# Gender representation and processing in Russian-German bilinguals

Oleksandra Gubina & Johannes Gerwien

Institut für Deutsch als Fremdsprachenphilologie

Despite previous studies on gender processing in L2 comprehension (cf. Paris & Weber 2004, Lemhöfer et al. 2008, Hopp 2013), the question of how gender is represented and processed online in bilinguals whose L1 and L2 both have a similar gender system have not received a definite answer. We ask, do nouns in both languages share the same abstract gender nodes?

To answer this, we presented fifteen advanced to near-native adult L1 Russian speakers of L2 German (critical group) and 15 native speakers of German (control group) with visual stimuli, each of which showed three different objects. In all trials, all participants heard a German sentence fragment (e.g., "dieser[DET-MASCULINE] schwarze[ADJ] Computer[NOUN-MASCULINE]" 'that black computer'), which, according to the instructions, cued them to click on the object whose name was mentioned (target). In the critical condition, the stimuli were constructed in such a way that the name of one of the two non-target objects in the L2ers L1 (Russian) was congruent with the gender information encoded in the determiner (gender-congruent L1 competitor). The third object's name was not gender-congruent in neither language (distractor). In the control condition, neither of the two non-target objects were gender-congruent with the determiner (see Fig. 1).

Results from the control condition show that L1ers and L2ers clearly anticipate targets, which suggests that all participants were able to match gender information derived from the determiner with gender information associated with the object names. However, in the critical condition, L2ers showed significantly more attention to gender-congruent competitors before target onset than L1ers (see Fig. 2). Taken together, these results suggest that in advanced to near-native L2ers, whose L1 has a similar gender system as their L2, gender is represented by shared abstract gender nodes, which can be activated from one language to the other.
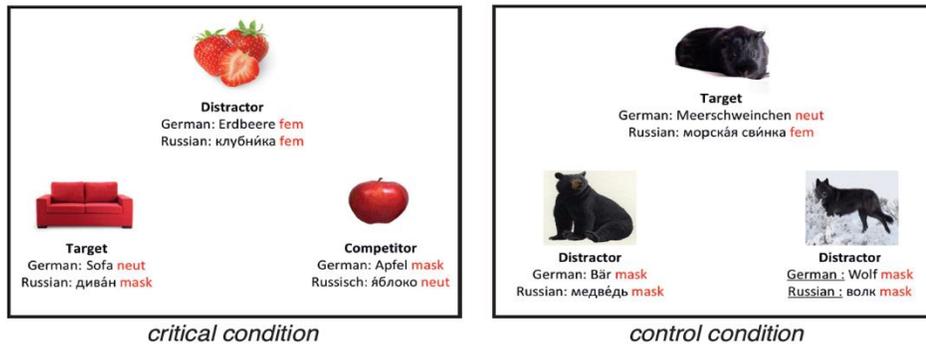
# Figures



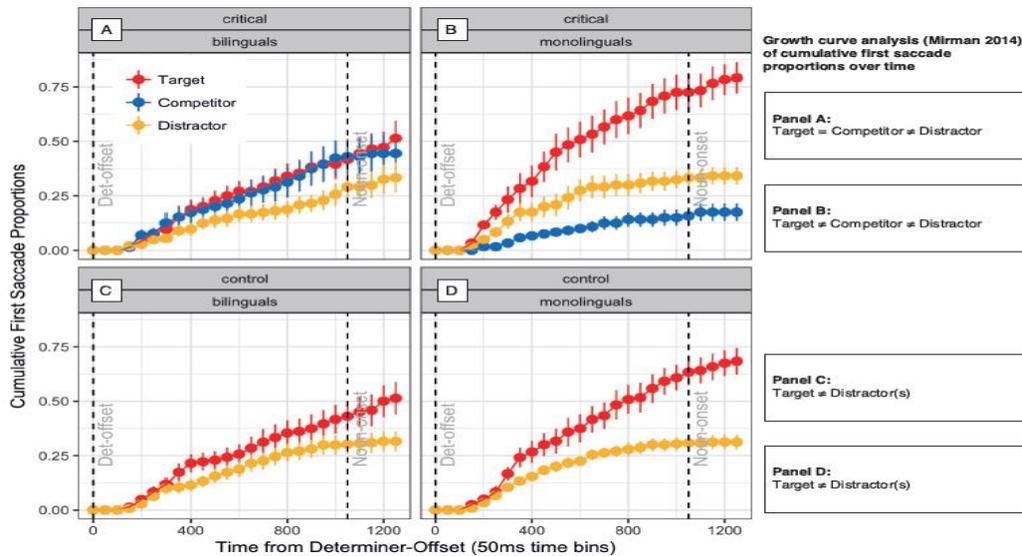**Figure 1.** *Example stimuli for both conditions*



**Figure 2.** *AOIs within groups over conditions*

## References

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