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Being Smart in a Diverse World

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This article reviews the concept of intelligence from different cultural perspectives and explains why the traditional approach to determining “who is smart” is inappropriate for students from culturally/linguistically diverse backgrounds and inadequate even for determining if mainstream students will be successful in daily living. The concept of successful intelligence is described and related to the components of cultural intelligence that are essential for professionals to function effectively in a diverse world. Strategies for promoting cultural intelligence in students are suggested.

Keywords: *cross-cultural; intelligence; assessment; testing*

All the articles in this issue of *Communication Disorders Quarterly* address concerns related to cultural and linguistic diversity, with particular attention in many articles given to the types of knowledge and skills (or intelligence) professionals need if they are to work successfully with persons from culturally/linguistically diverse backgrounds. Authors discuss emotional intelligence and cultural intelligence (CQ) in addition to the traditional academic knowledge that is part of the education and speech–language pathology fields. This article will review the concept of intelligence from different cultural perspectives, explain why the traditional approach to determining “who is smart” is inappropriate for students from culturally/linguistically diverse backgrounds and inadequate even for determining if mainstream students will be successful in daily living, and elaborate on the importance of CQ for professionals and students.

In mainstream society in the United States, educators and employers frequently ask how smart a student, job applicant, or employee is. Smartness or intelligence is often judged on the basis of a person’s performance on formal tests and evaluations. Schools test children yearly to determine if they are making appropriate progress; if they are not, the frequency of testing increases. Entry into a number of jobs requires some type of skill and knowledge assessment. Employees are regularly evaluated. Speech–language pathologists and special educators use standardized tests to determine if students qualify for additional services—is a student “as smart as” other students on a particular skill or knowledge such as using language, reading, or writing? In educational settings particularly, intelligence is determined almost solely by use of standardized or conventional assessment tools. Educators and speech–language pathologists are

often aware that English-language learners may not have the necessary language to do well on formal assessments, but they may attribute the students’ difficulties to language differences alone. At some point, the decision is made that children have had enough exposure to English so that their first language should not significantly affect their test performance. For many students from diverse backgrounds, however, the language of testing is only one factor influencing their performance. The tests may not assess knowledge and skills that are valued by the children’s cultures, or the ways in which the knowledge and skills are assessed may not be typical of their use in the culture (Sternberg, 2007).

What Is Intelligence?

What is conceived as smart or intelligent may differ in different cultures. Cultural groups using the same language may have different views of what it means to perform intelligently, and cultural groups using different languages may have similar views on what it means to perform intelligently. A study of Kenyan conceptions of intelligence (Grigorenko et al., 2001) found four terms referring to what was perceived as smart: *rieko* (knowledge and skills), *luoro* (respect), *winjo* (comprehension of how to handle real-life problems), and *para* (initiative). Only the first refers to the type of knowledge measured by traditional Western IQ tests. In Zimbabwe, the word for intelligence, *ngware*, means to be prudent and cautious, especially in social relationships (Dasen,

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1984). Even in the United States, there is no one overall conceptualization of what is valued as intelligent behavior. In a study of parents' concepts of intelligence, conducted in San Jose, California, Okagaki and Sternberg (1993) reported that Latino parents of schoolchildren tended to emphasize the importance of social competence; Asian parents heavily emphasized cognitive skills; and Anglo parents emphasized cognitive skills, but not to the degree of Asian parents. Children's school performance could be perfectly predicted by the extent to which their parents shared the teachers' conceptions of intelligence.

Performance on traditional forms of intelligence and language testing predicts academic achievement, but it is not a good predictor of success in the real world. Sternberg (1997) suggested that IQ tests and most other academic measures of achievement gauge only "inert intelligence," academic knowledge that does not necessarily lead to goal-directed action or real-world problem solving. He proposed that a different type of brain power, "successful intelligence," determines one's ability to cope in career and in life. Sternberg (2004) defined successful intelligence as the skills and knowledge needed for success in life, according to one's own definition of success, within one's sociocultural context. Successfully intelligent people capitalize on their strengths and correct or compensate for their weaknesses; they are self-motivating and flexible in their work style, creating their own opportunities, actively seeking out role models, recognizing and accurately defining problems, and knowing when to persevere.

How Should Intelligence Be Assessed?

Despite the fact that there is considerable similarity among the formal tests used to assess intelligence and language, among researchers and cultures there is no single agreed-upon description of the components or structure of intelligence. Are there cultural differences in the dimensions of intelligence? Are there differences in the instruments needed to measure intelligence? Sternberg (2004) suggested a range of models that can exist between cultures and measures of intelligence or language. The models differ in terms of (a) whether there are differences in how cultures view intelligence—and the nature of the mental processes or the dimensions involved in the adaptations that constitute intelligence in a culture—and (b) whether there are differences in the instruments needed to measure intelligence (beyond simple translation). The possible models represent the following assumptions about these relationships:

- Model I: The nature of intelligence is the same in all cultures, and the same tests can be used to measure intelligence in all cultures.
- Model II: The nature of intelligence is different across cultures, but the same tests can be used to assess intelligence. Persons in different cultures will think about and respond to the items in different ways. The tests reveal differences in thinking across cultures.
- Model III: The nature or dimensions of intelligence are the same across cultures, but the instruments used to measure intelligence differ because the items used to assess intelligence must be derived from within the context of the culture being studied.
- Model IV: Both the nature or dimensions of intelligence and the ways intelligence should be measured differ across cultures. This model assumes that intelligence can only be understood and measured from an emic or indigenous perspective of the culture.

Influences of Culture on Testing

Some cross-cultural psychologists have assumed that with appropriate translation, familiar content, and administration by a "native" tester, ability tests are transportable from one culture to another (van de Vijver & Leung, 1997). Hence, they claim that the components of intelligence are the same in all cultures and can be measured by using the same approaches (Model I). The same test items, however, may measure different skills for different students as a function of the socialization they bring to the test-taking situation (Sternberg & Grigorenko, 2002). Greenfield (1997) points out that transportability of tests requires that cultures share similarities in

- values: there must be agreement on the value of particular tasks and responses, and the items or tasks must mean the same thing in different cultures;
- ways of knowing: knowing must rest in the individual (not the group) and a distinction made between the process of knowing and the object of knowing; and
- styles of communication: the function of questions must be universal, decontextualized communication must be familiar, and communication with strangers must be appropriate.

Numerous studies have shown that cultures do not share these similarities; therefore, the use of similar tests across cultures is questionable.

Values and meaning. Similar test items may not mean the same things in cultures even when the translations are good. Items will be viewed through the lenses of one's own cultural experiences and values. Reese, Balzano, Gallimore, and Goldenberg (1995) showed that both Latino immigrants and Euro-Americans valued education, but their meaning of education was not same. The Latino parents put a high value on the social skills of respectful and correct behavior, in contrast to the emphasis on more cognitive skills by Euro-American parents. Mainstream U.S. culture values grouping by taxonomic categories (e.g., tools, foods, musical instruments, etc.). In preschool and early elementary school, American students learn to group objects taxonomically, for example, potatoes, carrots, and apples in the category of foods, and knives, scissors, and hammers in the category of tools. In contrast, when children in Liberia were given objects to categorize, they categorized functionally, putting a knife with a potato because "you take a knife and cut a potato" (Cole, Gay, Glick, & Sharp, 1971). They justified this pairing by stating that a wise man would do it that way. When the researcher asked how a fool would do the task, the children produced a taxonomic set of categories.

Ways of knowing. Collectivistic and individualistic cultures differ in their models of knowing. Greenfield (1997) attempted to interview Zinacantecan Maya girls and their mothers about learning to weave and embroider. She intended to interview the girls and their mothers separately, but participants did not conceive of persons having individual viewpoints; knowledge of the process was held by the group, not the individual. In the United States, it has been found that collaborative construction of knowledge in schools improves assessed learning among Mexican American and African American children, but not among Euro-American children, who are individualistic in their value orientation (Aronson & Bridgeman, 1979; Raeff, Greenfield, & Quiroz, 2000).

Formal testing requires separation between the process of knowing and the object of knowledge; that is, persons must be aware that thoughts about the world are separate from the world itself. Greenfield and Bruner (1969) gave the example of engaging children in Senegal in Piagetian conservation-of-quantity tasks. After water was transferred from a shorter, flatter beaker into a longer, thinner one, unschooled children were asked if the quantity of water was the same, more, or less. After their responses, they were asked, "Why do you *think* it is the same (or more or less)?" The children did not respond, so the interviewer changed the question to "Why do you *say* it is the same (or more or less)?" And still the children remained silent. Only when the interviewer asked,

"Why *is* the water the same (or more or less)?" did they respond, giving reasons for their judgments that were as articulate as Western-schooled children. Greenfield (1997) explained that children gave these responses because they were not making a distinction between their own thoughts or a statement about something and the thing itself. In their worldview, explaining a statement made no sense—it was the external event that needed to be explained.

Communication styles. The most basic problem that limits the universality of formal testing is that of the structure of the testing conversations and questions. In many cultures, including southern African American and Mexican immigrant, children are meant to listen and understand, not speak, and they certainly are unlikely to answer questions to which adults already know the answers—exactly what they are required to do in testing (Delgado-Gaitan, 1994; Heath, 1983; Nerlove & Snipper, 1981). Evaluators conducting formal assessment assume that they do not need to have a relationship with the students they are testing and that evaluators are interchangeable as long as they are trained to administer the tasks. Communication among strangers, however, is rare for children in collectivist cultures (Kim & Choi, 1994), and many nonmainstream children in the United States are from collectivist cultures.

Exposure to formal education prepares students for the type of thinking and responding necessary to perform well on traditional testing. Students must learn to understand what is relevant in testing versus what is relevant in life. Multiple-choice test items can be confusing to students who have not had exposure to them. In the multiple-choice format, students are presented with a set of alternative responses, all but one of which is useless information. The tester expects the student to eliminate incorrect possibilities while selecting the correct alternative. Persons in many cultures will assume that the evaluator is presenting a set of information that is relevant to the goal of solving the problem or question—that all the responses could be ways of solving the problem. The notion that a response would have no function other than to test understanding violates their idea of cooperative communication. Hence, students in areas where opportunities for school education are variable do no better on the multiple-choice Raven Progressive Matrices, a nonverbal test that is marketed as "culture-free," than on more verbal tests that do not use a multiple-choice format (Dague, 1972).

The nature of nearly all formal tests involves decontextualized language use—questions that are to be answered outside the context of present relevance. Children from unschooled backgrounds and lower socioeconomic backgrounds have difficulty with decontextualized

test items (Blank, Rose, & Berlin, 1978; Tapia, LeVine, & LeVine, 1994). In a study of African American and Caucasian 5-year-olds matched on socioeconomic level, African American children did more poorly on decontextualized test items (Fagundes, Haynes, Haak, & Moran, 1998). The performance of the African American children improved significantly when the test items were embedded in familiar thematic contexts.

Dimensions of IQ

The impact of differing values, ways of knowing, and communication styles makes it unlikely that the same or similar tests or styles of testing can be employed across cultures. Hence, one can eliminate the models addressing intelligence in Models I and II. Intelligence must be measured differently in different cultures. Are the dimensions or the nature of intelligence itself different across cultures? Sternberg (2004) proposed that if one considers the concept of successful intelligence, the components of intelligence must be universal because they are essential for mental functioning in all cultures. People in all cultures must (a) recognize the presence of problems, (b) define what the problems are, (c) mentally represent the problems, (d) formulate one or more strategies for solving the problems, (e) allocate recourse to solve the problems, (f) monitor the solution of the problems, and (g) evaluate the solution. Although, according to Sternberg's framework, the components of intelligence are the same in all cultures, the way they are manifested in various cultures differ. Hence, the components need to be assessed differently. Sternberg advocates Model III—measuring the components of intelligence using activities and interactions that are natural to the culture (same dimensions; different tests). Note, however, that Sternberg is defining intelligence more broadly than is typically done in school contexts. If one views the dimensions of intelligence only in terms of traditional verbal and academic types of skills, then one would need to employ Model IV, because a number of cultures outside the United States have limited or no experience with such knowledge and skills. Furthermore, within the United States, some minority cultures do not value these behaviors as highly as more social interaction knowledge and skills.

If we use Sternberg's broad concept of intelligence, we must consider that even in cases where traditional assessments may be appropriate, they may not provide us with a complete understanding of an individual's capabilities. We have often made the mistake of assuming that formal intelligence tests and academic performance in schools correlate well with how students do in other

contexts, but they do not. Do we make the same assumption about professionals—that their academic performance in coursework and scores on professional certification exams predict adequate clinical competence? Or is there something more that we need to consider about our own successful intelligence and the successful intelligence of students preparing to live in a diverse world?

Cultural Intelligence

Working with children and their families from culturally/linguistically diverse backgrounds requires that educators and speech–language pathologists develop their own cultural competence or cultural intelligence. Immigrants are entering the United States from more and more diverse countries. In addition to persons from Asian and from Spanish-speaking countries, recent immigrants are coming from places such as Somalia, Sudan, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. Speech–language pathologists and educators are less familiar with the languages and cultures of persons from these countries. Interacting effectively with these diverse populations requires CQ. There are three components of CQ: the head, or cognitive; the body, or physical; and the heart, or emotional/motivational (Earley & Mosakowski, 2004).

Components of Cultural Intelligence

Head or cognitive component. The head or cognitive component of CQ involves knowledge about the beliefs, customs, and taboos of a culture. The specifics of the cognitive components of CQ are typically not measured on formal tests, but the types of thinking and language used to acquire these are the same types of thinking and language required by traditional IQ tests. This head or cognitive information can be acquired from books or persons who serve as cultural brokers. Intercultural Press (www.interculturalpress.com) publishes many relatively inexpensive books that describe the values, beliefs, and communication styles of many cultures throughout the world. If you are faced with a family or child from an unfamiliar culture, the books and videos from Intercultural Press are a valuable resource for detailed information. Web sites such as the following can also provide useful information.

- *Clinical Decision Making With Linguistically Diverse Learners: A National Web-Based Training Program* (<http://clinicaldecision.umn.edu>)

- *Phonemic Inventories Across Languages* (<http://www.asha.org/about/leadership-projects/multicultural/phono.htm>)
- Center for Research on Education, Diversity, and Excellence (CREDE; <http://crede.berkeley.edu/>)

Cognitive information may enable you to avoid some behaviors and language that may be perceived as inappropriate to children and their families. Of course, having this information is useless if you do not your monitor cultural encounters and determine when and how to make use of this knowledge. Earley and Mosakowski (2004) suggested that persons evaluate their cognitive CQ by rating themselves on statements such as the following, using the scale 1 (*strongly disagree*), 2 (*disagree*), 3 (*neutral*), 4 (*agree*), 5 (*strongly agree*). A mean lower than 3 indicates that you should work on your CQ; a mean of 4.5 or greater indicates a strength.

- Before I interact with people from a new culture, I ask myself what I hope to achieve.
- If I encounter something unexpected while working in a new culture, I use this experience to figure out new ways to approach other cultures in the future.
- I plan how I'm going to relate to people from a different culture before I meet them.
- When I come into a new cultural situation, I can immediately sense whether something is going well or something is going wrong. (p. 143)

Body or physical intelligence. Body or physical intelligence refers to the actions and demeanor you use when you interact with others. We might think of this as pragmatic knowledge and skills. Appropriate use of the head or cognitive aspect of CQ will depend on the body or physical component of intelligence. Are you alert to body or physical cues from others? Can you adopt people's habits and mannerisms? Doing so can result in others feeling more trusting and open to you. If you are working with persons who have less personal space (prefer to stand closely to one another), can you modify your own behavior and tolerate close interactions? Evaluate your physical CQ by rating yourself on these statements:

- It's easy for me to change my body language (e.g., eye contact or posture) to suit people from a different culture.
- I can alter my expression when a cultural encounter requires it.
- I modify my speech style (e.g., accent or tone) to suit people from a different culture.
- I easily change the way I act when a cross-cultural encounter seems to require it. (Earley & Mosakowski, 2004, p. 143)

Heart or emotional component. The heart or emotional/motivational component refers to confidence in mastering a particular set of circumstances and overcoming obstacles and setbacks. Are you comfortable dealing with persons from diverse backgrounds? Do you even enjoy and look forward to the challenges of working with diverse populations? Or do you feel threatened and worry about how to accomplish effective interactions?

- I have confidence that I can deal well with people from a different culture.
- I am certain that I can befriend people whose cultural backgrounds are different from mine.
- I can adapt to the lifestyle of a different culture with relative ease.
- I am confident that I can deal with a cultural situation that's unfamiliar. (Earley & Mosakowski, 2004, p. 143)

Patterns of Cultural Intelligence

Earley and Mosakowski (2004) suggest that there are six patterns of CQ. *Provincials* are effective when working with persons who are similar to them, but they experience problems as people become more different from themselves. *Analysts* are able to use a variety of strategies to decipher the rules and expectations of a culture. They recognize when they are interacting with persons of differing beliefs and quickly are able to determine how to interact. *Naturals* rely on intuition rather than a systematic analysis. They make fairly accurate judgments from first impressions, getting a sense of what is going on and how they should act. *Ambassadors* are like political appointees who may not know much about a culture but can convincingly communicate that they belong in the culture. *Mimics* do not necessarily have much insight into the significance of cultural cues, but they have a high degree of control over their actions and behaviors, which enables them to imitate the behavior of others. *Chameleons* have high levels of all three types of CQ. They may be mistaken for a native of a culture and may be able to achieve results that even natives cannot achieve because of their insider skills and outsider perspectives.

What is your pattern of cultural intelligence? What aspects of your CQ would you like to improve?

Cultural Intelligence for All

Educators and speech-language pathologists working with culturally/linguistically diverse children and their families should not be the only ones developing CQ as part of their successful intelligence. Children in today's schools will live in an increasingly diverse world. Good scores on traditional intelligence, language, and achievement

tests will not be sufficient to ensure their successful functioning in society. All students will need to develop their CQs. As educators and speech–language pathologists develop lesson plans and individual educational plans for their students, they should incorporate goals and objectives that will address the development of students' CQs.

Head CQ can be developed relatively easily by using multicultural literature in lessons. The Web sites <http://www.cultureforkids.com> and <http://www.asiaforkids.com> have excellent collections of multicultural children's literature. The magazine *Teaching Tolerance* (see <http://www.tolerance.org>) reviews new children's books that have multicultural relevance. You can request a free subscription to the magazine (or read it online). Each year, *Teaching Tolerance* also produces a kit of materials that teachers or speech–language pathologists can order free for their schools. This year's kit, *Rhinos and Raspberries*, intended for kindergarten through sixth grade, highlights 12 stories and folktales from around the world and supports both literacy and character education. Some past kits have included materials such as poster sets, a CD musical anthology of songs from cultural groups in the United States, and an award-winning film of the Montgomery bus boycott. All kits come with supplemental materials and lesson plans.

Developing body and heart CQ in students is more challenging. Today's schools are more diverse than ever before, and social scientists have long known that contact between diverse groups helps alleviate tensions and reduce prejudice, yet social boundaries persist. Students often choose to hang out only with people who they believe share similar experiences, interests, or backgrounds (Tatum, 2003). Such divisions can make it hard for different student groups to understand each other and can lead to challenges and difficulties in school communities. Educators need to consider ways to promote interactions among different groups of students. An initiative of the Southern Poverty Law Center's Teaching Tolerance project, *Mix It Up*, helps young people identify, question, and cross social boundaries in their schools and communities. Social boundaries may be based on race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, sports, or academics. *Mix It Up* provides free tools, resources, and ideas to help youths and their adult mentors break down barriers between students, improve intergroup relations, and help schools create inclusive communities where there are fewer misunderstandings that can lead to conflict, bullying, or violence.

Story enactments and simulation games can provide another way of developing body and heart CQ. Students can read and then take the roles of characters in stories incorporating persons and themes from other cultures. Instead of talking about specific differences in cultures and groups, cultural simulations such as *Rafa Rafa*

(for fifth–eighth graders) or *Bafa Bafa* (for high school students and adults) provide students with a cross-cultural experience designed to focus on feelings, attitudes, and reactions (<http://www.simulationtrainingsystems.com>). The emphasis of these games is on the process of interacting with another culture. The games emphasize the importance of listening, of asking questions, of observing with an open mind, and of understanding the likely mistakes people will make if they make assumptions about others based on the values and practices of their own culture. Participating pupils are divided into two groups representing different cultures. People in one group are fun loving, superstitious, and honor their elders. People in the other group are hard working, businesslike, foreign speaking, and do not like to be close to one another. Observers travel to the other culture and try to learn about it by watching and listening.

Students with language-learning difficulties (LLD) are likely to require additional support to develop body and heart CQ. Research is showing that children with LLD have more difficulties in social interactions than can be explained by their language impairment alone (Fujiki, Brinton, Isaacson, & Summers, 2001). The International Classification of Functioning, Disability, and Health—the framework for the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (2001) *Scope of Practice in Speech–Language Pathology*—makes the distinction between an individual's *capacity* to perform an activity and an individual's actual *performance* of an activity. This is a critical distinction for intervention planning. Children must have language capacity; that is, they must have specific morpho-syntactic, semantic, pragmatic, and discourse skills, and they must perform these skills in social situations. A child may have the capacity but not use the capacity to participate successfully in life events. Students may have adequate language capacity and cognitive and head knowledge, yet this capacity or knowledge may not influence body/physical and heart/emotional behavior—or what speech–language pathologists could consider types of pragmatic skills. Language intervention for students with LLD should include two types of goals: (a) impairment-based goals that focus on developing the cognitive and language skills to build a student's capacity and (b) socially based goals that build their application of this capacity in activities and events of daily life with others.

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