

Learning Outcome:

Discuss how social or cultural factors affect one cognitive process.

The Role of Schooling on Memory (Cole and Scribner, 1974)

Key Terms:

Chunking: memory strategy of grouping bits of information into larger units

Narrative: objects presented in a meaningful way as part of a story death/after the fact

Aim: To investigate how different memory strategies are influenced by culture.

Procedure

1. For the respective cultures of children from the United States and rural Liberia, a list of things that would be familiar to them such as utensils, clothing, food, and tools was used and split into four categories.
2. Then, they were shown a list and asked to remember as many as possible in any order.
3. They were given the words as part of a narrative and then repeated for number of trials

Results

- Illiterate Kpelle children above age 10 did not improve like the American children did on the list
- Illiterate Kpelle children remembered around 10 items on the first trial
- After 15 trials, the illiterate Kpelle only remembered 2 more words
- Educated children from both countries used methods such as chunking to help recall list
- When presented as a story, the uneducated children had similar results to American children

Conclusions:

- Education and environment affects the cognition of memory

Application:

- Highlights importance and benefits of education
- Brings to attention the possibility of teaching different cultures using different teaching methods
- Providing insight on how learning memory strategies are dependent on schooling
- Cognitive skills are dependent on the environment. This environment is made up of education, social interaction, technology, and culture

Strengths:

- High ecological validity
- Can establish cause-effect relationship
- High cross-cultural validity

Limitations:

- Some participants could have guessed results
- Low replicability

Connection of Study with Learning Outcome:

- This study supports that culture affects memory.
 - The Kpelle children performed just as well as their US counterparts in a culturally-familiar memory task, but not on a free recall task.
 - This is because the free-recall task that Cole and his colleagues originally used to assess memory among Liberian tribal people has no precise analogy in traditional Liberian cultures, so it is not surprising that the corresponding way of remembering would not be acquired.
- Cognitive skills (memory) are dependent on the environment – which is made up of education, social interaction, technology and in this case, culture.
- Therefore, culture influences schemas, and thus our memory ability/ability to recall and have advantageous effects if asked to do a task associated with your culture.