Title: The Dynamics of Bilingual Mental Lexicon: The Effects of Partial Conceptual Equivalence on Acquisition of Russian as an L2

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It has been shown that cross-linguistic variations between languages (e.g., in the encoding of emotions and color) affect categorical perception in bilinguals. However, only a few cross-linguistic differences and their effect on conceptual storage and representation in bilingual mental lexicon have been addressed. Moreover, even fewer studies have examined the acquisition of L2 concepts that partially overlap with one or more categories, despite the strong belief that partial conceptual (non-)equivalence creates acquisition issues for L2 learners. Up to now, acculturation has been shown to be the strongest facilitator for acquisition of partial conceptual equivalents and non-equivalents.

The present study has been motivated by the striking difference in how Russian and English employ age-related terms used to refer to females. When it comes to categorizing females of differing ages, English differentiates between *girls* and *women*, while Russian differentiates between *devochki* '≈ little girls', *devushki* '≈ young girls', and *zhenschiny* '≈ women'. For this study Russian monolinguals (N=30), English monolinguals (N=30), and Russian learners (N=20) engaged in a free-categorization, Likert-scale task, and a labeling and age-estimation task designed to answer questions about any possible differences in categorical perception, the categorical age boundaries of each female term, and the influence of acculturation and length of language study on successful internalization of a new L2 concept. The monolingual groups demonstrated differences in categorical perception as a result of cross-linguistic lexical differences. Russian L2 learners' performance deviated from the Russian monolingual pattern, suggesting that acquisition of partial conceptual equivalents creates acquisition issues for Russian L2 learners. Extended exposure to the L2 culture did not seem to facilitate successful acquisition of the concept *devushka*. At the same time, length of L2 study appeared to be the only facilitating factor for native-like performance during the tasks, leading the author to argue that explicit L2 instruction is necessary for successful acquisition of Russian female terms.