

Culture and Cognition 2

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The Purpose and Background of Symposium

Many of the cognitive psychologists have assumed that human mind is universal, and have inferred that, even if they observe cultural differences, they are the consequences of different cultural stimuli. However, some social psychologists have demonstrated cultural differences in cognition (e.g., Nisbett, Peng, Choi, & Norenzayan, 2001). They abandon the universality view and proposed an interactive view that mind and culture are shaped interactively. Their idea is inspired by the situational view of cognition.

Some recent researches are on the comparison of cognition between Westerners and Easterners. Nisbett et al. (2001) summarized the previous cross-cultural studies covering a large range of attention, causal attribution, and inference, and claim that Easterners are likely to use holistic thought to solve problems, whereas Westerners use analytic thought more. Further they gave an explanation on the cultural differences using the distinction between individualist culture (Westerners) and collectivist culture (Easterners). Analytic cognition is adaptive in individualist culture, whereas holistic cognition is adaptive in collectivist culture. According to them, analytic cognition involves detachment of the object from its context, a tendency to focus on attributes of the object to assign it to categories, and a preference for using rules about the categories to explain and predict the object's behavior. On the other hand, holistic cognition has an orientation to the context of the field as a whole, attention to relationships between a focal object and the field, and a preference for explaining and predicting events on the basis of such relationships.

Recently, culture is also a big interest among cognitive psychologists who are tackling with the issue of rationality. They assume that people are rational both in adaptation in a culture and in constructing a culture. However, although some social psychologists use cognitive tasks, their terminology and concepts are sometimes different from those of cognitive psychologists'. For example, the distinction between analytic and holistic is also important for dual-process theories (Stanovich, 2004), and this dimension is connected to the distinction between explicit and implicit. But the latter distinction have not so discussed. Secondly, it is expected that the theory of mental models or relevance can be applied to explain the cultural differences in thought. On the other hand, although cognitive psychologists consider rationality, the analysis of relationship between culture and

cognition is not yet done enough. Cognition includes not only its goals but also goals with sense of value in a culture.

As a first step for this, I tried to describe the mechanism of hindsight bias. Choi and Nisbett (2000) demonstrated that hindsight bias was stronger in Koreans than in Americans, and they explained that it was because Koreans had more complex models on human behavior. Yama, Manktelow, Mercier, Van der Henst, Kawasaki, and Adachi (2006) described the 'complex models' in terms of SuperP which is a superordinate principle that is related to the stated-*p* in a conditional.

We feel a strong need to fill the gap between cognitive psychologists and social psychologists. In this symposium, we do not have resolution of the issues above, but expect to do so in the very near future. Therefore, this symposium is organized as the first step for the resolution. Three speakers are invited and each of them is to talk on cross-cultural studies between Westerners and Easterners. J-B. Van der Henst is to talk from a view of cognitive psychology, whereas T. Masuda and T. Hamamura are to talk from a view of social psychology.

The first speaker, Van der Henst, is to talk on belief revision process of French and Japanese participants. Masuda is to talk on attentional regulation, and to argue that East Asians are more likely than Westerners to be sensitive to the contextual information. Finally, Hamamura is to talk on regulatory focus of Japanese and of European-Canadians. He found that Japanese performed better on a task if they were rewarded for not losing points, whereas European-Canadians performed better when they were rewarded for winning points.

References

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