Orality Index: A pilot project

Assessing Levels of Orality Reliance among the Oral Majority

Phase I
Tool Development

Phase II
Tool Revision – editing the questions for relevance and clarity

Phase III
Survey Implementation - using the diagnostic tool, and identifying their preferences for oral communication

Phase II revision begins with the October WEA Mission Commission followed by the launch of the global 3-year mapping project in January 2017, eventually assessing all of the Oral Majority. The final outcome is to systematically stimulate the development of new ministry tools and resources for all peoples, but most strategically the remaining unreached, unengaged and Bibleless peoples.

Definitions of Orality

- **Conceptual definition:** A reliance on oral communication
- **Functional/Operational definition:** How oral preference and/or oral reliant communicators tend to receive, process, remember and pass on information
- **Missiological definition:** A complex of 7 descriptive disciplines that characterize the communication tendencies of oral cultures and oral reliant learners

Fundamental Assumptions

- God created us in His image, and we possess His characteristics and capacities for oral communication.
- Those common characteristics of orality emerge through our early childhood development and cultural nurture.
- Depending on how oral tendencies develop, a culturally-shaped frame of reference aids us in communication (an orality or textuality framework).
- We possess multiple oralities and literacies (textualities) without producing a dichotomy (either orality or textuality).

What This Tool Is Not

- a learning assessment tool: Learning depends on mutually consistent ways and means of communication, but much more precise research is needed to assess whether a person actually learns best by oral principles and methods

- classifying a dichotomy or polarization of orality vs. textuality (literacy)

- meant to speak directly to learning and psycho-social principles

- based on right-brain/left-brain neuropsychology or the unproven "audio, visual, kinesthetic" learning preferences popular in educational conversations;

- static: what may be identified as the state of orality reliance, may change next year when more electronic media or other technologies arrive.

- meant to pigeonhole groups since a culture and its individual members move in constant change.

What It IS

- identifying the *tendencies* of any given group which are not necessarily accurate for everyone within it

- assessing those communication tendencies, and *generally* capturing orality preferences and reliance of any given group

- classifying unreached peoples and their COMMUNICATION preferences and reliance on oral ways and means

What It Does

- gives the characteristics of each quadrant, questions that must be addressed, and suggestions for program design and development

- provides a diagnostic grid that can guide instructional design and communication strategies;

- creates a tool through which those working among any people group (including "digitorals" in most developed world contexts) can more completely analyze their audiences and develop more effective methods of evangelism, spiritual development, and training strategies

The Characteristics Behind the Questions

- All the questions are based on how people most preferably receive a message and how they prefer to transmit messages.

- The characteristics and questions might well be answered with an orality preference/reliance by everyone on the planet. (We all are hard-wired for orality.)

- Some groups rely more heavily on those characteristics than others giving them a "high orality reliance" or "low orality reliance".

Target Audience for the Pilot Study

Those who are bridge relations to a people group: persons (preferably, but not necessarily, indigenous) living among the people who possess a thorough understanding of that people group. If expat missionaries lead the process of the survey, they should do so with a majority of a fair sample of the group (not only well educated leaders from among them).

The Process

A People Group Assessment

1. Recruit a group of 5 bridge leaders composed of 1 of three types:
   – Type 1: All five answering the survey are outsiders (workers called to reach this group).
   – Type 2: A combination of outsiders and insiders (leader or others from the group).
   – Type 3: The majority answering the survey are insiders.

2. Meet together for clarity of the survey terms and concepts (ref. the spreadsheet).

3. Independently answer the survey questions through online survey software, if internet connections allow. If not, individually complete the MS Excel or Word version.

4. Average the total scores to plot the degree of orality preference/reliance for the people group. (This can also be done for the characteristics of orality behind the questions.) The scattergram of the scores on the Orality Index from bridge leaders should also reflect the range of orality preference/reliance within each quadrant for program and planning purposes.

A Regional Assessment

The mission of teams in some regions calls for an immediate collaboration that could identify all the UPGs or UUPGs. The Orality Index provides a starting point for those teams to further understand the communication needs they will encounter, and provides some guidance for the design of what they do and say. We will assess the degree of orality reliance of the 56 groups through local church networks and mission agencies at work in Nepal.

Steps to a Country-wide Assessment

1. Identify UPGs targeted by indigenous ministries who have leaders capable of completing the assessment. These are staff/personnel from those churches and agencies who know the people groups and may already have representatives that could help complete the survey.

   a. Identify church associations and agencies that have qualified personnel.

   b. Translate & back translate the survey and descriptions into the dominant languages.

   c. Complete the assessment for at least the first 25% of the groups in year one.

2. Within 2 years assess the remaining groups with other church or mission representatives familiar with the groups and who are able to answer the questions.

3. Update the data for each people group as teams engage them and repeat the survey with increased understanding learned from personal interaction.

Answering the Questions

1. Fully complete the background questions. Answers here will not be published with names associated.

2. Answer the orality reliance questions describing the people group. *ALL humans have an orality reliance.* We are asking "*how reliant is this group of people?*" for each particular question.

3. A scoring mechanism that identifyies where a group functions in its orality reliance will be in place by November.

4. A further description of each quadrant and suggestions on what they means for strategy or program design will be in place by December.

Orality Index

Performance

Diffusion

Information Transmiting

High Oral Transmitting Low Oral Receiving	High Oral Transmitting High Oral Receiving
Low Oral Transmitting Low Oral Receiving	Low Oral Transmitting High Oral Receiving

Information Receiving

Information Acceptance

Information Processing
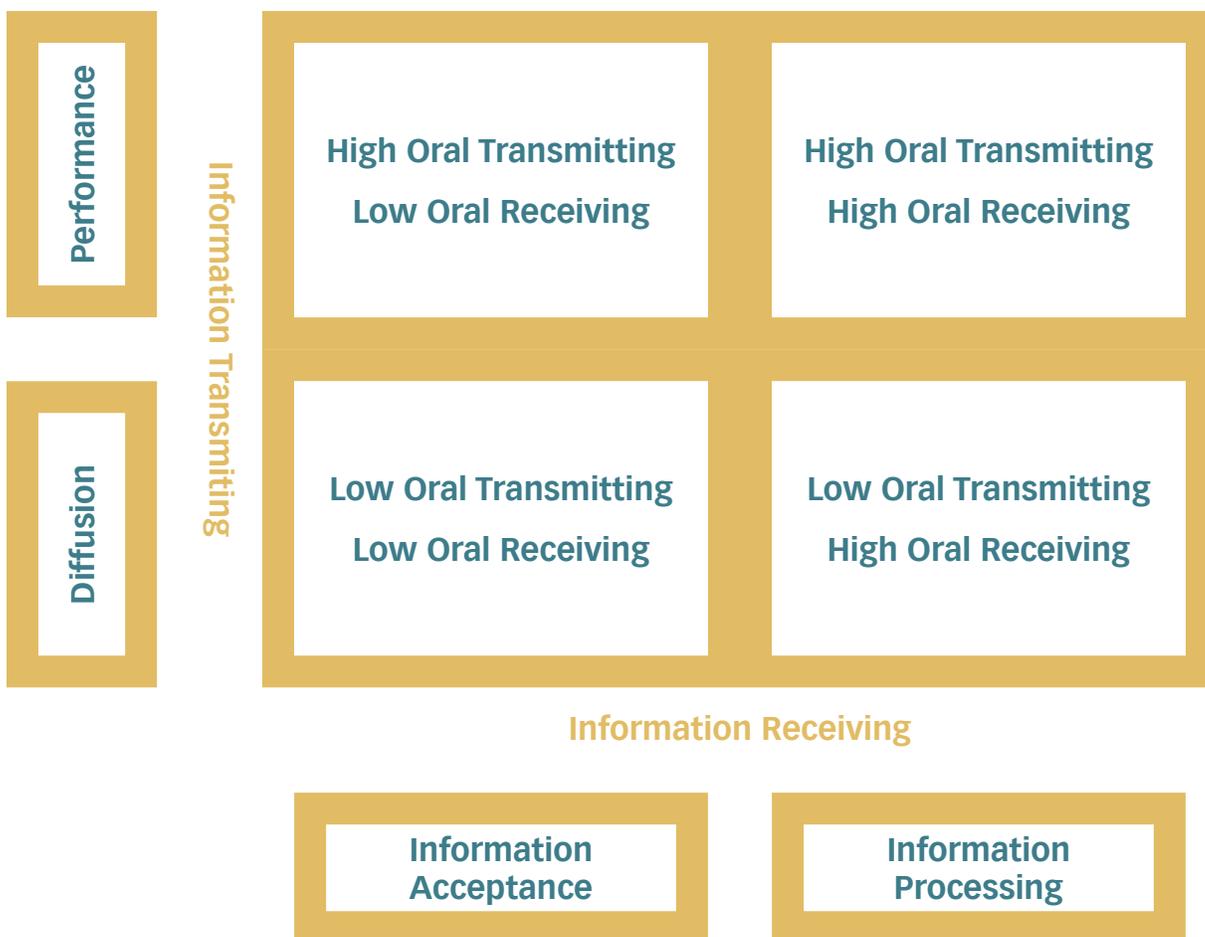
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