



Culture: Learning & Cognition

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Culture, learning & cognition



Worked Example

Here is an example of a **Paper 3 source** and 6–mark SAQ using **culture** (HL extension) in the **Learning & Cognition** context:

Source 3

Here are the results of [Bartlett's War of the Ghosts \(1932\) study](#):

Results: Bartlett found that the resulting stories bore **little similarity** to the original Native American folk tale. The changes made by the participants included:

- **Omission:** Key details of the story were **ignored or missed out**, particularly unfamiliar or unpleasant details such as a contorted face or black coming out of a mouth. Participants even omitted the key idea that ghosts were fighting, which is surprising as this is the title of the story. Ghosts were soon **dropped** from the retelling of the story, as they do not fit with the way that adult males see the world, particularly in relation to war; details such as a contorted face were omitted, as they may have caused unpleasant memories.
- **Assimilation and sharpening:** Story details were changed to suit the participants' own cultural schemas; e.g., 'canoes' became 'boats', and 'paddling' became 'rowing'. Details such as the spirit wound were **reinterpreted** as a flesh wound, with words such as 'therefore' and 'because' inserted to explain the events.
- **Levelling:** The story became **shorter** – the original story was approximately 350 words and the participants' version was around 180 words.

Q3: Discuss how the researcher could improve the credibility of the findings in this source.

[6 marks]

Model answer:

The researcher could improve the credibility of this research in several ways, one of which is the use of triangulation. Bartlett could use triangulation of method by implementing additional ways of collecting data, e.g., via a questionnaire; research triangulation by asking other experts to look over his procedure and/or join him in collecting and analysing the data.

The use of reflexivity (acknowledging his own biases and preconceived ideas) would be a good way of keeping subjectivity in check. Using an audit trail would also help to improve credibility, as it ensures that precise records are kept of all research decisions, data collection methods, and analytical steps taken throughout the research life cycle.

Guidance

- The command term “Discuss” requires you to offer a considered review, acknowledging limitations as well as strengths, offering suggestions for improvement, demonstrating insight of the topic
- A discussion of how to improve credibility could include:
 - Checking the findings with participants
 - Using a focus group to validate the research, particularly the findings
 - Ask colleagues/experts to review the findings
 - Using reflexivity
 - Highlighting strengths and limitations of the procedure, sample, etc.



Your notes



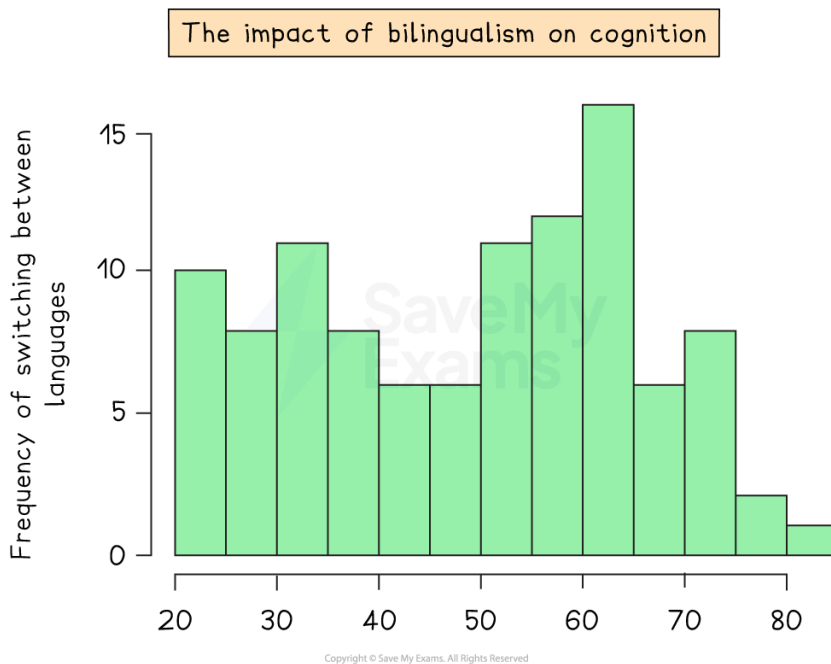
Bilingualism & culture



Worked Example

Here is an example of a **Paper 3 source** and 3–mark SAQ using **culture** (HL extension) in the **Learning & Cognition** context:

Source 1:



Q1. Explain **one** limitation linked to the interpretation of the data in this source.

[3 marks]

Model answer:

A histogram shows continuous data, which means that they cannot show individual data points so it is unclear as to whether the data is based on much language switching from a few participants or an even distribution of switching between participants.

or

The histogram only shows the distribution of a single variable, not the relationship between two or more variables. This means that the frequency of language switching

may not simply be a product of age but of other factors such as education level, personality variables, bilingualism within the family, etc.

Guidance

- Use only the information provided by the graph/chart: do not 'invent' data or make assumptions as to what may be behind the data, e.g., why bilingualism appears to impact 50–60 year-olds the most
- Do not write too much – there are only 3 marks available for this question and you need time to complete the higher-value questions on this paper
- The question is asking for one limitation so don't provide two or more, as you will not be rewarded for this
- The question is asking for what limits interpretation of the data so don't waste time/marks by stating any advantages/strengths



Your notes



Learning across cultures



Worked Example

Here is an example of a **Paper 3 source** and 15–mark ERQ using **culture** (HL extension) in the **Learning & Cognition** context:

Source 5:

Here is a classic study of cross-cultural differences in learning, conducted by Cole & Scribner (1974)

Aim: To investigate the memory strategies used by American children and Liberian children.

Participants:

- Children from the Kpelle tribe in Liberia (some attended school and some had never attended school)
- Children from the USA who attended school

Procedure:

- The unschooled Kpelle children were shown a list of everyday items that would be culturally familiar to them (e.g., coconut, calabash)
- The schooled Kpelle children and the US children were shown a list of words
- Each participant was asked to free-recall what they had been shown

Results:

- The schooled Kpelle children performed equally as well as the US children
- The US and Liberian children both used 'chunking' as a memory strategy
- The unschooled Kpelle children did not perform as well on free recall of items but when they were asked to weave the items they had seen into a narrative/story, they performed to the same level as the other two groups

Conclusion: Strategies used to cue memory recall may vary across cultures.

Q4: To what extent can we **conclude** that learning is culture-dependent? In your answer, use your **own knowledge** and **at least three** of **sources 2–5**.

[15 marks]

Model answer:

(Here are two paragraphs which could appear as part of a longer response to this question).

Memory recall may be culture-dependent, as outlined in the source. When children are schooled, the research found that both Kpelle and American children performed equally. This may be a result of standardised methods of recall used in formal educational settings, e.g., chunking. The finding that the unschooled Kpelle children



only performed well on free recall when they were asked to weave the items into a narrative offers evidence that recall may be culture-dependent outside of formal school settings (as also seen in Bartlett's War of the Ghosts study, where a culturally unfamiliar story showed flawed recall by English participants).

To properly understand and appreciate the cultural dimension of memory, it would be advisable to take an emic approach to research so that the findings do not suffer from an imposed etic. Attempting to apply a single cultural perspective when comparing cultures misses the point of such research, which is to highlight differences that demonstrate truths about specific cultures rather than the assumption that all behaviour is universal.

Guidance

- The command term "To what extent" requires you to express a view/judgement on the merit, validity, or success of an argument or concept, supported by relevant evidence
- Weigh up the relative merits of the claim
 - What is there in this (and other) source(s) that could be used to back up this argument?
 - Do you know of any research or examples which could be used to validate the idea that culture is key to recall?
 - Consider the difficulties facing researchers who are not familiar with different cultures
 - What are the implications for educating and training researchers to understand and appreciate different cultural perspectives?
 - Make sure that your argument is informed by the sources and that it draws from the relevant topics featured in this context
 - Include concepts (e.g., causality, bias) to inform your critical thinking and discussion of the source(s) as well as any real-world or anecdotal examples you are aware of