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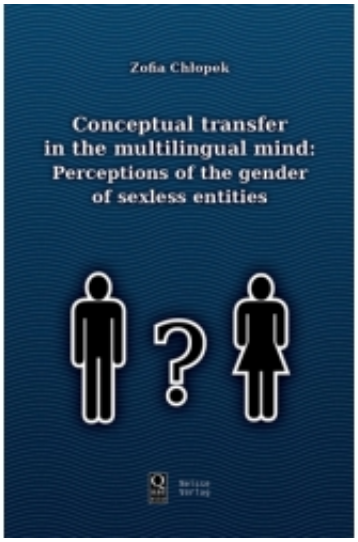

Conceptual Transfer in the Multilingual Mind

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There is a lot of evidence coming from the research done with monolinguals and bi-/multilinguals that the language we use influences our mental representations of the world. The present study takes linguistic relativity as its starting point and investigates it in the context of trilingualism. In particular, it deals with the phenomenon of conceptual transfer, understood as the activation of non-target-language-specific conceptual representations while using a target language. The conceptual domain in question is the perceptions of the gender of sexless entities. The results of the research study indicate that the mother tongue is the language which shapes our conceptual gender categories to some extent; these categories are activated even when a fluent foreign language is currently used.