



**Power your DE&I
strategy and drive
global growth with
language learning**

Why bold leaders are prioritizing language learning to turbocharge DE&I... and reaping the benefits.



Forward-thinking organizations and leaders are focusing on language learning – because they understand that it is fundamental to robust DE&I, which in turn unlocks untapped business growth opportunities.

The five business skills with the highest increase in demand – according to Pearson’s 2022 [APAC Power Skills Survey](#) – are all underpinned by good communication (Leadership and Management, Collaboration, Adaptability and Continuous Learning, Digital Skills, and Critical Thinking and Decision-Making). It’s therefore very clear to leaders across the world that **investing in language skills can underpin a progressive and even transformational diversity, equity and inclusion (DE&I) strategy that powers international growth.**

It’s widely accepted that a healthy culture of DE&I is a non-negotiable in today’s workplace. Investing in and building the language skills that underpin diversity, equity and inclusion is also your strongest business advantage, and the benefits to employers, employees and businesses as a whole are multifaceted and wide-reaching.

Companies that
invest in DE&I are

70%

more likely to capture
a new market

Improved language proficiency results in more confident communicators who are empowered with an understanding of cultural differences and nuances – underpinning your DE&I strategy in multiple ways. But historically this has been overlooked.

DE&I is by no means a new item on the business agenda – Harvard Business Review has previously reported that companies that invest in DE&I are **70% more likely to capture a new market**. But despite understanding the importance of DE&I, many businesses today are still struggling to implement and develop meaningful strategies that are embedded across the organization. And there's a simple way to fix this.

As a leader, when you make the connection between stronger DE&I and language learning, and discover the resources that will support you in doing so, an exciting growth potential is unlocked.

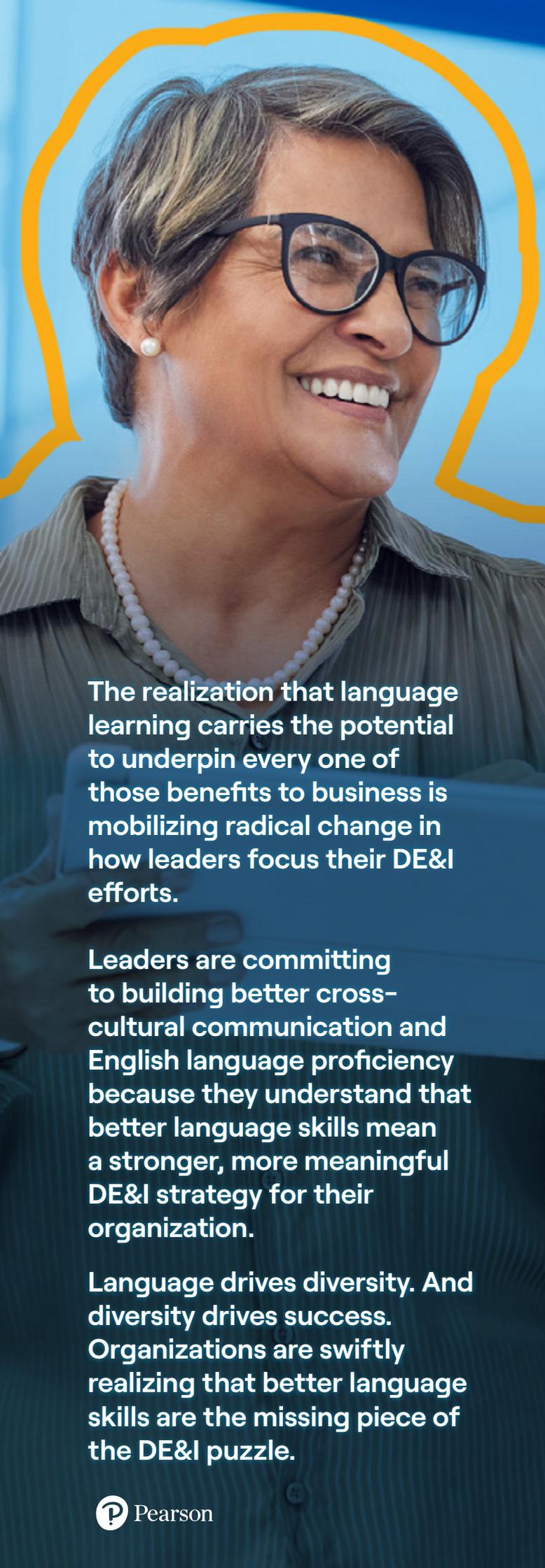
When you get them right, great DE&I strategies transform businesses, and language proficiency plays a crucial role.

We know that investing in DE&I initiatives promotes a sense of belonging and connection, and ultimately delivers stronger business results. Whether you're looking to **boost profitability, staff attraction and retention** or performance, proactive DE&I initiatives are central to overall business success.

And the benefits don't end there. Implementing a commitment to DE&I alongside expertly designed language training and development will also:

- Widen and diversify your talent pool.
- Foster a **culture of ongoing learning**.
- Boost employee engagement, loyalty and trust.
- Improve team morale, mental health and well-being.
- Help generate fresh ideas and new perspectives.
- Develop problem-solving and decision-making skills.
- Build better relationships with customers and help you gain better customer insight.
- Enhance your brand and company's reputation.

That's quite a list, and it can all be catalyzed by building language proficiency.



The realization that language learning carries the potential to underpin every one of those benefits to business is mobilizing radical change in how leaders focus their DE&I efforts.

Leaders are committing to building better cross-cultural communication and English language proficiency because they understand that better language skills mean a stronger, more meaningful DE&I strategy for their organization.

Language drives diversity. And diversity drives success. Organizations are swiftly realizing that better language skills are the missing piece of the DE&I puzzle.

Talent Acquisition leaders are assessing language skills fairly and inclusively, using assessment software such as **Versant by Pearson**. Learning and Development leaders are embedding the use of an interactive language learning tool with a range of levels such as **Mondly by Pearson** to support equity across their organization. This way, learners can choose topics based on their learning needs and learn at their own pace. This is a flexible and inclusive way to develop confident communicators, raise standards of English, and promote better collaboration across your business.

Leaders are motivated to recruit and develop a more varied and diverse work environment for many reasons - not least because diversity drives better thinking and high performance. McKinsey has reported that companies in the top quartile of ethnic and cultural diversity in teams **outperformed those in the lowest one in profitability by 36%**. At the same time, employees want to bring their authentic selves and 'be themselves in English' at work. Supporting a diverse workforce to build language proficiency fosters a greater sense of belonging, builds commitment and promotes better collaboration.

Inclusion and belonging are becoming even more important with the rise in remote and hybrid work environments. Many workers are missing communication with colleagues and clients in other locations, missing out on opportunities for collaboration, and feeling disconnected. Cultivating DE&I attributes with language skills in mind can unite dispersed teams, help serve customers from diverse backgrounds, build trust, and reduce feelings of isolation and risk of burnout.

How does DE&I intersect with language learning?

Let's look at the three key elements of DE&I and understand how language proficiency feeds into them.

- **Diversity** is about nurturing a workforce that's inclusive of different backgrounds and experiences, and building language skills is key to developing this. Better language skills help shape recruitment practices and [dismantle bias in your recruiting process](#) to access wider talent pools. They can also enhance communication within a team and with customers, and help employees from different language backgrounds contribute more fully, bring new ideas, understand subtle cultural nuances and appreciate other perspectives.
- **Equity** is the practice of levelling the playing field and treating everyone with impartiality, giving employees at every level equal opportunities to thrive, feel respected, and be able to speak up and share their ideas.

Since [inclusive language can make for a more equitable workplace](#), and everyday language can be unconsciously biased, raising collective awareness around equity and language use is key. By ensuring that each of your team members has the same access to language learning opportunities, you're providing an equitable environment that promotes fairness to all.

- **Inclusion** is about creating an environment where everyone feels welcome, where differences are embraced and where a sense of belonging for all is cultivated. Language skills fundamentally underpin inclusion - they're the catalyst for better communication and increasing employee engagement as a result of a sense of belonging. And it starts at the top. The [six signature traits of inclusive leadership as reported by Deloitte](#) are 'cognizance, curiosity, cultural intelligence, courage, commitment and collaboration'. Language learning is central to all six traits, and promoting it is a great way to demonstrate your commitment to inclusion.



Berenice López
Global ELL HR Director
at Pearson

Business reflects real life. We need to have open conversations to find ways of celebrating, implementing and promoting diversity, creating a culture where employees feel more valued and therefore more loyal. Building a business on human characteristic acceptance, mutual respect and behavioral awareness can transform workplaces for the better - for employer and employee - and can have a significant impact on reputation. I've regularly seen first-hand how language learning positively - even dramatically - impacts an institution's DE&I efforts.

How to embed effective language learning that supports DE&I in your organization.



- 1 Make it clear** that language learning for all is a top-level commitment as part of your DE&I initiatives.
- 2 Communicate the benefits** and advantages of ongoing language learning and development, along with the link between language and cross-cultural understanding and inclusivity.
- 3 Support a diverse recruitment strategy** by embedding language assessment in your Talent Acquisition initiatives. Measure candidates' current language skill levels in a fair and equitable way using a resource such as [Versant by Pearson](#). (Pearson TalentLens has developed a set of inclusive [best practice assessment steps](#) for HR professionals to incorporate over time.)
- 4 Implement and embed** easy-to-use and accessible language resources in your Learning and Development initiatives. Platforms such as [Mondly by Pearson](#) are flexible, relevant and engaging, and give employees autonomy on their learning journey.
- 5 Create excitement** to promote buy-in. Make language learning part of your company culture and experiment with ways in which to do this.
- 6 Communicate milestones** and progress, gain inclusive and regular feedback, celebrate successes and always promote a culture of collaboration.



Lattelle Reaves
Director of Diversity,
Equity and Inclusion
at Pearson

“Businesses that seek out, develop and amplify voices from under-represented racial or ethnic groups gain new perspectives and inspire their employees to make a difference. While prioritizing English language proficiency brings huge benefits, organizations should also be mindful of potential biases and ensure that language requirements do not inadvertently create barriers for certain groups. Leading by example in this area is incredibly important, and can be demonstrated even in the smallest actions.”

Here's what to focus on as a leader.

1 Practice self-awareness.

Be cognizant of your own language strengths and weaknesses. If there is a gap in your language skills, publicly commit to prioritizing your own learning development and set goals to stay on track.

2 **Keep the dialogue open.** Keep an open mind and invite suggestions from all as to how language learning could become further embedded in your organization to support DE&I initiatives. Encourage other perspectives to acquire new and valuable knowledge.

3 Listen and question actively.

Create an appetite for continuous learning and improvement. As Harvard Business Review says, **listening is critical in a multicultural workplace**. Ask team members which languages they'd like to learn or improve on. Make language learning a standing item on every annual performance review.

4 **Develop your own cultural intelligence.** Explore how different cultures communicate, and understand how that can allow for different approaches to productivity, collaboration, efficiency and innovation.

There will always be challenges associated with implementing, embedding and promoting diversity, equity and inclusion in a company.

But by prioritizing language learning, you will be propelling business growth throughout your organization – unlocking international opportunities, improving internal and external communication, enabling better collaboration, and turbo-charging your talent acquisition.

At the very heart of a truly diverse, equitable and inclusive environment lies a multi-level commitment to better communication, in all the various forms it takes across your organization.

Prioritizing language proficiency is one of the most dynamic ways to reinforce DE&I in your business.



About Pearson

At Pearson, the world's leading learning education company, we empower individuals and organizations through transformative learning experiences. With a global presence in over 70 countries, we offer a wide range of products and services to institutions, corporations, governments and learners worldwide.

Pearson Language Solutions for Work includes our assessment tool - **Versant by Pearson**, which helps you hire with confidence. With up to 3 million tests completed each year across 100 countries, it ensures effective language evaluation. The AI-based test reduces bias and enables global brands and businesses to assess candidates' English proficiency quickly, accurately, and at scale. **Mondly by Pearson**, our suite of language learning solutions, can then support employers to develop their employees' language skills and unlock business growth.