

PERCEPTION – SOME CONSIDERATIONS

by Di Dunlop

Perception is a process through which humans attend to, select, organise, interpret, and remember stimulating phenomena. Although all people are constantly involved in perception and aspects of the process are sometimes similar across individuals (especially among closely related members of families or cultural groups), each person perceives the world in unique ways that are open to a number of influences. It is difficult for us to know what and how each other perceive. Making our perceptions clear to others is an important part of effective communication and mutual understanding.

Perceptions are often the surface manifestations of more deeply ingrained biases or prejudices.

Perception is a universal, yet individual, process. Each person experiences and interprets the world differently from others. Clarifying your perceptions, aligning these with others, and noting perceptual differences are important for effective communication.

We are just beginning to understand knowledge that explains the formation of attitudes and prejudice, and how we can bring about attitude change. We need to increase our tolerance of others and reach a higher level of self-understanding through becoming aware of educational techniques that can accomplish this. Attitudes are learned - they help us to categorise so that we do not have to stop and consider each new encounter either with a person or a situation. Attitudes develop over time and affect the way people observe and understand the world. This process is called 'perception'. There are three basic components of attitudes: the belief element, the feeling element, and the action element. Psychologists call this cognitive, affective and behavioural. The relationship between our attitudes and behaviour is very complex, but attitudes are learned through social interaction.

The secondary student is at a stage when he/she is particularly capable of broadening his/her attitudes towards other groups. It is important that students understand they should not arrive at personal evaluations until they have gathered evidence from all sides.

Peg White



Image from Windle and Warren: <http://www.directionservice.org/caidre/Windle.cfm>

Perception

- What we perceive is not an exact reflection of the world around us.
- Our senses pick up stimuli but not all stimuli – just the ones that have significance for us.
- This is “selection” or “filtering”. No one perceives everything and no two people “see” the world in exactly the same way.
- We may add or omit certain things simply because we expect them or they seem to belong.
- PERCEPTION is a process by which we make sense out of information which comes to us from the environment. It helps us to categorise that information.

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What do you see when you look at this drawing?

You may have seen the old lady or the young one, or have adjusted your perceptions to see both.

The processes involved here are part of everyday life. Perceptions of individuals are always different. Most of the time people are not aware of the existence of this perceptual gap. Sometimes the gap between individuals' perceptions is small; sometimes it is huge.

Can we trust our own eyes?

We select certain signs (stimuli) from our environment and ignore others. We usually perceive—see, hear, taste, smell, and feel—only those signs that have meaning for us. A few simple demonstrations may help you understand this a little better.

Close your left eye—you see your nose with the right. Close your right eye—you see it with the left. Open both eyes—now where is it? When you open both eyes you no longer see your nose. Actually your nose remains in your field of vision, but you “omit” it—it fails to register. Practice trying to see your nose, looking straight ahead with both eyes open. Many people have to work on this for some time in order to see it. Since seeing your nose at all times would get in the way of your daily activities, you have simply learned “not to see it.”

At this moment you are chiefly aware of the page in front of you and, most of all, of this phrase. Yet, you actually see things above, below, and well to the sides of this page. As this sentence calls them to your attention, you may begin noticing some of these things. Similarly, you may not have noticed various noises, pressures on the skin, and smells that have been present while you were reading.

Cultural experiences

The way people perceive the world and reality, what they see as being important and the interpretation of meaning given to the world is strongly influenced by a person's cultural and personal values and background, on the values, beliefs and attitudes of that person's society.

Age and experience also influence perception.

Knowledge informs and influences the formation of values.



Picture designed by the American psychologist, E.G. Boring

Principles

1. Understanding the basic idea that we perceive and do things in our own way but others within our country and in other countries perceive and do things in their own way.
2. Developing awareness skills needed for one's journey through life, such as looking and listening, meeting and interacting with others, seeking to make sense of a complex and changing world.
3. Understanding depth studies of other cultures within our country and in other countries in order to apply these understandings and skills.

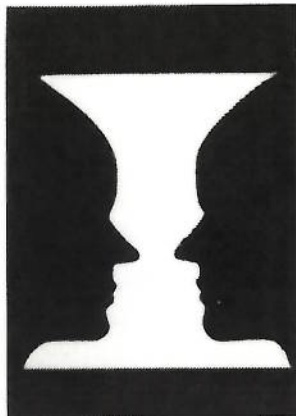
Source: *Seeing It Their Way— Ideas, activities and resources for Intercultural Studies* Duffy et al, Reed Education, Sydney (1975)

Website: Search for - Cool art that will mess with your head - <http://bertc.com/subjour/truth/coolart.htm> This site exhibits excellent perception puzzles that challenge the way we/students look at the world.

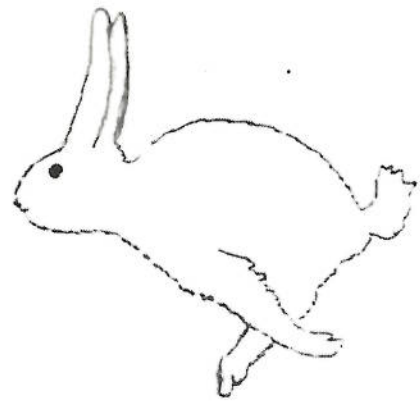
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Is this a duck or a squirrel?

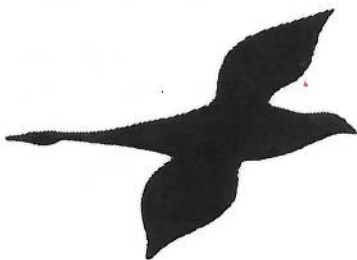


Is this a vase or two faces?

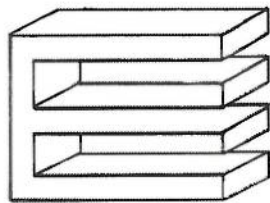


Is this a rabbit?

Is this a duck?



Is this a goose or a hawk?



Does this object have three or four arms?



Is this a pointing hand?

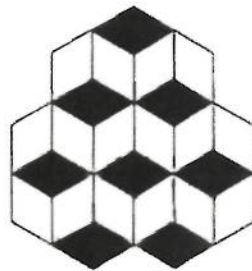
Is this a sitting cat?



Is this a candle or two faces?



Is this head upside down?



Are there six cubes or seven?



Is this a donkey or a seal?



Is this a young man or an old man?

This says "Tokyo" in Japanese!



What does this say in English?



He has "liar" written all over his face!

Can you trust this man?