

An act of magic

It is an act of magic converting information into knowledge.

The nature of something is unknown until the information, as a magical potion, appears to explain its essence. Some people can't use information because they can't read the recipe, or they can't understand the sorcerer's voice that has gently tried to explain how to do the hocus-pocus.

But we all know that there is no need to be trained as a magician to use language as a tool.

If we look for the synonym of 'convert' we get: *change, adapt, renovate, switch, and transfer*. All words related to an Immigrants life: Immigrants need **to adapt** themselves to this reality. They need **to renovate** their past. They need **to transfer** their backgrounds and make it functional to this environment. They need to make "the switch"; in other words, they need **to change for survival**.

How can Immigrants transform their lives if they don't understand the information? How can they do this without knowledge?

A person who doesn't understand the language that everybody speaks, feels sick. The old mother tongue, that antique way to express his or her life, has disappeared. The only potion that can take him back to active living is the one called "English" - for lifelong learning.

An individual suffering culture shock may find that his intellectual tools don't help him as effectively as he thought. He knows what he needs, but he doesn't know how to get it.

From the newcomers' perspective, English teachers have the formula that makes them available to exchange the energy stream that we call information into valuable knowledge. This fabulous act of magic where a new person will be born into an old body needs an environment - a safe place for this transformation, a place where diversity is respected, a place where all cultures are represented. That place is the public library.

In North America, where mass production of goods has created a uniformity of products and consumers, the library is remarkable for providing independent work and freedom. We Immigrants used to be dependent on other people's decisions, because the basis for our Education is training people in what to think and not how to think. We need the power to decide on our own what is good and bad or what is needed or not. It doesn't mean "illiterate". It means being able to think for ourselves – information gives you freedom. Many immigrants consider The Public Library as a revolutionary place where you have choices in what you read – complete freedom of thought.

This freedom – the freedom to learn, the freedom grow - makes the public library a magical place for growing new thinkers who want to practice the alchemy of transforming information into knowledge.

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- Ricardo Blanco