Can the Task-facilitation Paradigm Distinguish between Self-reference Tasks?: Comments on Dr.Okada's Paper

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Can the task-facilitation paradigm distinguish between self-reference tasks? I found that this is the most important question to be asked in Dr. Okada's paper. My comments on his paper are therefore focused on this question.

My first criticism is concerned with the logic of the task-facilitation paradigm. In the task-facilitation paradigm, same task condition and different task condition are employed and the same information is processed successively in the initial and target tasks. In the same task condition, the initial and target tasks can contain common processing phases, since the subjects are required to do the same task in the initial and target tasks, while, in the different task condition, the initial and target task can not contain common processing phases, since the subjects are required to do different tasks in the initial and target tasks.

Klein et al. (1989) distinguished self-descriptiveness task and autobiographical task using this task-facilitation paradigm. They assumed that if these two tasks contain common processing phases, the rating time (RT) of the target task would be shorter than that of the initial task in both the same and different task conditions.

Dr. Okada accepted this assumption and tried to distinguish between self-descriptiveness task and autobiographical task (Experiment 1) and between self-descriptiveness task and like-dislike rating task. The necessary premise for the validity of this paradigm is, of course, the assumption that the processing phases are reflected by RT data. I agree that RT is an important measure to be taken into consideration in memory research. It seems to me, however, that the RT might be influenced by random variation or other extraneous variables. Therefore, it seems necessary to test the validity of this paradigm more closely under a variety of conditions. Especially, the relation between the two tasks should be examined systematically by comparing RT per item, because the relation between the two tasks might be reflected by the correlation between RTs in the two tasks.

My second criticism is concerned with the measures employed in Dr.Okada's experiment. It seems to me that the rating data as well as the RT data should be taken into consideration to test the validity of task-facilitation paradigm.

Keenan and Baillet (1980) attempted to examine how people process self-relevant information. In their experiment, the subjects responded to a series of questions. One set of questions asked whether a personality characteristic was appropriate for a particular person. The people named in the experiment ranged from yourself to Jimmy Carter (who was a president at the time of the experiment). The major findings of their experiment were that the subjects were far quicker than in responding to the questions when they were self-referring than in other condition. In addition, the subjects recognized many more of the words when they were judged to refer to them. Considering these findings, it should be nacessary to analyse the rating data in the initial and target tasks.

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