

# DIVERSIVERSE

LANGUAGE • CULTURE • EDUCATION • BELONGING

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FREE DIGITAL EDITION

## THE MULTILINGUAL CLASSROOM

*What changes when we  
stop seeing language  
difference as a  
problem to solve?*

理解

超越语言  
连接彼此

### BEYOND ENGLISH

*What students may  
know before they  
can say it*

### LANGUAGE + IDENTITY

*Why belonging  
changes learning*

### THE ACCESS QUESTION

*Before changing the  
expectation, change  
the pathway*

تَفَهُّم

اللغة جسر  
لا حاجز

भाषा  
पहचान  
सम्बन्ध

palabras  
culturas  
historias  
futuro

chaque langue  
porte une  
façon unique  
de voir le monde

## THE BIG IDEA

# A student can understand more than they can say.

In multilingual classrooms, English production is often the most visible part of learning. It is not always the most accurate measure of understanding.

When a multilingual learner cannot explain an idea easily in English, the language gap can become mistaken for a knowledge gap.

But understanding does not begin when English becomes fluent.

A learner may already recognize the pattern, understand the scientific relationship, solve the mathematical problem, follow the sequence, or connect the new idea to something they already know.

**The question is not simply:**

“Can this student tell me the answer in English?”

**A better question may be:**

“What would allow this student to show me what they understand?”

That small shift changes the classroom.

Drawing, pointing, labeling, demonstrating, sequencing, using visuals, rehearsing with a partner, or making notes in another language can create a pathway between knowledge and expression.

The learning expectation does not have to disappear. The pathway to it can change.

“Language production and conceptual understanding are not the same thing.”



## IN PRACTICE

# Before you lower the expectation, change the access.

When language is creating the barrier, try changing how the learner can access or demonstrate the learning before changing what they are expected to learn.

## THE 60-SECOND ACCESS CHECK

1

### What am I actually measuring?

Am I measuring understanding — or the student's ability to express that understanding in English?

2

### Is language blocking access?

Would a visual, model, demonstration, example, gesture, or translated keyword make the learning more accessible?

3

### Can the student show it another way?

Try pointing, drawing, labeling, sequencing, demonstrating, matching, selecting, or briefly using another language.

4

### What support can I remove later?

Access is not about permanently simplifying learning. Good support creates a bridge toward greater independence.



## TRY TOMORROW

Before deciding that a multilingual learner “doesn’t understand,” offer one additional way for the student to demonstrate what they know.

Then look again.



# Keep the learning. Create access. Build the bridge.

The more closely we look at language,  
the more clearly we begin to see  
the people behind it.

## Language • Culture • Education • Belonging

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# Language, Identity & Belonging

What happens when the language we speak becomes part of how the world sees us — and how we see ourselves?