

Ph.D. Program in Speech-Language- Hearing Sciences

COLLOQUIUM

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4:15 P.M. – Room 7102

“Processing of contrastiveness by heritage Russian- English bilinguals”

Abstract: "Two eyetracking experiments are reported that investigate the nature of language processing mechanism of heritage Russian-English bilingual speakers by looking at how they comprehend contrastive constituents in Russian.

Experiment 1 investigated how monolingual Russian listeners process color adjective-noun phrases that require a rapid integration of multiple sources of information, i.e., word order, prosody, and visual context. Participants listened to either a regular instruction *Krasnuju zvezdočku položite v Poziciju 4* 'The red star put in Position 4' or to a split constituent construction *Krasnuju položite zvezdočku v Poziciju 4* to move objects on a board while their eye movements were recorded using the visual-world paradigm.

Experiment 2 was conducted with bilingual heritage language Russian participants. The results showed that while monolinguals used word order and visual context (but not contrastive prosody) to compute the contrast set before the noun appeared in speech, bilinguals were very slow and adopted the 'wait-and-see' strategy, taking advantage of multiple sources of information only after the noun was processed.

These findings point in the direction of generalized slowing hypothesis (Kail, 1994) and reveal bilinguals' lack of confidence in processing of their heritage language indicative of early stages of language loss."