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Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society

Title

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Permalink

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Journal

Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society, 40(0)

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Publication Date

2018

Commonality search between unrelated objects for retrieving original knowledge

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Abstract

Memory retrieval is the basis of idea generation. We hypothesized that people retrieve more original knowledge by searching for a commonality between unrelated objects than by thinking about an object itself. Seventy-seven undergraduates from Nagoya University were assigned to one of three conditions: a commonality search and either of two control conditions. In the first session, the participants in the commonality search condition listed a feature shared by a pair of words presented; those in the control conditions listed a feature associated with a word presented. In the second session, all participants were asked to list the words associated with the features they identified in the previous session. Results showed that the features and the words listed in the commonality search condition were more original than those in either control condition. We concluded that the method we proposed is effective in retrieving original knowledge for idea generation.