

# Beyond East and West: Cognitive Preferences in English, Chinese and Japanese Event Description

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## Abstract

This study challenges traditional East-West dichotomies in cross-linguistic cognition by examining event construal preferences across English, Chinese, and Japanese speakers. We investigated how 90 participants (30 per language group) described visual stimuli depicting agent-patient interactions with varying animacy types. Statistical analysis revealed that Chinese speakers' construal patterns aligned with English speakers ( $p > .05$ ), contrasting sharply with Japanese speakers despite China's cultural proximity to Japan. Both English and Chinese groups demonstrated greater flexibility in perspective-taking across all agent types (human > animal > object), while Japanese speakers showed significantly stronger constraints with inanimate agents ( $p < .0001$ ). These findings suggest that grammatical flexibility in encoding perspectives, rather than cultural grouping, shapes cognitive preferences in event description. Our results indicate that linguistic structures may influence cognition independently of cultural boundaries, revealing a more complex relationship among language structure, cognitive preferences, and traditional cultural categorizations than previously assumed.