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Cultural difference between Japanese and Scottish mother-infant tickling interaction ①

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Aim

Tickling play is naturally observed as 6-month-old face-to-face tactile interaction (Tronick, 1995; Jean, 2009). We examined the development of Japanese infant-mother tickling interaction (Ishijima & Negayama, 2014) and found that infant's intensive ticklishness and mother's tickling with "narrative" occurred more often at 6.5- to 7-month-old than at 5- to 6.5-month-old. Infant's intensive ticklishness was also found more often in the "narrative" context than in a normal context. But little is known about a cultural difference in tickling interaction. The aim of this study is to compare the interaction between Scotland and Japan.

Method

Participants

11 Japanese and 9 Scottish healthy mother-infant (6 months old) pairs.

Procedure & Data Recording

They were recruited at local nursery schools in Japan and through word of mouth, parent groups, and nurseries in Scotland.

Natural 15-minute mother-infant tactile play including tickling was observed. Mothers were instructed to tickle their infants freely at least once during the tactile play.

All mother-infant tickling-play episodes (43 and 45 in Japan and Scotland, respectively) were chosen for analysis. Mother's normal and narrative tickling behaviors and their tickling body parts, infant's strong ticklish and other reactions, and infant's eye gaze directions were coded.

Results & Discussion

Scottish mothers tickled their infants using "mouth" more often than Japanese mothers ($\chi^2=9.813$, $df=1$, $p<.01$; Figure1). The same tendency in Scottish mothers to use mouth in tactile play was reported by Negayama (2006). Behavioral cultural difference in infancy was also seen in holding (Negayama et al., submitted). The cultural difference in behavior was thus embedded in everyday-life tactile interactions in infancy and seems to be a precursor of a later difference in social cognition and interaction patterns.

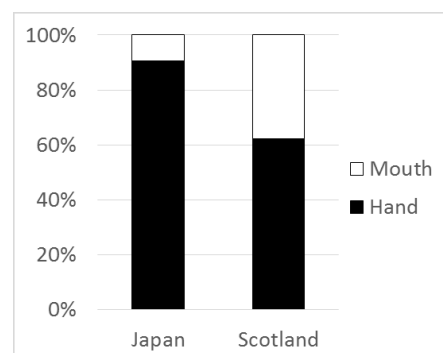


Figure1. Mother's tickling body parts