

***Schalter, šapka, šaška* – Coactivation in the bilingual lexicon of Russian heritage speakers and methodological problems of its investigation**

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We present a research project on the mental lexicon of Russian-German bilinguals that uses eye tracking and the visual world paradigm as a method for the investigation of interlingual lexical competition. Marian & Spivey (2003) suggest that bilingual speakers, when processing lexical items in one of their languages, activate phonetically overlapping words of their other language – be it L1 or late L2 – as well. Our study extends their method to the investigation of Russian as a heritage language: we plan to test the hypothesis that the strength of coactivation depends on the degree of completeness of language acquisition and first language attrition, respectively.

However, in our talk we will not present results of the main study, but will discuss the problems we had in preparing the test materials, and share our ways to deal with these problems. On the one hand, they arise due to specifics of the Russian language and the differences between the Russian and the German phonological and phonetic systems. On the other hand, they result from the not very advanced preparation of Russian for psycholinguistic purposes: At the moment, databases of standardized picture naming as well as of phonetic neighborhood are missing, and the frequency information at our disposal seriously differs from that available for German. To cope with these problems, we conducted pre-tests, the results of which we will discuss in some detail.

Reference:

Marian, V. & M. Spivey 2003. Bilingual and monolingual processing of competing lexical items, in: Applied Psycholinguistics 24, 173-193