

AN AFFIRMING SHIFT

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DEFICITS-BASED

ASSETS-BASED




Unmotivated



of experience in an English-medium school



Struggling

Possess at least one other linguistic & cultural background 

Slow progress



Capable of learning grade-level content while in mainstream classes

Low performing



Can use their entire linguistic repertoire

Stretchnote by @VIRTUALGIFT



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A high school English language development teacher walks into the Grade 10 English Language Arts class. Graciela sinks into her chair upon seeing the teacher, Mrs. Rivera. The teacher gently taps Graciela on the shoulder. “Hola, Graciela. It’s time for the annual English language proficiency test. Please follow me.” Graciela sighs and grudgingly puts away her class work, hurriedly packs up her school bag, and ducks self-consciously out of class, trying to draw as little attention to herself as possible. She always feels a bit embarrassed about taking the test every year, especially since some of her multilingual classmates no longer have to. She had just begun to understand figurative language in poetry and did not want to miss the rest of the discussion with her table group. Now she will have to do extra work to figure out what she missed. Every year during the state English language proficiency test, Graciela feels the same frustration. In the hall, she asks with some irritation, “Why do I have to take that test *again*? I speak English already, and I was born in America!”

Graciela was first identified as an English language learner (ELL) when she started kindergarten, because her mother noted at registration that she only spoke Spanish at home and an English language test indicated she was not yet proficient in English. In elementary and middle school, Graciela experienced a variety of programs designed to help her develop English, including two years of bilingual education and a few years of pull-out English classes. Now in high school, she feels comfortable speaking English in class and works hard to complete all her assignments. Although writing essays, presenting reports, and reading textbooks are still a challenge for her, she is proud that she is passing her classes. She thought she had also “passed” the English proficiency test last year, but her scores in reading and writing did not meet the state requirements.

Like all students in the United States who are classified as an English language learner, Graciela has to take an English proficiency test every year until she meets certain criteria. Yet, her peers and teachers would not know that she is still considered an English learner as her spoken and social English is on par with her classmates. Until she is “**reclassified**” as English proficient, she will be required to take the yearly test to assess her English language proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

Reclassified: When students classified as English language learners (ELLs) achieve a state-required level of English proficiency and receive the status “fully English proficient (FEP).” This process is also known as “redesignation” or “exit” in some states.



FROM THE FIELD

English Language Proficiency Testing

Jackie Doner-Campbell teaches experienced multilinguals in the United States. She recently posted on Facebook the following note about her experience during the annual English language proficiency testing period.

“I had such a hard day at school today. It started with one of my LTEL students expressing their frustration about still being in the program and then saying it’s because he is dumb. I tried my best to help him reframe that, but it’s so hard. This student is truly smart and has a lot of knowledge and vocabulary, but has not done well on tests.”

In this chapter, we describe a specific group of multilingual learners in Grades 6 through 12 who are currently classified as long-term English learners (LTELs). These multilingual learners have been studying in English for six or more years but are still classified as “English language learners” (Every Student Succeeds Act, 2015, p. 163). In the United States, these students still have the right to language assistance programs (U.S. Department of Justice & U.S. Department of Education [USDOJ & USDOE], 2015). When schools fail to provide students with appropriate services, this can be seen as a violation of students’ civil rights to equitable learning (Calderón et al., 2020). While continuing to offer direct English language development classes for these secondary multilinguals is one way to provide appropriate services, this book focuses on the scaffolds and appropriate grade-level expectations all content teachers across the curriculum can provide. We believe all teachers need to understand this diverse group of students so they can serve their needs.

We have designed this chapter to build background knowledge about these secondary multilingual learners so their math, science, social studies, language arts, and other content area teachers can meet their needs. First, we situate this group of English language learners within the bigger picture of multilingual learners. Then, we provide some insights into the state and federal requirements that these students need to meet in order to be considered as English proficient. We ask educators to consider how these requirements impact their own students and their perception of their students, who are labeled as LTELs. Later, we address the research about how long it takes to

develop grade-level academic language skills and the issue of the overrepresentation of these students in special education. Finally, we propose a new, asset-based term for this growing population of students: *experienced multilinguals*. We highlight the linguistic, cultural, and experiential assets these students bring to their schools and communities. We will close by introducing two experienced multilingual students who will be featured throughout the book.

As you read, consider this series of guiding questions:

- ▶ Who are multilingual learners?
- ▶ Who are long-term English learners, and how are they classified?
- ▶ What are the impacts of the LTEL label?
- ▶ How long does it take to develop proficiency in English?
- ▶ How did the COVID-19 pandemic impact secondary multilinguals?
- ▶ Who are experienced multilinguals?
- ▶ Why and how should teachers get to know the experienced multilinguals in their classes?

WHO ARE MULTILINGUAL LEARNERS?

Multilingual learners comprise a growing population of students in classrooms across the United States and around the world. In fact, people who speak more than one language make up the majority of the world's population (Graton, 2021).

Around the world, being multilingual is the norm,
not the exception.

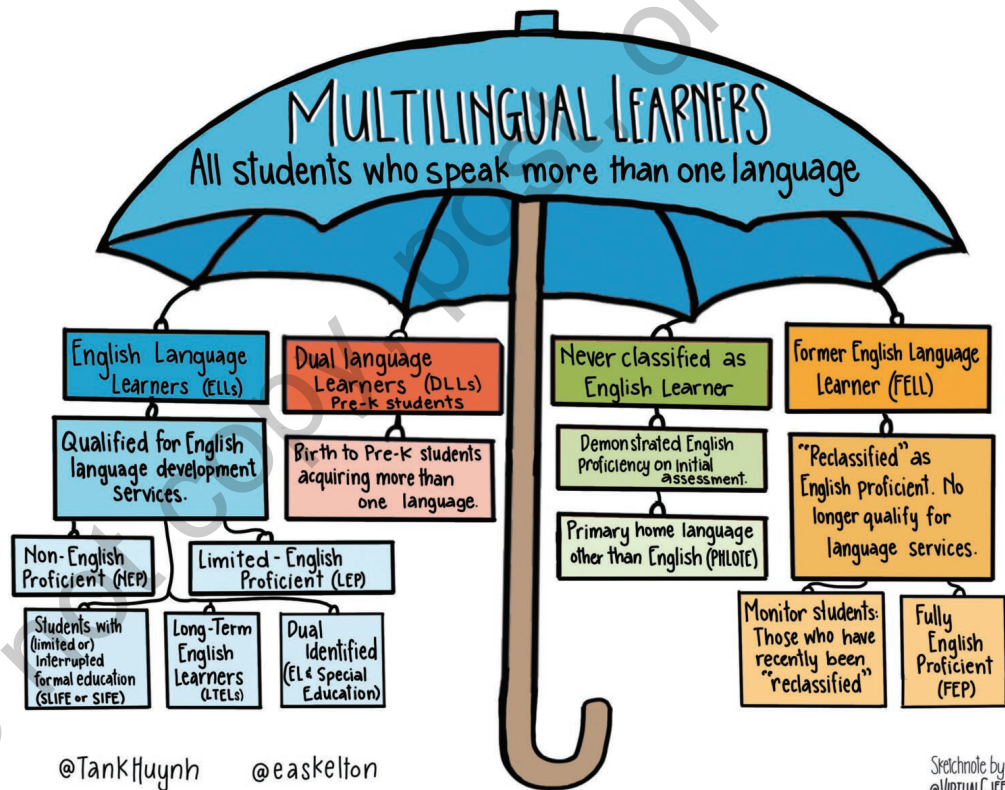
The umbrella term **multilingual learner** (ML) includes all students who speak more than one language. In this book, we apply this term to students learning in schools where English is the primary language of instruction and “whose parent or guardian reports speaking one or more languages other than English at home” (Snyder & Staehr Fenner, 2021, p. 2).

Some of these multilinguals may already be considered English proficient, but many are still developing the English proficiency necessary

Multilingual learners: Students who speak more than one language

to succeed in schools where English is the primary language of instruction, also known as **English-medium schools**. Multilingual learners who are still developing English proficiency now represent over 10 percent of total school enrollment in the United States (National Center for Education Statistics, 2021). As shown in Figure 1.1, the term *multilingual learner* comprises a veritable alphabet soup of labels for different groups of students, each with unique backgrounds, assets, and educational needs. With this book, we hope to share the central message that multilingual learners are diverse and dynamic; they bring tremendous assets to the classroom and enrich the educational experience for all learners.

1.1 Categories of Multilingual Learners With Some Terms Used by States, Organizations, and Countries



English-medium schools: Schools where English is the primary language of instruction

WHO ARE LONG-TERM ENGLISH LEARNERS, AND HOW ARE THEY CLASSIFIED?

The term *long-term English learner (LTEL)* has been used in the United States for over two decades to distinguish between newcomers, refugees, and other beginning-level English language learners and students like Graciela who have attended school in English for many years. They no longer need the type of support provided in newcomer English language classes, but they still do need appropriate scaffolds and grade-level challenges in order to continue developing their academic English skills and content knowledge. Because these secondary multilinguals have experience in English and understand the culture of their schools, they possess different strengths and needs than students at more beginning levels of English language acquisition. They are often quite fluent when interacting socially with their peers and teachers, which may lead some educators to misinterpret their ability to comprehend class content and follow instruction without additional support. However, when their strengths are not recognized and their needs are not addressed, these students may not experience success in school.

In the United States, multilingual learners are classified as long-term English learners if they “have not attained English language proficiency within 5 years of initial classification as an English learner and first enrollment in the local educational agency” (Every Student Succeeds Act, 2015, p. 163). Determining exactly what constitutes English language proficiency, however, has been left up to individual states.

There is no nationwide, consistent definition of English language proficiency or federal-level data about students classified as LTELs.

Sources from regional and state agencies reveal that students with the classification LTEL make up between 25 and 75 percent of all middle and high school English learners in many cities and states across the country (Buenrostro & Maxwell-Jolly, 2021; Menken et al., 2012; Uro & Lai, 2019). Because each state, agency, and international school

sets its own requirements for determining if a student has reached English proficiency, the numbers of students with this classification vary widely.

In addition to requiring a certain language proficiency level on a standardized English assessment, some states and international schools also require students to prove their proficiency through a body of evidence that may include standardized academic tests, passing grades in core content classes, and teacher recommendations (Okhremtchouk et al., 2018). It is possible that a student like Graciela living in California may still be classified as an LTEL, but if she were in Colorado with those same scores and body of evidence, she would be considered English proficient and no longer carry the LTEL label. In international schools, the determination of which students qualify for additional English language support services is made at the school level and varies widely from school to school, even within the same country. Some of the different ways states and international schools determine English proficiency are shown in Figure 1.2.

The various requirements for demonstrating proficiency in English indicate that the construct of English proficiency is neither static nor standard. It is no wonder that Graciela questioned why she had to take the English language proficiency assessment. Some students currently classified as LTEL may have scored at a proficient level on their state's English language proficiency test one year but unfortunately have not yet met the required score on a state academic achievement test. In other equally upsetting cases, they may have scored well on the state academic achievement test *and* the English proficiency test but received low grades in a core content class. Although many monolingual English-speaking students also score unsatisfactorily on standardized achievement tests and receive low grades in core content classes, they are not therefore labeled as English Learners. Students who are currently classified as LTEs clearly have a significant, inequitable burden of proof to be reclassified as fully English proficient (FEP). As Dr. Maneka Brooks states,

“It cannot be assumed that the primary reason that [a student] remains classified as an [English Learner] is because of her English proficiency” (Brooks, 2016).

1.2 Requirements for Reclassification to English Proficient

Criterion	Explanation	Examples
English Language Proficiency Assessment	There are many different English Language Proficiency assessments used across the United States and internationally. Each has a different definition of <i>proficiency</i> based on different criteria such as accuracy, fluency, use of discipline-specific language, etc. Some tests weigh each language domain (listening, speaking, reading, writing) differently.	WIDA ACCESS or MODEL test, ELPA 21, ELPAC, LASLinks, EILTS, Oxford English, IDAT, Woodcock-Muñoz, TELPAS
Grades	Some states and schools require students to achieve a certain score or grade in core content classes. Individual teachers vary in how they grade, and the criteria for a passing grade can vary from teacher to teacher, even within the same department at the same school.	Course grades may include criteria not related to English language proficiency such as attendance, bringing materials, homework completion, and participation.
Standardized Achievement Tests	Some states and schools require students to achieve at a certain level on a standardized test in reading, math, and other content areas.	SAT, ACT, ISA, NAEP, PARCC, IGCSE, iREADY, MAP, and various state-developed tests
Other Requirements	Some states and schools also require an additional body of evidence to show English proficiency. In some places, a student may not be reclassified unless they meet all of the criteria in one academic year.	Writing sample, teacher recommendation, classwork, additional reading assessment

With the need to meet so many requirements for reclassification as English proficient, it is no surprise that these students comprise such a high percentage of middle and high school students. The tremendous variation in requirements students need to meet in order to shed the label of LTEL also means that students in this subgroup of multilingual learners are highly diverse.



REFLECTION

How has your understanding of students labeled as LTELs shifted based on the information presented in this section?

WHY IS THE LTEL LABEL PROBLEMATIC?

Unfortunately, students classified as LTEL are often viewed as a homogenous group of struggling learners; we know they are diverse and dynamic individuals.

Because the label itself indicates these students are taking longer than their peers to achieve English proficiency, a series of undeserving, deficit-based characteristics such as “unmotivated,” “struggling reader,” and “disengaged” often come attached to the label. The LTEL label itself is therefore problematic because it is deficit-based, and that perception can detrimentally impact students’ educational experience.

The problematic classification of LTEL is not neutral and can “have life-impacting consequences for individuals” (Kibler & Valdés, 2016). If secondary content teachers perceive that students with the LTEL label are struggling, they may hold lower expectations or even over-scaffold lessons. As author and educator Dr. Doug Fisher says,

“Teachers’ perceptions become students’ realities” (Fisher, 2021).

That reality for many students classified as LTEL is all too often classes focused on basic skills rather than challenging and engaging content. While the intention may be to support these students and “fill gaps,” the result is too often unmotivating skill drills, knowledge-level questions, and less engaging content that leaves students further behind. When Soto (2021) shadowed high school students classified as LTEL throughout their school day, she discovered that they mostly completed worksheets in classes and rarely had the opportunity or expectation to discuss rigorous topics with their peers. Additionally, if content teachers believe these students are struggling readers, they may not require them to read the grade-level text but instead provide oral summaries or simply bullet points of the main ideas (Brooks, 2020). These well-intentioned supports are actually examples of over-scaffolding that reduces the rigor of the lesson so significantly that students are no longer challenged. Certainly, students who frequently experience these kinds of lessons and scaffolds may appear unmotivated or disengaged. When teachers think that secondary multilinguals cannot learn grade-level content, students may not be held to the same expectations. The lack of consistently high expectations and challenging content across the school day may also cause students to stagnate in their development of both academic English and content-specific skills.

When teachers think that secondary multilinguals cannot learn grade-level content, students may not be held to the same expectations.



REFLECTION

- How has the LTEL label impacted the way you instruct these learners in your classes?

- To what extent are LTELs held to the same grade-level expectations, or do they receive simplified assignments and assessments?

- How does your school collect data for this subgroup of students?

Students' educational programming may also be affected by the LTEL label. In some schools, students classified as LTEL are required to take an English language development class or enroll in specialized content courses designed for English learners, which unfortunately may restrict their access to Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, elective courses focused on a blossoming area of interest, or other challenging, upper-level courses. These specialized language development courses may also negatively influence how students perceive themselves. When one student who was classified as an LTEL was asked why they were in an English language development class, the student simply said, "Because we are dumb" (Thompson, 2015, p. 35). Additionally, some schools and districts require students at lower English language proficiency levels to take lower-level content courses as well, which can negatively impact their entire high school career. If students do not have access to higher-level courses, they may not meet necessary graduation requirements or college entrance expectations. An opportunity withheld is a door closed on a new world full of potential. One recent study of graduation rates across four different subgroups of multilingual learners found that students classified as LTEL had a lower graduation rate than even newcomers (Haas et al., 2014). Statistics like this confirm that many students classified as LTEL "have not been well-served by their schools" (Calderón et al., 2020, p. 23). In this book,

we hope to shift the deficit-based narrative around these students, provide administrators with practical approaches for schoolwide supports, and set these students up for a more equitable educational experience in secondary schools.

An opportunity withheld is a door closed
on a new world full of potential.



FROM THE FIELD

Educational Programming

Beth shares an experience with an experienced multilingual who advocated for participating in grade-level English classes.

When I was a high school English language development (ELD) teacher, one of my ninth-grade students approached me at the end of the first week of school. He respectfully requested a change in his schedule from my ELD class to the ninth-grade English Language Arts (ELA) class. I hesitated because his scores on the English proficiency test suggested he would struggle in the ninth-grade ELA class without additional support. I asked him why he wanted to switch classes and his thoughtful response moved me. He argued that he wanted to graduate and study at a university. He knew that the ELD class did not give him the necessary credits for graduation. He did not want to take both the ELD class and the ninth-grade ELA class, because he wanted to explore an elective during the ELD class instead. After I explained the situation to the ninth-grade ELA teacher and got her approval, I changed the student's schedule. I told him he could come to me for extra help at any time. He gleefully changed classes, and I never saw him for extra support. He passed the ninth-grade ELA class with a B. When he stopped by to thank me at the end of the year, I had to thank *him* for helping me see beyond a test score.

When identified English learners struggle with academics or seem to underperform relative to their peers and grade-level expectations, schools may begin the process of providing appropriate interventions and eventually identify a learning disability. While “timely and accurate identification of disabilities for ELs can be extremely challenging” (Sahakyan & Poole, 2022, p. 4), many schools around the world do

follow a careful, multitiered process for identifying learning disabilities in multilingual learners. Despite these processes, many studies have shown that students classified as LTEL are overrepresented in special education compared with other groups of students (Thompson, 2015; Uro & Lai, 2019). In fact, a recent longitudinal study of over a half a million multilingual learners in a U.S. state revealed that up to 80 percent of students identified with a learning disability in elementary school later became classified as LTEL (Sahakyan & Poole, 2022). This overrepresentation may be due to the initial identification process or the later reclassification process.

The process of identifying and reclassifying multilingual learners with learning differences and disabilities is not the intention of this book; providing general educators with a framework and strategies for serving the needs of all students classified as LTEL, even those who have been dual-identified with special learning needs, is the intent. This book focuses on secondary content classes because “even if a student is found eligible for special education services, their academic progress will be influenced by the quality of instruction they receive in their *general* education classes” (Haas & Brown, 2019, p. 29). The framework and strategies in this book are designed to help teachers provide high-quality instruction in general education classes for all students classified as LTEL.

HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE TO DEVELOP PROFICIENCY IN ENGLISH?

Since one of the ways students are classified as LTEL is the length of time they take to achieve English proficiency, it is important to review the research in this area. The time multilingual learners need to develop grade-level English proficiency varies widely depending on many factors, including the following:

- ▶ Prior schooling
- ▶ Socioeconomic status
- ▶ Access to bilingual education
- ▶ The student’s heritage language
- ▶ Quality and language of instruction
- ▶ Age of entry into an English-medium school
- ▶ Literacy development in the student’s heritage language

Regardless of all these variables, research indicates that students require between four and ten years to develop a level of proficiency in English that approaches grade-level peers, if they receive comprehensible instruction and supported opportunities to speak and write across the curriculum (Collier & Thomas, 2002; Cummins, 1981; Takanishi et al., 2017). Based on this research, we contend that students who are classified as LTELs after just five years may actually be on an *expected* English development trajectory. Developing grade-level academic English is a long process just like mastering any complex skill. Although our society expects students to take years to master a complex skill like playing an instrument, when it comes to academic English development, we expect full proficiency after just a few years. These unreasonable expectations are then expressed in the deficit-based LTEL label. By stating these students are taking a long time to develop English,

the LTEL label indicates they have a problem.

We believe they have potential.

Of all the factors listed previously, the one teachers have the most control over is the quality of instruction. This book provides a framework so that secondary multilinguals can receive quality content and academic language instruction across the curriculum.

HOW DID THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC IMPACT SECONDARY MULTILINGUAL LEARNERS?

An additional factor that has impacted the time students need to develop academic English is the COVID-19 pandemic. The unexpected pandemic interrupted the formal educational experience of all students around the world for many months. Online and hybrid instruction, social distancing, masking requirements, and frequent quarantines made it especially challenging for multilingual learners to learn new content in English and forge meaningful relationships with their peers and teachers. Although schools did their best to provide students with the necessary technology to connect to online classes, many students, including multilingual learners, sadly lacked a consistent high-speed internet connection. Even when the technology

worked, most teachers (we included) had little to no experience prior to the pandemic in providing engaging, comprehensible lessons with adequate academic language scaffolds in a virtual environment. Most students also never experienced virtual instruction. Teachers, schools, students, and their families were all in uncharted, unfamiliar waters. In addition, some multilingual learners also experienced food and housing insecurities (Lazarín, 2020), which impacted their ability to focus during online and hybrid classes.

The long-term impacts of school closures, online instruction, and lack of consistent face-to-face interaction with teachers and peers on school-age multilingual learners is not yet known. However, we can predict that two years of interrupted in-person education means that many students may not have received the consistent academic English support they needed during the pandemic. Students may experience the repercussions of these two years of crisis teaching for the next decade. For example, students who were beginning-level language learners during the spring of 2020 may not have received the necessary comprehensible input and support required to develop academic English at the expected rate during those first years as teachers were understandably careening from the whiplash of the transition to online teaching. Students who were already at intermediate levels of English proficiency at the beginning of the pandemic may not have had regular opportunities for interactions with English-proficient peers. Once schools went back to consistent face-to-face instruction, students could again more easily develop academic English and content skills, but those years during the pandemic will still count toward a possible future classification as LTEL. These interrupted school experiences will likely result in even more middle and high school students being classified as LTEL in the coming years.

Despite the challenges of learning during the pandemic, experienced multilinguals showed remarkable resilience as they participated in virtual classes while caring for younger siblings, cooking meals for their family, or sitting in a car outside a public library to access the internet. They may not have made expected gains in academic English, but we believe that these students gained tremendous life experience that teachers can now build on. Additionally, many multilingual learners supported their families financially and took on more adult roles in the household when their guardians had to work frontline jobs. This is the perfect time to reconsider the limitations of the LTEL label and shift our focus instead to the assets these students have.



FROM THE FIELD

Learning During the COVID-19 Pandemic

One of Beth's students illustrates the resilience and growth many students experienced during the height of the pandemic.

I had the privilege of tutoring several highly resilient students classified as LTEL during the pandemic. One of the eighth-grade students, Josue, decided to move back to Mexico to live with his grandfather because the school offered a fully online option for the fall of 2020. Josue continued to Zoom into school in the United States for all of his classes and signed up for extra virtual tutoring hours with me after school twice a week. Due to the time difference between Mexico and his school in the United States, he had to log in very early in the morning every day. During our tutoring sessions, he showed me how to navigate various websites, and I provided him with additional scaffolds for completing assignments in his core content classes.

After school, he helped his grandfather around the ranch. He fed the animals every day, cooked meals, and repaired the chicken coop. He played on a local baseball team and learned how to waltz for a friend's quinceañera celebration.

When he decided to return to face-to-face instruction in his U.S. school for the second semester, he successfully reintegrated into grade-level classes. He had improved his Spanish language skills, regained his connection to his Mexican culture, and passed his academic courses in English. The life experiences this student gained during his virtual schooling are irreplaceable and will certainly support his continued education.



REFLECTION

- What academic gains or nonacademic experiences did your students make during the pandemic?

- What have your students learned during school closures and virtual instruction that you could tap into during your content lessons?

WHO ARE EXPERIENCED MULTILINGUALS?

In order to focus on these students' assets, we are choosing to refer to students currently classified as long-term English learners as *experienced multilinguals* (EMs) (Brooks, personal communication, July 30, 2021). This assets-based term highlights the fact that these middle and high school students have gained valuable experience and that they already speak at least one other language. We hope to shift teachers' perceptions and focus the attention on the assets these students bring to the classroom rather than focusing on perceived deficits.

Labels matter. As Brooks (2020) wrote, "Labels impact the way in which educators engage with students and understand their needs and abilities" (p. 7). Therefore, we have chosen a label that aims to *positively* shape the way educators view these students. Experienced multilinguals bring many positive life experiences, linguistic assets, and cultural funds of knowledge to their learning (Moll, 2019). They know how to navigate multilingual, multicultural spaces fluidly. Teachers can value the experiences these students, their families, and their communities possess as important instructional treasures that play a central role in teaching and learning (Zacarian et al., 2021). The assets that experienced multilinguals, families, and communities offer include such things as

- ▶ having lived through specific historical events,
- ▶ a rich tradition of oral and written literature,
- ▶ personal experience living in different regions, and
- ▶ knowledge of various cultural practices, traditions, and beliefs.

Throughout the book, we will focus on what experienced multilinguals *can* do. We understand that they continue to need support across the curriculum, but we take an asset-based perspective on what these students can achieve and how to best provide that support. We believe their heritage languages, cultures, and lived experiences are valuable resources that enhance and facilitate learning (González et al., 2005; Little et al., 2017; Moll, 2019). Developing an assets-based mindset as shown in Figure 1.3 is one essential way to create long-term success for experienced multilinguals.

1.3 Differences Between a Deficit-Based and an Asset-Based Mindset

Deficit-Based Mindset	Asset-Based Mindset
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experienced multilinguals (EMs) are not capable of learning grade-level content. • EMs' heritage languages hinder their ability to learn English. • EMs lack the experiences needed to learn this content. • EMs are reading below grade level so they won't be able to access the text. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EMs are capable of learning and excelling in grade-level content. • EMs' cultures provide rich opportunities for curricular connections. • EMs' languages enhance learning. • EMs' lived experiences provide context for learning. • EMs who are less proficient in English can learn grade-level content with intentional support and graduate from high school.

We encourage educators to begin using the more assets-based term *experienced multilinguals* when referring to their students who have been learning in an English environment for five or more years. We hope this book goes a long way in achieving the wish Claravall expressed on his podcast, "Maybe ten years from now the word LTEL is gone" (EdPod, 2018). In its place, we hope that more experienced multilinguals will find the long-term success they are capable of.



REFLECTION

- How does the term *experienced multilingual* shift how you perceive students who have been learning English for five or more years?

- What would happen if the term *experienced multilingual* were used more often at your school?

- How would you explain the purpose and benefits of shifting to the term *experienced multilingual* to a colleague?

WHY AND HOW SHOULD SECONDARY CONTENT TEACHERS GET TO KNOW THE EXPERIENCED MULTILINGUALS IN THEIR CLASSES?

We recognize that this group of multilingual learners is as diverse as any other group of students. Understanding the complex identities of

experienced multilinguals is an essential first step in successfully and equitably educating them. If secondary content teachers understand their students' rich backgrounds—including their vast experiences in and out of school, their heritage languages, and their cultural values—they can meaningfully connect their lessons to these funds of knowledge (Moll, 2019; Paris & Alim, 2017; Snyder & Staehr Fenner, 2021). Throughout the book, we will share concrete ways to make these connections to enrich the education of all students.

Therefore, we encourage teachers to spend some time getting to know their experienced multilinguals. There are many ways to listen to students' stories and learn about their educational experiences, including the following:

- ▶ Surveys
- ▶ Journal entries
- ▶ One-on-one interviews
- ▶ After-school or lunchtime chats

Surveys may seem like the most efficient way to gain this information, but we caution teachers to build rapport with their students first and only ask a few questions at a time. It is often more effective to ask questions about students' backgrounds that directly connect to the current unit rather than asking students to complete a long survey at the beginning of the year. Figure 1.4 provides some topics and questions teachers might ask students as journal prompts, in informal interviews, in small focus groups, or on written surveys. Although we include a variety of open and closed questions in several different categories, we advise teachers to be cautious asking questions about students' educational background and family. While this information can be valuable in informing instruction, it may also cause students some anxiety, especially if they are undocumented or have interrupted formal education. Sometimes asking the more open-ended questions like “Please tell me something about your education before you came to this school” or “Please tell me something about the adults in your home” allows students to share within their comfort zone and open the communication channels for follow-up questions later. We suggest teachers ask just a few of these questions at a time and continue building connections to their students throughout the school year through a variety of interactions. These interactions not only build relationships with the students but also help teachers design lessons to connect with their students.

1.4 Possible Questions for Interviews, Surveys, Focus Groups, or Informal Chats

Topic	Possible Questions or Prompts
Educational Background	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where were you born? • What countries have you lived in? • Tell me about your schooling before you started at this middle school/high school. • When you were in elementary school, how did your teachers help you learn English? • Did you go to a special English language development class? What did you do in that class? • Have you ever had bilingual classes or instruction in your heritage language(s)? What was that like for you? • Did any of your teachers ever use your heritage language(s) in class? What was that like for you? • Did you change schools during your elementary education? How often? Did you change schools during your middle school education?
Linguistic Background	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which language(s) do you speak with adults in your home? • Which language(s) do you speak with siblings in your home? • When you speak with bilingual friends, which language(s) do you use? • In which language(s) do you prefer to read for fun outside of school (texts, chats, games, books, websites, articles, etc.)? • In which language(s) do you prefer to write outside of school when texting, writing lists, sending emails, and so forth? • Which language(s) do you consider your most proficient or “best” language(s)? Why? • If you have a choice to read or write in any language in a class in school, which language would you choose? Why?
Current Academic Experience at School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When do you feel most successful at school? Why? • Do you feel motivated to succeed at school? Why or why not? • What do you like about school? • What is challenging or frustrating for you at school? What kind of assignments are most difficult for you (essays, readings, extended projects, etc.)? • What is your favorite subject at school? Why? • How do your teachers support you? • What could your teachers do to support or challenge you? • What do you do when you are having difficulty in a class, with homework, or with a project? • Which classes do you think will be most useful for you in the future? Why?

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(Continued)

Topic	Possible Questions or Prompts
Sense of Belonging	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What activities are you involved with at school (clubs, sports, volunteer activities, etc.)?• How do you feel about your peers? Do you feel respected by other students in your classes?• Do you have a group of friends at school?• Is there a teacher, coach, or other adult at school that you feel close to? What do you like about that person?• What is something you wish your teachers knew about you?• How do you perceive yourself as a student at this school?
Family	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tell me about the adults who live in your home.• Who do you feel closest to in your family? Why?• How do you help your family or around the house (chores, work, child care, etc.)?• Do you have any siblings? Tell me about them.• What do you like to do at home or with your family members?
Other Experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What do you like to do outside of school or school-related activities?• Are you involved in community organizations (church, youth groups, community sports, music groups, etc.)?• What brings you joy?• What are your hobbies or personal interests outside of school?
Future Plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What would you like to do after high school?• What goals are you most excited to achieve by the end of middle school/high school?• How have your experiences and education influenced your interests for the future?• How could this school best support your plans for the future?



Adapted from Dr. Maneka Brooks, Patty Payne, and the CUNY-NYSIEB Framework.
Available at [resources.corwin.com/Long-Term SuccessforExperiencedMLs](https://resources.corwin.com/Long-Term-Success-for-Experienced-MLs)

Teachers in the United States may be surprised to learn that the majority of experienced multilinguals in their classrooms were born in the United States and have attended U.S. schools since kindergarten (Batalova et al., 2007). They may discover that some students no longer speak their heritage languages well and others consider English

as their most proficient language. Most likely, these interviews and interactions will reveal students who are motivated to succeed and have high aspirations for their future (Kim & García, 2014). Through these personal connections, we can get to know the individuals behind the labels and counter the negative stereotypes.



TRY IT OUT

Student Interview or Survey

1. Create a set of interview questions for your experienced multilinguals that includes at least one question from each topic in Figure 1.4.
2. Use an online survey platform like Survey Monkey or Google Forms to collect the information. Use the information you gather to inform your instruction and interactions with the students.

STUDENT PORTRAITS

There is no one “typical” experienced multilingual. The students highlighted in the following portraits are composites of many students we have worked with over the years. The following students provide a sense of the diversity and variety of assets experienced multilinguals bring to school. These student portraits provide a focus for our work and the strategies we present. Although we focus on just two experienced multilinguals, their educational experiences mirror many of these students. We acknowledge that the educational programming we describe for both of these multilinguals for many reasons may be considered out of compliance with federal requirements, but these portraits share the reality of many experienced multilinguals.

We will follow the students in these portraits, Graciela and Min Woo, through their school day and use them as examples of how teachers can support and challenge their experienced multilinguals. We believe all students will benefit by building on the assets of experienced multilinguals and offering appropriate scaffolds in challenging secondary content courses.



GRACIELA

Portrait of an Experienced Multilingual

Graciela is a hard-working tenth-grade student. Her parents are from Mexico, but she was born in the United States. She went to a bilingual school from kindergarten to second grade. However, when her parents moved to a new school district, she received pull-out English language development classes instead of bilingual education. As a middle school student, she received academic language support in the sheltered English language arts class but took all other content classes without additional academic language support. Now in tenth grade, she has no direct English language support classes.

Graciela speaks Spanish with her parents, bilingual friends, and community members. She reads shopping lists, menus, and headlines in Spanish but prefers to read books and magazines in English. She uses her complete linguistic repertoire (Spanish and English) when interacting socially between classes, at lunch, and at recess. On the weekends, she helps her father in their family store and interacts with customers in Spanish and English. At this point, she is interested in marketing and graphic design and is planning to study at a university in the United States.

In school, Graciela is motivated to do well but is often disappointed when her grades on projects and report cards do not reflect her hard work. She tries to complete all the assignments, so she wonders why her grades are not better. Occasionally she asks for extra help, but she is fearful of being ridiculed by her classmates, so she often slips under the radar as she tries to figure it out on her own or with her friends.

Talking with her friends is the best part of each school day. Graciela appreciates the opportunity to talk to her bilingual classmates about class topics, because it helps her understand content texts. When she has to read independently, she depends on visuals, headings, and key words to comprehend the main ideas.

Graciela would rather give an oral report in class than labor to write an essay. She knows how to write full, comprehensible sentences, but she needs more coaching and explicit instruction to write more like a scientist, mathematician, and historian. When teachers give her specific feedback on writing, she gladly makes changes.

Although Graciela is still classified as an English learner, she does not receive any extra support classes or work with an English language development teacher anymore. After ten years of education in the United States, she sees herself as English proficient.



MIN WOO

Portrait of an Experienced Multilingual

Min Woo is a bouncy, positive, and helpful seventh grader born in Korea to adoring Korean parents. Min Woo's dad works for a Korean technology company that has manufacturing plants throughout Southeast Asia. Min Woo went to Korean-speaking schools in Korea up to first grade when he followed his father as he worked on multiyear projects outside of Korea. In each place, he enrolled in international schools where English is the language of instruction. Fortunately, at these schools, Min Woo continued to learn Korean formally through after-school tutors and at international schools that offered opportunities to learn Korean. Understandably, his reading and writing level in Korean is not on grade level compared with other seventh graders in Korea. Not surprisingly, Min Woo has a more proficient command of English than Korean.

At home, Min Woo's family speaks Korean but everyone in the household is literate in English as well. Min Woo is highly literate in Korean for a person who only spent his first school year in Korea as a result of his parents painstakingly investing time and financial resources to grow his Korean language skills.

During free-voluntary reading time at school, he switches between Korean and English books. When speaking to Min Woo, one would see he is a fluent, confident user of English without any issues following his teachers' spoken instructions. Min Woo can decode and pronounce all words found in a grade-level text but needs support to comprehend the text. He can write in grammatically correct sentences and paragraphs but needs support in producing writing that meets discipline-specific expectations and to use evidence drawn from texts and video resources.

Though Min Woo does not qualify for English language development services at his international school, he still needs additional support to be successful in his content classes.



TRY IT OUT

Assets-Based Student Portrait

1. Use the information you gathered in the student survey or interview to create a student portrait that highlights the student's assets.
2. Share the portrait with your colleagues and encourage them to build on the student's assets in their lessons.

CLOSING REMARKS

This book serves as a guide for all secondary content teachers who are fortunate enough to work with experienced multilinguals. In the following chapters, we share a framework for planning and teaching so that all students receive appropriate support for both academic English and content learning. We stand by the belief that through the collective efforts of all teachers in the school, experienced multilinguals will have long-term success.

As Robinson (2010) explains, “Farmers and gardeners know you can’t make a plant grow. . . . The plant grows itself. What you do is provide the conditions for growth.” In Chapter 7, we offer some suggestions for programming that will create the conditions for more equitable educational experiences across the curriculum. We offer a systematic approach to collaboration that raises awareness, capitalizes on teachers’ expertise during co-planning, and provides differentiated support for experienced multilinguals. We are convinced that if more teachers implement the equity-based framework in this book, they will create the conditions for growth so their experienced multilinguals can reach their fullest potential.



CHAPTER SUMMARY

- *Experienced multilingual* is an assets-based term that highlights the valuable resources these secondary learners possess.
- In many middle schools and high schools, experienced multilinguals make up a large and growing percentage of students identified as English learners.
- Experienced multilinguals have the right to equitable education that includes meaningful access to grade-level content courses.
- Content teachers have the responsibility to learn about the linguistic, experiential, and cultural assets of their experienced multilinguals.
- Experienced multilinguals are a diverse group of individuals with rich backgrounds.