

# Speaking with... David Livermore

Interview by Mark Critchley



David Livermore PhD is a thought leader in cultural intelligence (CQ) and global leadership and the author of the recent book, *The Cultural Intelligence Difference* (2011). His book, *Leading with Cultural Intelligence* (2009), was named a bestseller in business by The Washington Post. He is president and partner at the Cultural Intelligence Center in East Lansing, Michigan and a visiting research fellow at Nanyang Technological University in Singapore. Previously, David spent 20 years in leadership positions with a variety of non-profit organizations around the world and taught in universities. A frequent speaker and adviser to leaders in Fortune 500s, non-profits and governments, he has worked in over 100 countries across the Americas, Africa, Asia, Australia, and Europe. [davelivermore@culturalIQ.com](mailto:davelivermore@culturalIQ.com)

戴夫·利弗莫尔是文化智能（CQ）和全球领导力研究方面的一位思想领袖，也是新作，《文化智能差异》（2011年）的作者。他的《用文化智能领导》（2009），被华盛顿邮报评为商界最畅销的书。戴夫现任密歇根州东兰辛文化智能中心的总裁兼合伙人，也是新加坡南洋理工大学的客座研究员。此前20年间，他在世界各地不同类型的非营利性组织担任领导职务，并在大学任教。他经常作为财富500强企业，非营利组织和政府领导人的发言人和顾问，曾于100多个国家工作，横跨美洲，非洲，亚洲，澳洲和欧洲。

**Let's start with a question that all our readers should be asking themselves. Why is cultural intelligence so important when teaching English to speakers of other languages?**

Well, in most Western classrooms students are rewarded for speaking up, asking questions, and participating in classroom discussions. Conversely, in most Asian classrooms, students are taught to listen carefully, respect the teacher, and only speak when invited to do so. So in the U.S. for instance, *struggle* is an indicator that a student isn't cutting it. Smart kids barely study, finish their work first and still get 'A's; and the high achievers are asked to come to the front of the class to demonstrate their insights, while struggling students are dealt with discreetly to ensure their self-esteem stays intact. In China however, struggle is viewed as a predictable part of the learning process. A student is allowed to struggle because it's a chance to show he or she has what it takes to resolve a problem by persevering through it. The student who can't figure out a problem is

asked to come to the front of the class to work it out in front of peers.

These are gross over-generalizations, but if you're teaching away from home, you know that these kinds of educational differences are the tip of the iceberg for what you experience in the classroom. The importance of learning how to be true to your own teaching style and values while also adapting effectively to your students' personalities, learning styles, and cultural backgrounds is essential. That's almost self-evident... but research now demonstrates that your effectiveness teaching across cultures can be pinned upon something we call your CQ, or your cultural intelligence quotient. Cultural intelligence is "the capability to function effectively in a variety of national, ethnic, and organizational cultures", as referred to in my 2011 book *The Cultural Intelligence Difference*, for example.

**Your body of work shows a rare talent for translating huge amounts of research data into practical tools that are now being applied successfully in all manner of educational and leadership contexts.**

Thank you. I'm grateful to be part of this work, which to date includes academics from more than 50 countries and articles published in over 100 A-level journals. Business professors Chris Earley and Soon Ang built upon existing research on multiple intelligences (Sternberg & Detterman, 1986) to develop the conceptual model of cultural intelligence. Based on that framework, Ang collaborated with Linn Van Dyne to create a twenty-item Cultural Intelligence Scale (CQS), which they developed and validated to measure CQ across multiple cultures (Ang and Van Dyne, 2008). That initial research, combined with the work of countless others, points to a number of promising results for ESL teachers who improve their CQ. See *The Handbook of Cultural Intelligence* for a fuller picture on the research, or visit the RESEARCH tab on our website [www.culturalQ.com](http://www.culturalQ.com).

Just as emotional intelligence helps you interact effectively with students based upon the cues they send about their emotional state, cultural intelligence allows you to have that kind of insight when you're a cultural outsider. A great deal of what it takes to detect and respond in light of the emotions of a student presumes you know how to interpret their nonverbal behaviors and the subtext beneath their words. That's difficult if not impossible when dealing with someone from an unfamiliar culture. The beauty of cultural intelligence, however, is that it picks up where intuition and skills like emotional intelligence leave off. It allows you to have the same kind of practical sensibility when interacting with students and colleagues who come from different cultural backgrounds than you.

The question that drives our research on cultural intelligence is this: *Why do some teachers easily and effectively adapt their views and behaviors cross-culturally and others don't?* What factors explain the difference? The research reveals four capabilities that consistently emerge among those who are culturally intelligent.

1. **CQ Drive:** Your level of interest, drive and motivation to adapt to the cultures present in your classroom.

2. **CQ Knowledge:** Your overall understanding of cultural similarities and differences.
3. **CQ Strategy:** Your awareness and ability to consciously plan in light of students' cultural backgrounds.
4. **CQ Action:** Your ability to adapt (and *not* adapt) based upon what's most effective while teaching across cultures.

Our CQ Assessments measure your skills in each of these four areas. These have been academically validated (see Matsumoto and Hwang, 2013) to accurately predict your level of effectiveness teaching in a culturally diverse environment.

### So... what does it look like to teach English in China with cultural intelligence?

As many of your readers know, a lot of ESL students are most comfortable learning through rote memorization or by mastering mathematical formulas and grammatical rules. That doesn't necessarily mean they won't benefit from other methodologies that you might view as more effective. But teaching with cultural intelligence means you begin with where your students are most comfortable and then find ways to strategically prepare them for alternative approaches. For example, if you're going to use games, a simulation, or an approach where students role-play a conversation in front of the class, give them an opportunity first to develop their confidence by memorizing material, practicing privately, and working with a peer group. Teaching with cultural intelligence means you adapt your teaching style and content based upon your students' cultural background but that you also must retain your personal style for what makes you authentic and effective in the classroom.

There's a great deal of research behind the kinds of strategies that are most effective for teaching with cultural intelligence. And the good news is, anyone can teach with cultural intelligence. But it's not automatic. It requires an intentional effort to assess and improve your skills and a developmental plan for adjusting the way you teach. But with a conscious effort, you'll find yourself becoming more confident and comfortable in the classroom.

Thanks for this whistle-stop tour of a discipline that is growing exponentially in importance as globalization gains pace.

It's a pleasure. To learn more about cultural intelligence assessments, research and books, or to attend an upcoming CQ Certification program, ETIC readers can visit [www.culturalQ.com](http://www.culturalQ.com)

### Further reading

Ang, S., & Van Dyne, L. (2008). Conceptualization of cultural intelligence. In S. Ang & L. Van Dyne (Eds.), *Handbook of cultural intelligence: Theory, measurement, and applications* (pp. 3-15). Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe.

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Matsumoto, D., & Hwang, H. C. (2013). Assessing cross-cultural competence: A review of available tests. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology, 44*, 849-873.

Sternberg, R., & Detterman, D. K. (1986). *What is intelligence?: Contemporary viewpoints on its nature and definition*. New York: Ablex Publishing.



**Mark Critchley** has taught languages since 1984, and worked as an adviser to businesses and government for twenty years before joining XJTLU. His key interests are creative writing and Business English.