Shifts and Constancies in Rorschach Responses as a Function of Culture and Language

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Abstract: This study examined the relationship between Korean and American cultures and languages on Rorschach responses. The Rorschach Inkbolt Test was individually administered to 20 Korean monolinguals, 20 American monolinguals, 20 Korean bilingual immigrants, and 10 American bilingual missionaries returned from Korea. The bilingual subjects took the test in Korean and in English. The results showed some shifts as well as some constancies in Rorschach responses as a function of culture. The results on the effect of language on Rorschach responses were less clear.

The role of culture and language in the cognitive processes of individuals has been a source of speculation. Some have held that the form of a particular language strongly influences the shape and form of perceptions (Brown & Lennenberg, 1954; Lennenberg, 1961; Carroll & Casagrande, 1958). A contrasting view is that the genetic tendencies and environments of different groups create tendencies to different perceptions and particular language structures. There is no convincing evidence to completely justify either position (Fishman, 1960; Hockett, 1954; Pen, 1972).

The differential effects of language and culture on perception can be explored in the responses of bilinguals: compound and coordinate types. The compound bilingual has learned both languages in a common cultural setting whereas the coordinate bilingual has learned the language in two different settings. The compound bilingual has two different language systems but may function primarily within a single perceptual framework. The coordinate bilingual has two different languages and may function in two different perceptual frameworks that are related primarily to the languages with which they are associated.

Two studies that have used coordinate bilinguals to explore the influence of language upon perceptions and cognition have been conducted by Ervin (1964) and Fanibanda (1976). These studies support the conclusion that there are differences in cognition as a function of the language employed. Both of these studies lacked monolingual comparison groups which might have been helpful in showing whether the perceptions associated with one language group would be similar in mono and bilingual subjects.

In addition to noting the effect of language on perception, it would be helpful to determine the additional effects of acculturation. There are suggestions that acculturation produces modifications in perceptions (Abel & Hsu, 1949; Caudill, 1952; Devos, 1955; Kaplan, 1956; Park & Gallimore, 1975; Ramirez, Castaneda, & Lherold, 1974).

The Rorschach Test has been an instrument used in part to study perceptions in a variety of different cultures. There is support in the literature for the view that Rorschach perceptions vary in markedly different cultures (Abel & Hsu, 1949; Cook, 1942; Hallowell, 1941a, 1941b, 1945; Leighton & Kluckhohn, 1947; Macgregor, 1946; Oberholzer, 1944; Richard, 1954; Siegman, 1956). The cultures studied in much of the research are native cultures that are changing rapidly and the results cannot be generalized to more modern cultural groups. There are problems as well associated with the test administration which may have confounded the results.

Studies are needed to clarify the differential roles of language and culture and acculturation on perceptions. The Rorschach test is ideally suited to study perceptions between different language
and cultural groups. In order to test the differential effects of language, acculturation, and culture upon perceptions, monolingual and bilingual students from Korea and the United States were checked for differences in Rorschach responses.

Method

Subjects

The study utilized volunteers composed of two monolingual and two bilingual groups. Twenty native students from several different universities in Seoul, Korea, served as one of the monolingual groups. The other monolingual group consisted of 20 native American students attending Brigham Young University.

One group of bilingual subjects consisted of 20 Korean-English-speaking students from three different colleges in the Philadelphia metropolitan area. All were immigrants who had lived in the U.S. for five or more years. Their average stay in the U.S. was 6 years and 7 months.

The other bilingual group consisted of 10 missionaries for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormon), who had served a mission in Korea for 2 years. At the time of this study, the subjects in this group were all teachers at the Missionary Training Center (where new missionaries begin to learn a foreign language), teaching Korean.

The American bilingual group was not strictly comparable to the Korean bilingual group. First, their stay in Korea was for 2 years, while the average Korean stay in the U.S. was almost 7 years. Second, the Koreans were immigrants to the U.S., while the missionaries were in a sense only “visitors” to Korea. Most important, Koreans were more fluent in their second language than the missionaries were in theirs. Due to the limited number of Americans who speak Korean, it was not possible to recruit subjects who were more proficient in Korean. All the subjects in the study were male and were about the same age. Their average age was 22.6 years.

Test Materials

The Language Proficiency Test. The Oral Language Proficiency Test developed by the Foreign Service Institute (FSI) was used to determine the bilingual subject’s relative skill in the Korean and English languages. The test has six levels of proficiency, ranging from “0” to “5.” The rating of “0” indicates that the individual cannot perform at all in the language, while the rating of “5” signifies that the individual performs at the level of a skilled native speaker.

The American bilinguals received a score of 2 to 2+. This means that the individual has adequate vocabulary for simple conversation, has fair control of most basic syntactic patterns, has understanding of nontechnical speech directed at him, and is usually hesitant in speech.

The Korean bilinguals scored 3+ to 4. At these levels, the individual is able to speak the language with basic structural accuracy and has a vocabulary sufficient to participate effectively in most formal and informal conversations on practical, social, and professional levels.

The Rorschach Inkblot test. Scores and derivations on the Rorschach Test were the dependent variables. Exner’s system was used for scoring; 16 Rorschach variables were submitted to statistical tests. The variables include: Lambda, Affective-ratio (Afr.), M, FC, CF+C, ΣC, R, W, D, Dd, FM, F+%, X+%%, A%, H, and Rejection (Rej.).

Translation

The test protocols in Korean were translated into English by a Korean-English bilingual who lived in Korea until she was 35 and has been a physician in the U.S. for 20 years. She speaks both languages fluently. She also translated the test instructions for the Korean sessions.

Statistical Analysis

A one-way analysis of variance was first performed between the responses of the American and Korean bilinguals.
Table 1
Means and Significant $F$ Ratios for 16 Rorschach Scores on Korean and American Monolinguals and Bilinguals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exner Rorschach Score</th>
<th>Monolinguals</th>
<th>Means and $F$</th>
<th>Bilinguals</th>
<th>Means and $F$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Korean $n = 20$</td>
<td>American $n = 20$</td>
<td>$F$</td>
<td>Korean $n = 20$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$R$</td>
<td>13.65</td>
<td>18.15</td>
<td>5.38*</td>
<td>20.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$Rej$</td>
<td>.64</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>7.13*</td>
<td>.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$W$</td>
<td>5.50</td>
<td>8.00</td>
<td>9.15**</td>
<td>7.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$D$</td>
<td>6.80</td>
<td>8.30</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>11.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$Dd$</td>
<td>1.60</td>
<td>1.90</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>2.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$FM$</td>
<td>1.35</td>
<td>2.65</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>2.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$M$</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>2.35</td>
<td>6.20*</td>
<td>2.55</td>
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<tr>
<td>$FC$</td>
<td>.65</td>
<td>.35</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$CF + C$</td>
<td>1.85</td>
<td>1.60</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>1.35</td>
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<tr>
<td>$\Sigma C$</td>
<td>2.40</td>
<td>1.78</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>1.80</td>
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<tr>
<td>$H$</td>
<td>2.01</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>13.83**</td>
<td>4.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$A$</td>
<td>47.96</td>
<td>47.05</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>49.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$F + %$</td>
<td>52.60</td>
<td>62.80</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>62.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$X + %$</td>
<td>53.45</td>
<td>68.70</td>
<td>7.92**</td>
<td>64.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$Afr$</td>
<td>.69</td>
<td>.49</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\Lambda$</td>
<td>2.04</td>
<td>1.39</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>1.70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* $p < .05$.
** $p < .01$.

Subsequently, $F$ tests were calculated between these two groups for the 16 Rorschach scores previously described. A 2X2 analysis of variance (nationality and language) was performed on the responses of the bilingual subjects. Subsequent sequential $F$s were performed on the same 16 scores.

Other group comparisons based on the order in which the tests were taken and on other language and group comparisons were also performed. They did not reveal significant data and are not reported.

Procedure

All the sessions with the subjects involved individual administration of the Rorschach Inkbland test. Instructions used were from Exner’s comprehensive system. These instructions were translated into Korean for the Korean sessions. The tests were administered by two female examiners. One examiner conducted all the sessions for the two bilingual groups and the American monolingual group. The Korean monolingual group was tested by a psychiatrist trained to administer the Rorschach using the Exner system. The psychiatrist spoke fluent Korean.

Bilingual subjects took the Rorschach test twice, one session in Korean and another session in English, with a 4-week interval in between sessions. The order of language in which the subjects took the test was counterbalanced.

Results

The one-way analysis of variance between the two monolingual groups yielded a statistically significant difference, $F(16,38) = 3.65, p < .01$. The 2X2 analysis of variance between the American bilinguals and Korean bilinguals also yielded a significant effect between the two groups for nationality,
$F(16, 22) = 3.42, p < .01$, but did not show significant $F$-s for language or significant interactions between language and nationality. Although the bilingual analysis was done on the tests taken in each language, combined language means are reported in order to make the reader more able to make cultural comparisons.

Subsequent $F$s showed the two monolingual groups to be significantly different on six scores: $R$, $Rej$, $W$, $M$, $H$, and $X+\%$. The bilingual groups had significantly different $F$s on five scores: $W$, $FC$, $Cf+\%$, $SC$, and $\Lambda$. The means and significant $F$s are found in Table 1.

The fact that 10 of the 16 scores between the two monolingual groups and 11 of the 16 scores between the two bilingual groups did not show significant differences between the groups may in some respects be more important than the significant differences. Those who use the scores on minority populations, particularly Asian, may take particular note of these data.

**Discussion**

As the results have shown, there were both significant differences and constancies in Rorschach responses between the Korean natives and the American natives. The Korean natives appeared less likely to integrate percepts (fewer $Ws$), and their percepts were less differentiated than those of Americans (lower $F+\%$ and $X+\%$). Constriction (fewer $Fs$) and blocking of association (more $Rej.$) also seemed to characterize Korean natives along with significantly fewer human percepts. In various ways, these findings are consistent with the Korean culture. Typically, Korean society is much more restrictive and controlled than the American society, and the Korean natives' behaviors are to a large extent governed by complex social proprieties. Deviations in behaviors are not well tolerated. Consequently, it is not surprising to observe manifestations of constriction and blocking of association among Korean natives.

In their analyses of Chinese person-
ceptible to change as a function of acculturation. It also appears that acculturation and not language was the significant factor that affected Rorschach perceptions. The idea of compound and coordinate bilinguals (Ervin & Osgood, 1954) does not seem advanced by the results of this study. Some perceptions appear affected by culture and acculturation, but language appears to be a less important or perhaps a more sensitive dimension.

It does appear that the Rorschach test will yield some differences in perceptions as a result of culture. The magnitude of the differences appear less in this study than in those earlier studies that used native cultures. However, in the main, it appears that the Rorschach test is perceived in many similar ways by individuals in Korean and American cultures and that the initial differences are reduced by acculturation.

References


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