

CULTURAL NEUROPSYCHOLOGY IN XXI CENTURY: ROOTS , NEW BRANCHES AND CHALLENGES

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In our discussion of the roots of contemporary cultural neuropsychology, we will focus on the main aspects of the concept of higher mental functions that is the foundation of A.R. Luria's Systemic-Dynamic approach. Higher mental functions are social in origin and complex and hierarchical in their structure, and they all are based on a complex system of methods and means both external and internalized. The role of external factors (stimulus-mediators, symbols) in establishing functional connections between various brain systems is, in principle, universal.

However, different mediators and means, or significantly different details within them (e.g. the specific writing system, the strategies employed in spatial orientation, etc.), may, and in fact, do develop in different cultures. The cultural environment almost everywhere in the world has changed dramatically over the last century, bringing into being new media of communication and new means of utilizing these media. These developments must be taken into account in our analysis of brain development and the organization of cognitive functions, particularly in view of the plasticity of the brain, and most particularly in its growing stages. We must be sensitive to possible changes in classical neuropsychological syndromes. A review of recent research confirms the relevance of utilizing the concept of Higher Mental Functions as an analytical concept in the understanding and prediction of how the changing contemporary cultural environment influences brain functions.