary greatly across disciplines and researchers. Different researchers embrace different purposes, and tailor their definitions so as to suit their own purposes.

My definition of ‘emotions’ is spelt out in 1.2. I do not claim that this definition is better than others. The proposed criteria provide a grid to classify events into categories. Such grids are useful guides to empirical descriptions, but should not be expected to reflect a perfect image of the world. While categories are in essence discrete and clear-cut, and often well-organized, the real world is a complex continuum. As a result, wherever we postulate categories, we should expect that empirical observation will reveal a number of inadequacies and undecidable cases, wherever things in the world do not fit neatly into our clear-cut categories. This, however, does not imply that the categories in question are inadequate. Here, a comparison with color categories is enlightening. I know what ‘blue’ and ‘green’ mean, and in many cases I assign these labels without hesitation. Yet, not all blue things are the exact same hue – ‘blue’ defines a gradient, i.e. a heterogeneous category. In addition, there are many things in the world which I would hesitate to call either ‘blue’ or ‘green’, because they fall somewhere in between. Neither of these points – heterogeneity within a category or undecidable

cases – imply that ‘blue’ and ‘green’ are meaningless labels that should be discarded. Likewise, the categories of private states (emotions and others) delineated below group together things which can be different, and they also leave some cases undecided. Yet, this does not imply that these categories are incorrect or useless. Within the philosophical literature, a similar point is made by Wittgenstein (1953) for instance. The simple idea behind his philosophical argument is that when we posit conceptual categories, we should not expect things in the world to necessarily distribute neatly between these categories. The inclination to sort out every borderline case results from what Wittgenstein could call a misguided ‘essentialization’ of our own categories.

As will be discussed in the following sections (1.3), it is unlikely that Dalabon people share a concept identical to the concept of emotion I will be using here, as defined in the following section. This does not imply, however, that using my own methodological definition will amount to inadequately imposing foreign categories onto the Dalabon language. As long as I am aware that the categories I use are mine, and as long as my observation is comprehensive enough (for instance covering what is adjacent to my object of study), the mismatch between my own definitions and emic categories does not interfere with sound empirical observations attentive to emic categories. Rather, as will be shown throughout the volume, emic categories become apparent in empirical observation and are registered as such. Here again, the comparison with colors is enlightening. ‘Green’ is an English word and concept. As such, it is not precisely defined, but sharper scientific definitions may be devised (with criteria of wavelengths etc.). Equipped with such definitions, it is possible to investigate empirically the way people talk about green things in languages that do not have words for this color range. Indeed, Dalabon has no word for ‘green’, but speakers may use other color words to describe green objects, extending their spectrum of reference; or, Dalabon speakers may refer to the color of grass. The fact that my empirical observations are framed by my own definition of ‘green’ does not impede adequate observation of Dalabon linguistic practices, nor prevent me from discovering their emic categories in the process – especially if I also consider colors other than green, and remain attentive to local distinctions. The same applies to emotions. My definition allows me to select the range of phenomena I am interested in, without further assumptions about Dalabon concepts and categories. Provided the spectrum of observation is large enough (i.e. also paying some attention to some phenomena adjacent to my definition), emic categories will emerge from empirical observation, as will be shown throughout the volume.

In the following sections, I briefly present various trends of research on emotion (1.1), before eliciting my own working definition in 1.2. Section 1.3 discusses how this concept relates to Dalabon emic categories.

1.1 Universalists and relativists

Emotions have long been an important topic of reflection, mostly among philosophers originally (Aristotle, *De anima/On the soul*; Descartes, 1649; Hume, 1740; James, 1884, 1890; Spinoza, 1677/1992), but also in medical circles in the last few centuries (see Dixon (2012) for a concise history of modern medical discourse on emotions). In the last fifty years or so, empirical and theoretical research on emotions has been rich and diverse (Scherer, 2000, 2013). Many authors identify two broad trends in this research.

On the one hand, some psychologists take a 'physicalist' position, construing emotions as neurological and/or physiological phenomena (Damasio, 1999, 2003; Ekman & Davidson, 1994). These are often labelled 'universalists', because this physicalist stance should in principle allow us to identify each particular emotion as a type of private, internal event, with unified properties across individuals and cultures. Some researchers, inspired by Darwin (1872), construe emotions as adaptive responses, and posit a set of 'basic emotions' (Ekman (1992a); also Frijda & Parrorr (2011) on 'ur-emotions', and Scarantino (2012) on whether emotions are natural kinds), also universally expressed and identified by humans across cultures in terms of facial expression (Ekman, 1992b). This seems problematic when confronted with the cross-cultural diversity evidenced by ethnographic research. Furthermore, such lists of 'basic emotions' are usually inspired by the English lexicon (Arnett, 2008; Blumenthal, 2009, p. 44; Majid, 2012b), thus imposing a cultural bias on what is deemed universal.

In contrast, most social scientists adopt a stance labelled 'constructionist' or even 'relativist': they see emotions as shaped up, to a greater or smaller extent, by culture (Harré, 1986a, 1986b; Lutz, 1986, 1988; Myers, 1979, 1986; Rosaldo, 1980, 1990; Shweder & LeVine, 1984). These social scientists – mostly anthropologists – seek to rehabilitate the conceptual and social dimension of emotions (as opposed to their physical dimension). Rather than approaching emotions as eminently internal, private states, they study emotions as social constructs, and this explains why emotions may vary with the social context. Some social researchers admit a certain level of universal experience. For instance Levy (1973, 1984) suggests that underlying experience is common across cultures, but that social parameters select which aspects of experience are considered significant, and which are 'hypocognized', i.e. cognitively and culturally backgrounded. Some anthropologists, like Briggs (1970) or Lutz (1987, 1988), postulate more radical differences in experience. The emphasis on social manifestations of emotions leads to a certain reluctance to construe them as private events (Myers, 1979). This stance combines with 'relational' conceptions of emotions and the person or 'dividual' (rather than 'individual', see Strathern (1988)). (See Lutz & White (1986), Reddy (Reddy, 2001) (2001, p. Part 1), Wilce (2009, p. Part 1) for concise accounts of these research trends.)

As pointed out by social scientists, emotions – their conceptualization, and maybe, due to feedback effects of hypocognition, actual emotional experience – vary across cultures. However, ‘relational’ conceptions and the downplaying of the ‘private’ dimension of emotions sometimes lead to a relatively unnatural use of the word ‘emotion’, where it refers to public events. For instance, Leavitt (1990, p. 527) puts to the fore ‘the transindividual nature of culturally marked emotions’, and Wilce (2009, p. 51) (concurring with Goodwin & Goodwin (2001)) invites researchers to ‘locate emotions in the realm of intersubjective participation’.¹ What they mean ultimately is that emotions cannot be understood independently of the social contexts and interactions which shape them. This idea is also encapsulated in the idea of emotional ‘scenarios’ or ‘cultural scripts’. Cultural scientists emphasize the prototypical, and thus culturally shared, nature of some of the scenarios (Holland & Quinn, 1987). Linguists oriented towards semantics (Natural Semantic Metalanguage in particular), led by Wierzbicka (1999, pp. 12–17), argue that scenarios or scripts are part of the meaning of emotion words (a point agreed upon by researchers from various trends, see Russell (1991, p. 442ff), Plantin (2011)).

While emotion scenarios are often crucially informative and constitute an inherent part of the meaning of emotion words, formulations such as the ones quoted from Leavitt (1990, p. 519) and Wilce (2009) use the word ‘emotion’ in a way that conflicts with most everyday uses of the term. In everyday English, reference to psychological states is a core feature of the word ‘emotion’. As a result, defining emotions as non-private, relational events sounds somewhat odd.² As pointed out by Ortony et al. (1987, p. 343), the sources and implications of emotional states – constituting what is more naturally called a *scenario* – are important to understand what these states are, but should not be confused with the states themselves. Russell (1991, p. 445), for instance, blames Lutz (1980) for this confusion. He points out that this tendency to conflate emotions and scenarios may be rooted in a confusion between sense and reference: while the sense of a word is defined by a network of relations with all sorts of *signifiants* and *signifiés* to which it is associated in one way or another, reference targets the object itself. Hence, for instance, a number of events, comprising threatening events interactions, behavioral responses etc., may contribute to define the sense of the word ‘fear’; yet, ‘fear’ denotes an internal state, not the observable events that relate to this state. In my working definition of ‘emotion’, like in my everyday use of the English word, emotion words crucially refer to internal, private states. (See also Spiro (1984, p. 334) for criticisms of the relativism in Rosaldo (1980), and Palmer & Brown (1998) targeting Rosaldo (1990).)

1. See also Plantin (2011, p. 116), who suggests that ‘nothing forces us to consider the emotion as a fundamentally private event; the same event can affect a whole group simultaneously’ (my translation).

2. At least in my use of the word, possibly influenced by my understanding of the French word *émotion*.

Wierzbicka (1999, p. 25) takes a middle road between universalism and relativism, and suggests that emotional ‘content’ (emotional experience) is universal, while emotional categories (the concepts, the words) are culture-specific. A number of linguists and psychologists (Russell (1991), as well as Kövecses (2005) on a slightly different topic) and some anthropologists (Levy, 1973, 1984) adopt a similar stance, which is the one I embrace in this work.

1.2 Working definition

1.2.1 *Emotions are private states*

In my working definition of ‘emotions’, the internal, or private, dimension of emotions is a crucial criterion. English examples of emotional private states are ‘be sad’, ‘love’, ‘feel angry’... This property of being internal or psychological is not at odds with the everyday use of the English ‘emotion’ (at least for some speakers), but more importantly, it suits my research purposes and interests. One of the motivations of my interest for the language of emotions is precisely that emotion words refer to internal, invisible states. These invisible states become detectable via a myriad of visible symptoms: reflex or voluntary behaviors and expressions (bodily or vocal), visible physiological reactions. As repeatedly pointed out by various philosophers such as Wittgenstein (1953) or Ryle (1949), these visible phenomena are our only access to others’ internal states, so that we may as well do without the reference to anything internal, i.e., according to Ryle, without a ‘concept of mind’. Recent works have emphasized the predominance of descriptions of scenarios in discourse, as opposed to the description of emotions *per se*. For instance, Préneron & Lambert-Kluger (2010) show that French speaking children (re)telling a story involving fear will more often articulate descriptions of the factual threat that causes the character to be scared (‘the monster comes about’), than fear *per se* (‘the man is scared’). In any case, they seldom provide explicit descriptions of fear (‘the man is scared’) without mentioning the factual threat. Matching these findings, I have observed that Dalabon speakers (like speakers of most languages presumably) are able to elaborate extremely emotional narratives without using emotional devices, but simply describing facts in a suggestive way.

This apparent predominance of observable facts in humans’ evaluation and descriptions of emotions raises a question. If all we know about emotional internal states are their external, observable manifestations, and if it is possible for speakers to effectively discuss emotional events without referring to these internal states, why is it that most, if not all languages in the world have emotion terms (Wierzbicka, 1999, pp. 36, 284)? Is there any language that does not have words referring to invisible states? How do word forms acquire the ability to refer to invisible states, based on which original meanings, and in which contexts? What kind of semantic extensions are at play? Can we identify cross-linguistic preferences in this respect? These questions (tackled by Sweetser (1990), followed by Evans & Wilkins (2000), and Vanhove

(2008) for intellection terms) are not the focus of this work: they call for broader typological studies rather than language-internal descriptive research. Yet, they contribute to my interest for the language of emotions, and I do answer some of these questions with respect to Dalabon.

1.2.1.1 *The body and mind dichotomy* The above ‘privacy criterion’ relies on a distinction between internal, invisible events on the one hand – i.e. psychological and intellectual events – and external, observable events on the other hand – i.e., behaviors. Western philosophy, and possibly Western folk theories, have long associated this internal/invisible vs external/visible distinction with another distinction, the mind vs body dichotomy. While these distinctions are not strictly equivalent, there are some overlaps between them. Descartes’s *Méditations métaphysiques* (1641) highlighted the immaterial – and thus invisible – aspect of the mind, which is inside the body, and contrasted it with the material, and thus visible aspect of our body, which is our external envelope. Among philosophers, anthropologists, and even neurologists (Damasio, 2005), the strength attributed to this mind vs body contrast is often regarded as a mistaken overstatement of the division between the mind and the body, and as a cultural particularism giving in to the ‘myth of the inside’ (Descola, 2005; Dewey, 1925; James, 1900; Leavitt, 1990; Ryle, 1949; Wikan, 1991; Wittgenstein, 1953). Thus, one may object that my definition of emotions as private, invisible, psychological states, inherits a particular twist of Western thought.

There are several reasons why this objection is invalid. Firstly, the mind vs body distinction may actually be useful. It is in part culturally specific, like most of the distinctions we posit. However, this does not entail that it is inaccurate or useless. All conceptual distinctions drawn by human beings in the world may be regarded as cultural conventions, but this does not entail that they may not capture some relevant aspects of reality (Bouveresse, 1987). The criticism of the mind vs body distinction is not new (Johnson & Rohrer, 2007, p. 20), and more recently some authors reflecting upon the notion of embodiment from the point of view of cognitive psychology have suggested that this distinction is useful. Thus, Ikegami & Zlatev (2007, p. 230) ‘believe that some conceptual – and even in some cases ontological – differences between different levels [of human cognition, i.e. between intellectual and embodied cognition] need to be maintained.’

Second, while there are conceptual associations between the internal and invisible vs external and observable distinction and the mind vs body dichotomy, these two contrasts are distinct. It is not clear that Dalabon speakers endorse the latter, but there is ample evidence that they do endorse the former. For instance, they linguistically express contrasts between observable behaviors and invisible emotional states. This is often sanctioned by the use of the word *buyirrhwalung* ‘inside’, suggesting that emotional states are indeed located ‘inside’ the person’s body-envelope. Related tropes are further discussed in Section 4 of Chapter 9.



Figure 1. Picture extracted from the *Mind Reading* video set used in elicitation.

20120705b_001_MT 054 [Stim]

[Watching a video extracted from the *Mind Reading: The interactive guide to emotion* set, where the actor exemplifies ‘hurt’. The actor had an argument with his girlfriend, who has left. His mouth looks like he is crying, but he sheds no tears.]

(1) *Ka-h-yolh-weh, duway-no.*

3sg-R-feelings-bad husband-3sgPOSS

Kardu bah ka-h-ru-n, ka-h-kangu-ru-n, buyirrhwalung.

maybe but 3sg-R-cry-PR 3sg-R-belly-cry-PR inside

feel.sad

‘He’s not happy, her husband [of the woman who left upset]. It looks like he’s crying, he’s feeling bad [crying from the belly], inside.’

In addition, the Dalabon language seems to make some use of the immaterial vs material distinction, which is even closer conceptually to the mind vs body dichotomy. Dalabon has words for non-physical aspects of the self such as *men-no* ‘one’s ideas, one’s mind’ (Ponsonnet, 2009a), *yolh-no* ‘pep, feelings’, which connects to desires and will (Ponsonnet, 2010). That these aspects are regarded as immaterial, at least by some speakers, is evidenced by pointing tests. Speakers readily pointed at body-parts, including internal organs, on drawings, but when asked to point at *men-no* (‘ideas’) or *yolh-no* (‘pep, feelings’), some of them objected that these attributes of the person did not feature on the drawings. This suggests that, as one would expect, Dalabon speakers distinguish between material and immaterial aspects of the self. Therefore, defining emotions as internal, invisible, psychological (and thus to some extent immaterial³) states is appropriate in the context of the description of the emotional resources of Dalabon.

3. Neuroscience has shown that emotions and other psychological states have a material dimension in the brain. Yet, this level of observation is not available to Dalabon speakers (nor to myself), neither in the context of this research, nor in everyday life.

1.2.1.2 *Linguistic tests* Few authors have suggested or discussed linguistic tests for internal state terms.⁴ In French or English, there exists a simple, relatively good test to show that words refer to an internal emotional state rather than to a visible behavioral response. For instance, if I say ‘he looks sad, but he’s not really sad’, under normal conditions, I must be contrasting an observable behavior with an invisible internal state. This corresponds to two senses of ‘sad’, an emotional sense and a behavioral sense. In Dalabon the use of *buyirrhwalung* ‘inside’ is probably the best equivalent. *Buyirrhwalung* allows speakers to contrast behaviors against ‘internal’ psychological states, as in (2), where the speaker contrasted cheerful behavior with psychological discomfort. *Buyirrhwalung* ‘inside’ was sometimes used spontaneously to qualify emotional states.

20120705a_002_MT 128 [ContEl]

[In response to a scenario attempting to combine smiling and laughing (behavior) with being sad (emotion).]

(2) *Ka-h-dja-woh-redji-ng yelng bonj.*

3sg-R-FOC-a.bit-laugh-PR SEQ INTJ.finished

Buyirrhwalung mak ka-kakku-yolh-redji-ng kahke.

inside NEG 3sg-R-really-feelings-laugh-PR NEG

‘She laughs a bit and then finished. Deep inside, she’s not really happy [have laughing/smiling feelings].’

Example (2) was a response to a test where the speaker had been asked to describe a situation where someone is sad but displays cheerful behavior to please others. This particular test was relatively successful, but most tests seeking to contrast a behavior with dissonant emotions, so as to demonstrate that a given word refers to an invisible internal state rather than an observable behavior, failed. When trying to describe a contrast between someone acting nice in spite of resentment, for instance, speakers (especially the main consultant) typically reinterpreted the scenario as a succession of states (the person was nice for a while, then became nasty) or in terms of intensity (the person felt a little angry, but not really angry). As a result, the internal/external contrast hardly ever obtained in such tests.⁵

4. But see Ruwet (1994) for such tests in French.

5. The repeated failures met by these tests may be explained by Dalabon speakers’ socially motivated reluctance to discuss faking and dissimulating behaviors. Dalabon speakers (like most humans presumably, see Festinger (1957) or Voh & Baumeister (2010)) commonly dissociate their behaviors from their emotions, and in the social context of a relatively small group, such practices are probably indispensable to maintain social cohesion. Discussing such dissimulating practices opens up the risk of making them less successful. Indeed, open discussions of hypocrisy tend to threaten social order. Given that Dalabon speakers seem prone to adopt avoidance strategies with respect to emotions such as anger in particular (Chapter 2, 4.2, Chapter 6, 2.1.1),

1.2.2 *Other criteria and properties*

The ‘private state’ lexicon includes emotional words translating ‘be sad’, ‘love’, ‘feel angry’ etc., but also non-emotional states such as ‘know’ or ‘believe’, ‘agree’, ‘understand’, i.e. words referring to judgments and other intellectual states and processes (Palmer, Goddard, & Lee, 2003). The scope of private states is too large to be considered in its entirety in this study. Instead, narrowing the scope to Dalabon words referring to emotions brings it down to a more appropriate scale for this work. Specifying emotions as private states is not sufficient to capture the sense of what is usually called ‘emotions’ in English or scientific English. I thus define emotions using the properties outlined below, several of them shared with Ortony et al.’s (1987) now ‘classic’ criteria. Ortony et al. define emotions as internal (as opposed to external) conditions which are mental (as opposed to physical) and relate to affects (as opposed to behavior or cognition). I adopt comparable criteria, albeit organized in a somewhat simpler system, and with different labels.⁶ Another difference is that Ortony et al.’s definition considers states as better exemplars of emotions, while I consider that the category may encompass moods or dispositions as well as states for instance. In Dalabon, as in many languages such as English, French, or Dogon languages for instance (McPherson & Prokhorov, 2011), emotional adjectives can usually denote both a temporary state and a durable disposition to experience this kind of state (Chapter 5, 2.2) – in English, ‘he feels cheerful today’ (his current state) and ‘he is a cheerful person’ (i.e. someone with a propensity to feel cheerful). As mentioned above, I do not claim that my definitions are better than others; I have chosen criteria which suit my research purposes, and which remain in line with the everyday use of the word, as well as with a number of scientific definitions.

1.2.2.1 *Emotions vs sensations* Emotional states differ from *sensations* and other *affects* in that they are triggered by representations of the world. Sensations, on the contrary, result from physical triggers. Emotions are triggered by the cognitive appraisal of events – social or otherwise. Sensations such as pain, hunger, tickling, etc., involve no cognitive grasp: I can feel pain in my hand without establishing a representation of the source of the pain. In practice, however, I am usually aware of what causes my pain, and this knowledge does modify my sensations. Yet, in principle, sensations can occur

it is likely that they prefer not to engage in overt discussion of dissociation strategies. In line with these suggestions, the vocabulary for discussing dissociation – such as words for lies and trickery – appears to be limited in Dalabon (but would deserve further documentation). Dissociation practices and speakers’ reluctance to discuss dissociation should be taken into account in the process of documentation, and when analyzing the data.

6. I use the term ‘private’ where Ortony et al. prefer ‘internal’, or ‘inner’ (I endorse these terms as well, with the same sense). I call ‘cognitive’ what Ortony et al. call ‘mental’, and ‘intellectual’ what they call ‘cognitive’; following Hagege (2006), I use ‘affect’ to cover both cognitive and non-cognitive internal states, while Ortony et al. use ‘affect’ to refer to non-affective judgements.

while the cause remains unknown, whereas an emotion is normally a response to my understanding of a situation (if I feel sad without knowing why, I will probably try and find out what triggers my feeling). Both emotions and sensations are affects; they share the property of being pleasant or unpleasant, and of escaping, to some extent, the full control of the experiencer. I use the term *affect* to refer to emotions and sensations together, along with physical affects, such as being sick or have a broken leg.⁷

1.2.2.2 Emotions vs intellectual cognitive states ‘Emotional’ cognitive states differ from other ‘intellectual’ cognitive states because the latter concern *only* the establishment of appropriate ‘representations’ of the world (Ikegami & Zlatev, 2007, p. 200), and nothing else. I treat both emotional and intellectual states as *cognitive states*, i.e. as states having to do with the individual’s representation of the world. Emotional states, however, involve more than these representations. When believing something or denying something, for instance (two intellectual states), an individual posits the validity or invalidity of a representation of a certain state of affairs in the world. They articulate a judgment, which may be deemed accurate or inaccurate. As pointed out by Nussbaum (2001), judgments and representations of the world play an important part in emotional states as well. I claim, however (unlike Nussbaum), that emotional cognitive states also involve a non-intellectual component, i.e. that in some aspects they are independent of our assessment of what the world is like. The nature of this component – which some psychologists call ‘arousal’, and which Nussbaum calls ‘upheavals’ (2001, p. 62)⁸ – remains obscure, and I do not claim that it corresponds to any neurological reality (although it may correspond to what Damasio (1999, p. 281ff) calls ‘feelings’). Rather, my assumption here is that this component is largely what speakers of many languages hold emotion words to refer to, in association with the scenarios and judgments that are assumed to trigger this non-judgmental component.⁹

This ‘specifically emotional’ dimension partly explains why emotional states are sometimes granted a particular ‘epistemic status’ by some philosophers (Cavell, 1979;

7. The term ‘affect’ has attracted very different definitions. I diverge from Ortony et al. (1987, pp. 341–364), who use ‘affect’ to define words ‘that do not refer to emotions but might influence them’. For Ortony et al., ‘affects’ include affective judgements. What I call ‘affect’ includes what Ortony et al. call ‘non-mental’ (1987, p. 351), i.e. sensations (which I indeed describe as ‘non-cognitive’). My definition of ‘affect’ is also distinct from Massumi’s (1995), and better reflects the use of the French ‘affect’ by Hageège (2006) for instance.

8. A term inspired by Proust. Crucially, Nussbaum (2001) denies that emotions *are* these upheavals.

9. This distinction between intellectual states and emotional states is in line with the finding of linguists working in the Natural Semantic Metalanguage framework, who have established that both THINK (an intellectual state) and FEEL (relating to emotional states) are universal semantic primes (Goddard, 2011).

Wittgenstein, 1953). Indeed, if I declare that I feel sad, one may suggest that I'm lying or pretending, but usually not that my statement is wrong (in the sense 'inaccurate' or 'inadequate'). The sentence 'I was wrong to be sad about it' sounds odd to many English speakers.¹⁰ This does not mean that all emotions are exempt of such accuracy or adequacy judgments. With some emotions, the judgment or intellectual component is prominent enough, so that the emotion itself can be denied. For instance, the sentence 'I was wrong to worry about it' sounds much better to many English speakers than 'I was wrong to be sad about it'. As discussed by Plantin (2011), emotional states may be subject to inter-personal negotiations and for this reason, inaccuracy tests are not good linguistic tests to identify emotions. Nevertheless, emotional states also include a dimension that typically escapes interpersonal scrutiny, and may be qualified as 'subjective' to that extent – this dimension is attested by English speakers' rejecting the suggestion that one may be wrong to be sad. As pointed out by Lutz (e.g. 1988, p. 223), in practice, emotions and intellectual states cannot always be teased apart. Yet, in my definitions, the difference between them remains that emotional states involve more than just claims about the adequacy of representations of the world.

1.2.2.3 *Emotions and their physical manifestations* As emphasized by Wierzbicka (1999) and Damasio (1999), emotional responses typically involve the body, in various ways. Emotions are often accompanied by visible symptoms: a behavior, a posture, a facial expression, the visible aspect of a physiological reactions (e.g. blushing in shame). These observable phenomena constitute our only source of information about other people's internal states – apart from what people *say* about these internal states of course. In addition, emotions are often accompanied by physiological responses which may not be perceptible by others but trigger interoception (the sensations of one's organs, blood pressure level etc. – for instance, feeling one's own increased heart-beat in response to fear).

Unlike Wierzbicka, Damasio and others, I do not include physiological responses as a criterial property for emotions. Since I am interested in internal states, I consider emotions as a broader category which also includes durable states as well as shorter episodes (Ekman, 1992a, pp. 86, 175; Ortony et al., 1987, p. 354ff), and also *emotional dispositions* (i.e. one's propensity to experience a certain emotion). Durable states and dispositions may be devoid of any clearly identifiable physiological counterpart – being a cheerful person, for instance (a disposition), does not correlate with a well-identified bodily response. This inclusion is further justified by the fact that in Dalabon, a number of emotional words colexify emotional states and emotional dispositions. Given this inclusion, I do not need to distinguish between emotions as immediate responses and

10. About 20 speakers have been surveyed, and about half found the sentence unacceptable, or strange.

long-lasting states, i.e. 'feelings' (or between emotions and the French 'sentiments').¹¹ Although the distinction may be very useful to psychologists for instance (see Scherer, 2013, p. 25), it is not indispensable here, where the broader category of 'internal states' is in focus. (On proposed distinctions between emotions and feelings, see Myers (1979), Wierzbicka (1999), Damasio (2003), Ponsonnet (2010).)

Since under my definition, emotion words are those which refer to internal emotional states, words denoting behaviors strictly speaking fall out of the scope of my research (which contributes to limiting the scale of the study to a manageable size). Thus, I leave aside social behavior words (e.g. verbs meaning 'to argue'). While the events that such words refer to usually have emotional implications, they are not internal events. The distinction between social behaviors and emotional behaviors may sometimes seem arbitrary, but again, it was necessary to limit the extent of the research. On the other hand, Dalabon has a number of words which refer to a behavior intimately tied up with an emotion. This is for instance the case of the verb *yer(mu)* 'avoid interactions for fear of others', which refers to a behavior (avoiding interactions with other people), but also specifies quite precisely the emotion that triggers the behavior, namely feeling afraid of interacting with others. *Yer(mu)* cannot be used to refer to someone avoiding speaking to someone else because they find this person boring, for instance. The type of emotion involved is part of the sense of the lexeme. I call the words referring to a behavior *along with* its inherent emotional trigger *emotional behavior words*. Because emotions are part of the denotation of these words, I include them in the study.

1.2.3 Summary

To summarize, I define emotions as *cognitive, internal or private states* that are triggered by representations of the world (i.e. not *sensations*, which do not rely on representations of the world – the pain I feel when I jab my finger does not depend on a representation of the needle) but that are not concerned solely with establishing adequate representations of the world (i.e. not *intellectual cognitive states*). I make no distinctions between feelings and emotions. Emotions are private and thus invisible states, but are often accompanied by physiological and observable manifestations, such as behaviors or expressions. However, my definition of emotions includes states which do not trigger such responses: in particular, words referring to durable *emotional states* and *emotional dispositions* are considered emotion terms, as well as terms referring to shorter *emotional events* or episodes.

The manifestations of emotions (behaviors, expressions, physiological responses) are not part of what I define as emotions. Emotional behaviors, such as laugh or cry,

11. See Melnikova (2009, p. 159) on the semantics of the French pair, which suggests a very different partition from the one between emotions and feelings in English. Here again, the use of English may have influenced the conceptual categories used by researchers.

are not directly included in this study. However, what I call *emotional behavior words*, i.e. words denoting both a behavior *and* its inherent emotional trigger, will be considered. The expressions in italics will be used along the following chapters in the sense posited in the previous paragraphs. Those among them that are not straightforward are listed and briefly defined for reference in Table 1.

Table 1. Definitions of some expressions used in the volume.

Expression	Sense
affects	internal states which can be pleasant or unpleasant: emotions and sensations
emotional behavior words	words denoting a behavior and specifying the emotional trigger of this behavior
emotional disposition	propensity of an individual to experience a particular emotional state
feelings	equivalent to emotions in this work
intellectual states	cognitive states having to do solely with the establishment of adequate representations of the world
internal (private) states and events	any event or state affecting the person in a way that is not perceptible by others, independent of the visible manifestations resulting from this state or event
sensations	internal states triggered by physical factors, independent of representations of the world

1.3 The concept of emotion in Dalabon

It is well known that not all languages include a generic term comparable to the English word ‘emotion’ (Lutz, 1982, p. 114; Ogarkova, 2013; Russell, 1991, pp. 429–430; Wierzbicka, 1999). Some researchers, especially anthropologists, have argued that researchers should be wary of ‘importing’ this foreign concept, along with the expectations and cultural bias it entails (see Lutz (1987), Myers (1979) for such warnings, and Ponsonnet (2010) for critical suggestions). As argued above (Section 1), delimitating the object of one’s study independently of local categories does not imply that the observer will become blinded and unable to perceive emic categories. In addition, as pointed out by various authors (Levy, 1984; Russell, 1991, p. 430), not having a word for a concept does not equate not using this concept. Speakers of languages without a generic term for ‘emotion’ may well construe emotional states as a relatively unified category in spite of the absence of a corresponding lexical category.

Dalabon, like some other Australian languages (e.g. Gidjingali, Arnhem Land, Hiatt (1978), Pintupi, Central Australia, Myers (1986)), has no superordinate noun referring to a generic concept of ‘emotion’.¹² This is not surprising, considering the low incidence of nouns in the Dalabon emotion lexicon (only a handful, among more than 160 emotion words (Chapter 5, 1.1)). Two compound verbs may be used to ask questions about someone’s feelings: *yolh-yin* ‘pep, feelings’ + ‘say, do’, *kangu-yin* ‘belly’ + ‘say, do’.

Yolh-yin ‘pep, feelings’ + ‘say, do’ is frequent in rhetorical questions, where speakers wonder what someone wants or why someone is acting the way they do (3). It was not clear whether these rhetorical questions targeted emotional states specifically: they seemed to encompass physical aspects as well. However, the context of such questions often related to emotional states. *Yolh-yin* was also used occasionally outside of rhetorical questions, with a similar ambiguity (4). *Yolh-yin* is the best candidate for an exponent of FEEL, listed by Wierzbicka (1999, pp. 275–279) among universal exponents of the Natural Semantic Metalanguage.

20110526c_000_MT 030 [Narr]

- (3) *Ka-h-dja-woh-kangu-dinjirr-minji*¹³, *kanh-kun narra-woh-du-rru-ninji*.
3sg-R-FOC-a.bit-belly-HATE-PCUST DEM-GEN 2du-a.bit-scold-RR-PCUST

Bah kardu marruh ka-h-yolh-yinHyin-inj,
but maybe INTERR 3sg-R-feelings-say/do:REDUP-PP
feel

kardu molkkun, kardu kinikun
maybe secretly maybe different

kirdikird-kun kardu molkkun, ka-h-woh-kangu-dinjirr-minji.
woman-GEN maybe secretly 3sg-R-a.bit-belly-HATE-PCUST

‘He was hostile to you, and this is why you kept arguing. I don’t know what was happening to him [what his feelings were doing], maybe secretly, [it was about] another woman, secretly, that he was hostile to you.’

MT’s Kriol¹⁴ trans. of ‘*kardu marruh kah-yolh-yinHyininj*’:
‘ai don no wad kain wil o aidiya la im’
‘I don’t know what sort of views or ideas he had’

12. Some Australian languages, like Yolngu, are reported to have a term approximating a generic ‘emotion’ term (Tamisari, 2000, p. 281).

13. With verbs ending with the intransitive verbalizer *-mu* or its inflections, an alternative gloss would distinguish a verbalizer element and a tense element: *-minji* would be *-m-inji* ‘VBLZR-PCUST’. However, the cases where *-mu* is an independent morpheme rather than a part of the verb root are difficult to identify, and since the semantic input of the verbalizer is close to nil, I gloss the tense only.

14. Barunga Kriol is the local creole, see Chapter 3, 1.1.2.

- 20120706a_004_MT 74 [Stim]
 [Commenting on Figure 2.]
- (6) MP *Kardu marruh nga-h-kangu-yin?*
 maybe INTERR 1sg-R-belly-say/do:PR
 be.sulky
- MT *Kardu dja-h-wurr-ngarrk-mu.*
 maybe 2sg-R-intestines-ache-PR
- ‘MP What could happen to my belly?’
 MT You might have a belly-ache.’



Figure 2. Picture of the author used in elicitation.

Thus, while the concepts ‘emotion’ and ‘to feel’ (as in ‘to experience an emotion’) do not stand in one-to-one correspondence with Dalabon lexical categories, the Dalabon language does provide lexical tools to ask generic questions about emotional states and events. The Dalabon generic terms allowing for such generic questions are verbs (the noun *yolh-no* ‘pep, feelings’ is not a generic term for emotions when used alone: it refers to enthusiasm and desires, i.e. to specific emotions, see Chapter 8, 3.1). Verbs are not construed by speakers as hyperonyms for categories as easily as nouns are. Therefore, the expressions *yolh-yin* ‘pep, feelings’ + ‘say, do’ and *kangu-yin* ‘belly’ + ‘say, do’ did not help in obtaining lists of emotion words for instance. Nevertheless, these verbs allowed me to trigger comments on emotional states.

In addition, I have shown in Ponsonnet (2010) that while Dalabon people put a strong emphasis on ‘relational’ emotions – i.e. socially embedded and socially constrained emotions – they also pay careful attention to emotional states stemming from the individual alone, independent of any social interactions. A number of lexemes, in particular YOLH ‘pep, feelings’ compounds (Chapter 6, 2.2 and Chapter 8, Section 3) denote such personal (non-social) emotions. This is an important difference between the Dalabon emotional landscape and the Pintupi emotional landscape as described

by Myers (1979, 1986, 1988). My observations in the Dalabon context otherwise align fairly well with Myers's descriptions, except that he does not discuss lexemes that refer to private emotional states independent of any social order. In his interpretation, such emotions surface under the form of a tension within the social and moral order, but are hardly treated as an emotional realm of their own. As will be further discussed in Chapter 6 (2.2), many Dalabon lexemes refer to 'non-relational', personal emotional states that do not relate to social interactions and norms. It is possible that this aspect is also present with the Pintupi, and other Australian groups, but has been overlooked because it is not in focus within overt moral systems – and is therefore backgrounded in conversations, especially conversations with strangers. In any case, Dalabon does lexicalize the notion of autonomous emotional self, and Dalabon speakers are attentive to emotions that bear no relation to the social and moral realm. As a result, my interest for the language of emotions as private states in Dalabon is not at odds with local concepts and values.

2. Linguistic approaches to emotions

2.1 Expression vs description

Many authors have delineated a distinction between linguistic resources which allow speakers to *express* their own emotions, and those which allow them to *describe* (their own or others') emotions. Authors suggest various labels for these categories, emphasizing slightly different contrasts. The 'expressive' function (Jakobson, 1960, p. 354; Leech, 1974, pp. 10–27) is alternatively called 'emotive', 'affective' (Lyons, 1977), contrasting with denotational, descriptive, social components of language (Lyons, 1977), or other functions such as referential, metalingual, poetic, phatic, conative (Jakobson, 1960), informative, directive, aesthetic (Leech, 1974). Besnier (1990) provides a review of such partitions. Potts (2005, 2007) suggests criteria defining 'expressive' language. Expressive features include non-referential and/or suprasegmental devices (prosody, morphology, contrastive syntactic constructions). Their input is usually less accessible to speakers' metalinguistic awareness and to their control. As pointed out by Besnier (1990, p. 422), the expressive dimension pervades every aspect of language. Any utterance is endowed with some expressive impact, since suprasegmental features always convey additional messages.

Descriptive tools, on the other hand, consist essentially of referential devices, namely lexical resources. In contrast with expressive features, the use of lexical tools is relatively locatable and may be delineated with some precision. The (relatively) discrete nature of lexical descriptions of emotions makes them more amenable to both speakers' awareness and control, as well as to systematic study and analysis by the linguist, than expressive resources (Besnier, 1990; Majid, 2012a, p. 435). But for the same

reasons, descriptive resources are also less spontaneous, and therefore less pervasive, than expressive resources – at least in Dalabon. This results in a paradox, namely that the most studied aspect of emotional language is relatively marginal in actual speech.

While Dalabon has a well-developed emotional lexicon, lexical resources seem to be used mostly in relatively formal – and thus, less emotional – speech. The data suggest that expressive features are prominent in ordinary speech. When I was able to record spontaneous emotional speech, expressive resources immediately became overwhelmingly frequent and central in conveying emotions. In addition, it will be shown in Chapter 4 that expressive resources sanction socially central emotional categories, which are not particularly well-catered for by the lexicon. As a result, it seems logical to give them a prominent position in this study. This does not, however, undermine the relevance of lexical studies. Since emotion words delineate emotional concepts, describing the emotional lexicon represents an important step towards understanding emotional resources in a given language. Therefore, lexical studies are at least important components, if not preliminary components (Wierzbicka, 1999, p. 28), in such studies.

Both expressive and descriptive resources are considered in this work. Chapter 4 is entirely dedicated to expressive features, and the analysis of the lexicon extends over all the following chapters. Since expressive features are in fact prominent in spontaneous emotional speech, they might have deserved more space. However, there are obstacles to the study of expressive features. An initial problem is data collection. As I explain in Chapter 2 (4.1), Dalabon speakers treat emotions as a ‘private’ topic, so that recording spontaneous, authentically emotional speech was difficult. While I did manage to get enough for an initial study, my data remain somewhat fragmentary in this respect. Through conversations with colleagues working on other Australian languages, I have come to the conclusion that the obstacles to the collection of spontaneous emotional speech in Dalabon apply in most Australian contexts (if not further). Indeed, there seems to exist no published study or significant material on expressive emotional features in Australian languages. This made it harder to articulate a well-developed analysis on this topic – due to the lack of comparative material etc. Cross-linguistic studies of emotive interjections or emotional prosodic patterns exist (see Chapter 4), but remain rare and often isolated. What I provide in Chapter 4 is thus an initial contribution to the understanding of expressive emotional resources in Australian languages. It is hoped that this description can serve as a base for comparison in the future.

Developing an analysis of the lexicon was easier. While collecting lexical data on emotions words is also difficult, it remains more controllable (elicitation, while slippery, is at least possible). In addition, here my own analyses can lean against a large corpus of existing works and ongoing arguments, fed by relatively large amounts of cross-linguistic data.