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Why we need a National Languages Policy

Susan Warren

In the last two TESOLANZ newsletters, Distinguished Emeritus Professor Paul Spoonley and Associate Professor Sharon Harvey have put forward a strong case for more coherent support for the rich diversity of languages spoken in Aotearoa, and specifically for the need for a National Languages Policy (Spoonley, 2025, p3, and Harvey, 2025, p1). These issues have also been raised in a recent publication from the National Forum on Language Learning for New Zealand's Future (Coughlan, J. et al, 2025).

So, what would a National Languages Policy look like, and why do we need one?

There are really only two reasons why the Parliament in Aotearoa considers establishing any new policy – to solve a pressing problem, or to take advantage of a significant opportunity. In the case of a National Languages Policy, both reasons apply, which is why, among many other voices, the Languages Alliance Aotearoa NZ has been calling for a National Languages Policy since our inception in 2012.

Let's look first at the problems caused by the lack of a coherent language policy. Here are just a few examples:

- Evidence shows that quality bilingual education improves achievement across the curriculum (May, 2020), yet few children have the opportunity to use their heritage language as a medium of learning at school.
- New migrants who do not yet have residency do not qualify for government-funded English language classes, which means some people can be in Aotearoa for years, often unable to use the skills that brought them here, before they can access subsidised English language support.
- Most community language classes have no government support (Warren et al, 2024, p38), and children get no recognition in their school reports for their learning.
- Deaf children are not always supported to learn and use New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL) and may not have access to NZSL interpreters or peers in school (World Federation of the Deaf, 2016), or supporting materials (Daly and McKee, 2022).
- Interpreting services are not always easily available, which severely impacts migrants' ability to engage with essential services such as healthcare and social services, or to be fairly represented in the justice system.

A more coherent language policy that ensures consistent support for language diversity across government agencies could resolve these and other issues, and could enable Aotearoa to gain more of the benefits that language diversity can bring.

Editor's Foreword



Kia ora koutou,

I began the editor's foreword in the July edition with a comment about the weather, and here we are again with many of us experiencing some very challenging Spring weather events. For any of you affected by the most recent storms, especially in the South Island and lower North Island, kia kaha, and our thoughts are with you as the clean-up continues.

Our Spring edition offers a full kete of interesting articles, book reviews, and reports from the TESOLANZ President, branches, and SIGs, as well as another interview – this time with Mark Dawson-Smith, who stepped down from the Executive at the recent TESOLANZ AGM. Mark has been an absolute stalwart on the Executive, both in his role as Publications Coordinator and as a passionate advocate for all things relating to assessment. He has passed the baton on to Siân Waite, who is also joined on the new Executive by Sally Hay, who has moved from her leadership role in the Secondary SIG to Secretary. You will find a brief introduction to each of them along with their pictures in this edition, so you will recognise them at the CLESOL conference coming up so quickly in July next year.

In our first article, Susan Warren from Languages Alliance Aotearoa New Zealand responds to articles in our previous two editions authored by Paul Spoonley and Sharon Harvey respectively, calling for a national language policy. Susan outlines what a national languages policy would look like and why it's needed so urgently. Her description of issues caused by the lack of this kind of policy is compelling reading.

Structured Literacy is once again in focus in our next article. Tracey Millin and Jude Bautista from the University of Canterbury respond to Rosemary Erlam and Rebecca Jesson's article in our previous edition about whether this approach is fit for purpose when teaching English language learners. Tracey and Jude support Rosemary and Rebecca's argument that Structured Literacy requires thoughtful implementation if it is to meet English language learners' needs and offer a potential way forward to address the growing literacy struggles here in New Zealand.

In our third article, Angie Finnigan describes her learning journey at her East Auckland school as they responded to the growing number of English language learners in their classrooms. She provides many insights into the challenges, both perceived and real, and the many positive outcomes. Kudos to Angie for being so open and willing to share.

Kudos also to Adrienne Jansen and Dave Douglas for introducing us to poetry writing for English language learners. Their article showcases books of poems written by English language learners and published by Landing Press in Wellington. I found the two poems included in the article a moving testament to the power of this form of writing for these learners in particular.

Our loyal and regular contributor, Nick Baker has once again delivered an article related to the use of technology in our teaching and learning. His is a cautionary tale of how to spot digital bottlenecks and prevent them from impeding online learning, in particular. He lists the likely culprits, relabels them as design challenges, and offers some solutions to address those challenges.

And last but certainly never least, we have two further instalments in the PART series. These two are again both written by Paul Nation and, as ever, well worth a read as many of us are caught up in end-of-year assessments and beginning to plan our programmes for next year. In one, Paul's focus is on administering tests. He provides a list of points to consider in order of importance when we are assessing. In the other, he highlights the importance of having a balanced course that covers all four equal strands of meaning-focused input, meaning-focused output, language-focused learning, and fluency development.

Once more, we have three book reviews curated by Elizaveta Tarasova, our book reviews editor. One of the books is accompanied in this edition by Adrienne Jansen and Dave Douglas's article. Thank you, Liza, for making the connection. There is also the usual range of reports from the president, branch leaders, and SIG leaders who have worked on our behalf throughout the year.

Altogether, I hope this edition offers you an interesting and enjoyable read. Best wishes for a calm end-of-year period and a happy holiday season. I look forward to the new year and whatever it brings.

Ngā mihi nui

Christine

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For over two decades, Susan Warren has had the privilege of working with community-based and academic language experts from most major language groups in Aotearoa New Zealand, through her roles in schooling improvement at the Ministry of Education, as Chief Executive of Te Hononga Akoranga COMET, as a co-convenor of the Languages Alliance Aotearoa New Zealand and as a trustee of English Languages Partners NZ. At various stages she has attempted to learn nine languages, with varying success.

When most people think of possible benefits from multilingualism, they think first of economic gains, such as smoothing the path of trade and making things easier for tourists. These benefits are real and significant. For example, Switzerland recognises gains of 10% of its gross domestic product because of its multilingual heritage, whereas the United Kingdom associates a loss of 3.5% in gross domestic product due to poor language skills within its population (Hardach, 2013).

When well-supported, language diversity is also a powerful bridge to social cohesion and to well-being in general. Learning or being exposed to multiple languages increases cultural awareness and enhances people's ability to consider different points of view, providing a window into another way of understanding the world (Piller, 2016). The languages we speak can also strengthen family and community ties and shape our identity (Alshammari, 2018).

So, having looked at why a National Languages Policy is needed, let's think about what exactly a National Languages Policy might look like. In our 2024 report on language organisations in Aotearoa (Warren et al, 2024), we reflected on the kind of National Languages Policy we were looking for.

In practical terms, we proposed that any National Languages Policy would need to provide for access to English language teaching; interpreting and translation services; bilingual and immersion education across at least early learning and primary schooling; language diversity in government communications and broadcasting; formal and informal opportunities for language learning; and support for maintaining heritage languages within families and communities.

As we saw it, such a policy would be much wider than just education. Rather, it would be relevant to multiple portfolios, including Ethnic Communities;

Arts, Culture and Heritage; Māori Development; Pacific Peoples; Health; Justice; Business, Innovation and Employment; and, yes, also Education.

It would specifically address and be underpinned by te reo Māori, recognise the place of NZSL as an official language and of English as a de facto national language, encompass official recognition and support for Realm languages (Te Reo Kūi Airani, Vagahau Niue and Gagana Tokelau) and for the other major Pacific languages spoken in our nation (Gagana Samoa and Lea Faka-Tonga) as recommended in the Pacific Languages Strategy (Ministry of Pacific Peoples, 2022), and would recognise the value of all languages.

Such a policy could resolve most of the issues I have listed above, and could also enhance the social, cultural, economic, and well-being benefits that multilingualism brings. These benefits are currently only partially realised, due to the piecemeal approach to language support in all public spheres.

I will close with the words of Professor Jo Lo Bianco, who wrote Australia's national languages policy and who has supported a number of other countries to develop their own national languages policies, commenting recently on the potential for Aotearoa:

"New Zealand has a unique opportunity to craft a language policy that celebrates multiculturalism, strengthens national cohesion, and prepares young people to be global citizens. To achieve this, policy must be practical, well designed, and effective." – Professor Joseph Lo Bianco, Emeritus Professor, University of Melbourne, quoted in Coughlan, J. et al, 2025.

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“To Sound or To Sense? That is the Question!”: Supporting Linguistically Diverse Learners with ‘Reading to Learn’

Tracey Millin | Jude Bautista



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In the evolving literacy landscape of Aotearoa New Zealand, Structured Literacy has taken centre stage. With a strong foundation in the “science of reading,” its focus on phonemic awareness, phonics, and decodable texts has shaped the revised English curriculum, ITE requirements, and classroom expectations. While this approach may benefit some learners, critical questions are emerging, particularly in light of New Zealand’s increasing linguistic diversity, common in many classrooms across New Zealand (Goodwin & Jiménez, 2025; Wyse & Bradbury, 2022).

In a recent TESOLANZ article, Jesson and Erlam (2025) rightly raise concerns about the adequacy of Structured Literacy as it is currently represented in New Zealand classrooms for students who are acquiring English at the same time as they are learning to read in English. Many of these learners enter classrooms with additional needs in English communicative skills (BICS), let alone the academic language proficiency (CALP) required to engage with curriculum texts in English. In some cases, some of these learners arrive in New Zealand, with additional needs in CALP development in their heritage language too. For these emergent bilinguals, learning to read in English is not merely a matter of decoding, but rather, it is an act of meaning-making in a language they are still acquiring.

While the challenges presented above are important considerations for younger emergent bilinguals, they are equally relevant for older multilingual learners in upper primary and secondary schools. These learners may have mastered basic decoding skills but still lack the deep reading comprehension skills needed to succeed academically (Duke et al., 2021). For example, these students can read the words on the page, yet struggle to unpack dense academic language, follow the logic of complex texts, and connect ideas across paragraphs or genres. For these students, the key barrier is not phonics, but the ability to interpret, organise, and use information from reading to support coherent, purposeful writing. When curriculum assessment requires students to demonstrate their understanding through writing, the ability to read with deep comprehension and then convey that understanding convincingly in written form becomes a high-stakes skill (Grabe & Zhang, 2016; Vaughn, Boardman, & Klingner, 2024), one that can determine access to further learning, qualifications, and future opportunities. There are alternative literacy pedagogies available to teachers that can support deep reading comprehension skills development whilst also scaffolding more advanced writing skills. An approach like *Reading to Learn (RtL)* provides explicit, structured support for these learners, helping them engage meaningfully with challenging texts and laying the groundwork for the academic writing skills they will need to demonstrate curriculum mastery.

This article offers support to Jesson and Erlam’s (2025) article and gives food for thought on a potential way forward to tackle New Zealand’s



growing literacy struggles, especially amongst *older* learners and English Language Learners (ELLs). *RtL*, a structured and scaffolded pedagogy rooted in meaning and language, provides a powerful alternative that complements the aims of Structured Literacy while directly addressing its limitations for ELLs and for learners who already have basic decoding skills but need deeper comprehension support.

What Can Complement and Augment Structured Literacy?

Structured Literacy draws on the *Simple View of Reading* (Hoover & Gough, 1990), which conceptualises reading comprehension (R) as the product of decoding (D) and linguistic comprehension (C), formalised as $R = D \times C$. In practice, the sequencing prioritises the mastery of phonics first, with comprehension addressed later, once decoding becomes automatic (Spear-Swerling, 2018; Spear-Swerling, 2022; Chovanec & Sharp, 2025). For many monolingual English speakers, this can be effective. But for emergent bilinguals, this may model or create a disconnect. As Jesson and Erlam note, decodable texts are not designed as input-rich reading material. Rather, they are constructed for phonemic regularity, not meaning. Often, decodable texts offer little opportunity for ELLs to develop vocabulary, grasp narrative conventions, or build the mental lexicon necessary for second language acquisition. The sentences are often syntactically impoverished, may be culturally inauthentic, and semantically thin. Critically, these texts do not connect form to meaning, which is often considered the cornerstone of second language learning (Barber, 2025). For a multilingual learner, reading is not just about matching letters to sounds. It is about making sense of ideas, recognising language patterns, and understanding how English works to convey meaning. Structured Literacy, as currently implemented, does not consistently offer this pathway for ELLs and learners beyond the emergent literacy phase. *RtL*, used in over 14 countries globally, offers a potent complement and/or augmentation.

Reading to Learn: Anchoring on Meaning

RtL offers a solution grounded in both research and practice. While equally structured and explicit, *RtL* simultaneously addresses both meaning and form. When teachers require ELLs to expand their cognitive energies to individual sounds while neglecting comprehensible input, they may see their students develop accurate word reading, but they may not have the assurance that the words sounded out are understood (barking at print).

Furthermore, when the New Zealand English variety clashes with the phonology of the other English language varieties known to ELLs, teachers also run the risk of being misunderstood because the meanings conjured in the learners' minds are different, especially when teaching and learning are limited to phonological sources of information and nothing else. When dealing with ELLs, restricting teaching and learning to include only phonological sources of information in the New Zealand English variety will potentially make ELLs question their own known varieties of English, adding unnecessary cognitive load to these learners. Instead, teachers can simultaneously honour and discuss the ELLs' English phonological variety while

teaching New Zealand English decoding so that learners develop the understanding that there are several correct ways of sounding out a word (Sellen & Andrews, 2017). In a meta-analysis of studies that attempted to relate children's use of dialect and their literacy skills, Gatlin and Wanzek (2015) tend to be convinced that "it is not the use of dialect features alone that presents an obstacle in reading acquisition and achievement, but rather it is a student's ability or inability to vary dialect use in different contexts that is more highly related to literacy performance." (p. 1314)

It is therefore imperative that while teachers develop word decoding accuracy, the words sounded out are anchored on the ELLs' linguistic (e.g., phonological), symbolic, cultural, and multimodal repertoires. In other words, for ELLs, word decoding accuracy needs to have an interactive-compensatory relationship with relevant contexts (Kosaka, 2024; Stanovich, 1980, 1984) to maximise language and literacy learning in the target language.

At its heart, *RtL* helps learners answer the question: How does this text work, and what is it trying to say? The reading process unfolds across five interlinked domains. On one hand, teachers can help learners identify the type of text and its social purpose in the genre domain. On the other hand, in the paragraph domain, teachers can focus on scaffolding language patterns used to convey ideas, highlighting how texts are sequenced and developed. Teachers can also help students examine grammatical choice and construction, including clause structure in context within the sentence domain. Teachers can also move to the morpho-phonological domain, helping students explore vocabulary and how noun/verb groups build meaning. Additionally, in this domain, learners are guided through an analysis of word formation, prefixes, suffixes, and sound-spelling patterns.

The general idea embedded within *RtL* is that meaning is a linchpin where other more detailed layers of language are jointly anchored in. The role of the *RtL* teacher is to respond to students' needs depending on what emerges as the area of greatest need. Rather than decoding for its own sake, *RtL* supports learners to see the why behind the how of English. It allows them to explore language patterns in context, not in isolation, and gives them the tools to comprehend and later produce the kinds of texts valued in schooling. It provides rich opportunities to build vocabulary by incorporating established linguistic systems ELLs bring to the classroom. We draw our readers' attention to one of many publications of interest: Rose & Marin (2012) and Acevedo, Rose, and Whittaker (2023).

Rich Input, Richer Understanding

RtL is supported by usage-based language acquisition theories (Ellis, 1998, Ellis, O'Donnell, & Römer, 2013), which highlight the importance of rich, authentic input in building grammatical and lexical competence. In *RtL*, this input comes from real curriculum texts, not artificially constrained decodable readers. Instead of learning words and sounds divorced from meaning, students are led through a scaffolded close reading process where teachers model how to extract meaning, identify structure, and decode unfamiliar language within authentic, age-appropriate, cognitively-demanding texts. This approach builds academic vocabulary





through exposure and discussion. It supports syntactic awareness by unpacking real sentences. Furthermore, discourse knowledge through genre and text structure is scaffolded, and confidence is built through guided interaction with complex content-based material. Critically, it positions reading as a meaning-making practice, not just a mechanical skill. This provides the foundations for writing development.

Cognitive Science in Practice

RtL's effectiveness isn't accidental. It is backed by core findings from the science of learning. For example, it aligns with three key principles that are especially crucial for ELLs:

1. Cognitive Load Theory

RtL reduces overload by sequencing tasks carefully. For example, students begin with teacher-led preparation, moving to detailed reading, and only later engage in independent reading and writing tasks. This gradual release keeps working memory free for comprehension.

2. Schema Theory & Prior Knowledge Activation

Before reading curriculum-based content texts, teachers preview concepts, elicit learners' prior knowledge (including L1 and cultural background), and pre-teach key vocabulary. This helps ELLs build meaningful connections and reduces disorientation.

3. Explicit Instruction

Rather than expecting students to infer structure or grammar rules, *RtL* models exactly how texts work. Teachers guide learners through examples, checking for understanding and adjusting support as needed.

In short, *RtL* is not a "soft" or "naturalistic" approach. It is explicit, intentional, and rigorous, but its central focus is meaning, which is what emergent bilinguals, and older students outside of the emergent literacy phase so urgently need.

A Foundation for Writing: But First, Reading

While *RtL* is often associated with its powerful writing scaffolds (Millin & Millin, 2018), this article focuses deliberately on its reading pedagogy. For ELLs, especially those with limited English input, *RtL* reading practices provide the foundation upon which academic writing can later be built. Reading, through a *Reading to Learn* pedagogic approach, is not just decoding. It is language study, meaning-making, and genre apprenticeship. Students learn to notice how information is organized, how ideas are sequenced, and how language choices shape meaning, all of which prepares them to become confident writers because teachers have spent time explicitly *showing* students what good writing looks like. Put simply, students are equipped to write better because they learn to read deeply, building the knowledge and language needed to express themselves effectively in writing.

What Reading to Learn Offers Classrooms with Linguistic Diversity

In classrooms with high numbers of multilingual learners, teachers face the dual challenge of supporting language acquisition and curriculum access. *RtL* enables teachers to:

1. use an inclusive approach that does not require multiple lesson plans;

2. build reading comprehension and language knowledge simultaneously;
3. provide equity of access to complex texts through targeted scaffolding; and
4. respect and activate learners' existing knowledge, including their L1.

RtL also aligns with the principles of Structured Literacy. It is systematic, cumulative, and explicit. But its strength lies in how it applies these principles to meaning, not just mechanics.

Conclusion: Broadening the Structured Literacy Conversation

Jesson and Erlam ask an important question in their 2025 article. In our rush to implement Structured Literacy, have we paused to ask whether it meets the needs of all learners? The answer, particularly for emergent bilinguals and older learners, may be no. Structured Literacy, in its current form, potentially risks narrowing reading to decoding, a task that, while essential, is insufficient for students learning English as an additional language. Nor is it sufficient for older learners already decoding, if used in its conventional sense at the secondary school level. In contrast, *RtL* offers a compelling alternative: a structured, research-aligned, evidenced-based, and linguistically responsive pedagogy that begins with reading for meaning and leads, over time, to confident written text production.

Before we teach students to write well, we must teach them to read deeply, not just sound out words, but understand how texts work, what they mean, and why they matter. For multilingual learners, this is not an optional luxury. It is the foundation of literacy equity.

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TESOLANZ position statement:

Staff responsible for ESOL programmes in primary and secondary schools.

TESOLANZ believes that specialist teachers with a recognised ESOL qualification should have responsibility for developing, planning and implementing ESOL programmes. Programmes can be enhanced by paraprofessionals who would ideally hold qualifications in working with ELLs. We encourage all schools to support teachers and paraprofessionals to gain ESOL qualifications.

Qualified staff have the benefit of training to support the micro-decisions of teaching required to accelerate the development of English language proficiency, enabling our learners to more readily access a broad classroom curriculum, achieving academic success and a sense of social and emotional wellbeing.

TESOLANZ is an incorporated society, founded in 1994 with the following constitutional purposes:

- to promote the professional interests and cater for the needs of teachers of English to learners from language backgrounds other than English;
- to promote the interests and cater for the needs of learners from language backgrounds other than English;
- to cooperate with community language action groups in identifying and pursuing common goals;
- to publish research, materials and other documents appropriate to the Association's aims; and
- to affirm the maintenance of Te Reo Māori under the Treaty of Waitangi.

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The book prize kindly gifted by Cambridge University Press for the **STAR LETTER** goes to Sarah Roper. *Ben Goldstein's 30 Ideas on Inclusion in ELT* is a user-friendly book for teachers and managers working with English language learners. It considers learner diversity from multiple perspectives and outlines a range of approaches and ideas for how teachers can integrate inclusion into their teaching practice. If you have something you want to share or air, please email your letter to Christine at secretary@tesolanz.org.nz

1.

Dear Editor,

I really enjoyed reading Nick Baker's Tech Tips in the Winter 2025 TESOLANZ newsletter. Titled 'Bringing AI into Your Writing Through Dialogues of Discussion and Critique', Nick's article resonated with me, and I hope too with many teachers who are grappling with the use of AI in their classrooms. In secondary schools this year, following advice and guidance from the MOE, schools have been implementing AI policies. These policies guide teachers and students in responsible use of AI.

In secondary English language classrooms, many teachers use pen and paper for classwork and assessments. This practice helps mitigate misuse of AI where no language learning takes place. However, as Nick points out, there is a place for AI in writing instruction. I think every teacher needs to add to their teaching kete, a digital literacy unit. ELLs at all levels of language proficiency need language to understand and skills to use AI as a language learning tool. Teachers need to be transparent in class about using AI with students and modeling ways it can be used well and effectively. I would welcome more tips and ideas on this topic in future newsletters.

Ngā mihi,

Sarah Roper

2.

Dear Editor,

I am writing to highlight some of the current challenges faced by ESOL teachers in the tertiary sector, which I believe deserve wider discussion within our professional community. While the commitment of teachers remains strong, the conditions under which many of us are working have become increasingly complex and, at times, discouraging.

A key issue is the precarious nature of employment. Many tertiary ESOL teachers are on short-term or part-time contracts, which creates uncertainty and limits opportunities for professional growth. This instability affects not only teachers but also learners, who benefit from continuity and experienced educators who feel supported and valued.

Another challenge lies in the changing student demographics and expectations. Many tertiary ESOL learners now come with diverse educational backgrounds, linguistic repertoires, and learning goals. While this diversity is enriching, it also requires more flexible teaching approaches and institutional support that is not always available.

Additionally, funding constraints and administrative demands continue to place pressure on programmes. Reduced teaching hours, larger class sizes, and increased reporting requirements can make it difficult to maintain the high-quality, learner-centred instruction that is the hallmark of effective ESOL teaching.

As members of a professional community dedicated to empowering learners through language, we need to advocate for better working conditions, sustainable funding, and professional recognition for ESOL educators in tertiary institutions. Open discussion of these challenges through platforms like the TESOLANZ newsletter is an important step in that direction.

Thank you for continuing to provide a space for these vital conversations.

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The Birth of a Primary ESOL Class

Angie Finnigan

Angie Finnigan is an ESOL Teacher at Baverstock Oaks School and co-leads the ESOL and Learning Support Department (Ākonga Rerekētanga - Diverse Learners). Angie teaches the foundation ESOL Class and focuses on establishing the foundation English Language skills of her learners to empower them to be able to access learning alongside their cohort in their homeroom.



I was approached in the middle of 2024 by my Principal and Associate Principal with the idea of a creative and innovative way to accommodate the learning needs of our foundation English Language Learners (ELLs). The idea was to create an ESOL Class that would spend two out of three blocks of the day together, four days a week, and delivered the full curriculum with the focus on oral language and vocabulary. The ultimate goal was to have our ELLs' access the curriculum once they are re-immersed in their home class. Initially, I was apprehensive as this was a new model we hadn't explored before. There seemed to be multiple barriers in my head i.e. how would the multiple age groups cope in the same space together? How would I differentiate my programme across that many age differences? How would the students gain traction spending most of their week in a multilingual learning environment? All valid questions. I was incredibly fortunate that my Principal and Associate Principal have a great open-door policy, and every challenge and barrier I had, I was able to voice and hash out - expressing my concerns and openly discussing the challenges and solutions. Sometimes, I was able to just use this as a sounding board to help me with my thought processes. Ultimately, at the end of the day, I had to ask myself how I could resist something I had never tried before. There is no doubt that the increasingly complex needs of the average classroom put quite a load on teachers, so if I was able to help remove some of that load, it was worth a try. Thus, our ESOL Class was born. Planning started to happen, as well as tremendous support and growing excitement.

This class is led by me as the ESOL teacher and supported with an ELLA (English Language Learning Assistant). We cap the numbers at 20 to provide the best possible environment to be able to make some progress with this group. The model we run is a revolving door model where, as the students establish enough English to be able to confidently access the curriculum in their home class, they are released back into their homeroom full-time. We continue to have a 'next step' intervention group for these students, where they are withdrawn for 45 minutes a day to receive continued ESOL support with a focus on applying their English language skills to literacy-based activities. There is continual monitoring of these students to track their progress through collaborative conversations with their teachers and ongoing assessments.

There have been some pleasant surprises since we started this class. With this mixed age group, it was great to observe how well they collaborated and supported each other. They immediately came together like a whānau. It didn't take them long to know exactly who was meant to be there, so they would go and seek them out if they arrived and their peers weren't there. What I also observed was the amazing sense of safety that developed and risk-taking that these students were prepared to take. An environment where they are all on the same page and at the same stage or level has provided a really safe environment for our students to take risks, make mistakes, and support each other. It is so warming to see the confidence in these students soar.

Having a multilingual class was another possible challenge. However, it has

actually not only provided a safe learning environment for our students, but also a rich environment where we have the opportunity to develop a deeper understanding of each other and celebrate our differences and similarities. The cultural pride in our classroom is outstanding and provides such an amazing way for us to learn about and with each other. In such an environment, what has also faded is my preconceived barrier posed by the challenge of having a diverse range of ages. This has not been an issue at all. In fact, possibly the opposite has occurred, where the students have probably created a more profound relationship with each other and don't feel any sense of embarrassment about being grouped with students who are younger or older than them. We communicate very clearly that the kaupapa of this class is to teach and learn English, and it is very clear from our communication with each other where our English language gaps are. Keeping this as the focus helps our students have a better understanding of why they are there and what the intended outcome or goal is.

Each term, I take our class to engage in EOTC (Education outside the classroom) experiences, including visiting Ambury Farm, Auckland Zoo, and Auckland Botanical Gardens. For some, they had never been to these places before, so it was a lot of fun seeing them take part in these authentic language learning experiences with new lenses. The language that comes out of these experiences is amazing. These trips have also allowed us to include our migrant parents and offer them a great learning experience.



A ripple effect of creating such a class has developed in the form of connections and relationships with parents. This has become a safe space for our migrant parents of our ESOL Class students to come and confidently seek clarity or advice on things happening around the school. It is not unusual for a parent to come and communicate with me through a translation app, and I am able to reciprocate and help them in any way I can. I have even been able to help parents communicate with teachers as well as set up apps or understand school notices. This lessens the barriers and creates a great home and school partnership. It is so wonderful having these parents involved - both for them, us, and their children.

As these students are with me for most of their schooling week, I have taken on the task of delivering the full curriculum to them, including Maths, Reading, and Writing. From a planning perspective, I consistently ask myself

questions like What vocabulary focus should we have? What language learning focus should come out of this lesson? How would these students not only learn the new 'concept' but also use this as a vehicle to establish some foundation English Language structure which they can confidently use with English-speaking students and teachers? This is where the small classroom numbers are great and allow us to continually correct and provide opportunities for our students to "practise" their language skills. I am also responsible for writing reports, doing assessments, and communicating with parents.

2025 gave us the initial opportunity to trial this model, and the positive outcomes will see us continue with this kaupapa. This is a continual learning process for all involved, and I am excited about progressing, improving, and continuing this work in progress.

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Poetry writing in the EAL classroom

Adrienne Jansen | David Douglas

For the last five years, EAL students at Mana College in Porirua have been writing poetry. They are from very mixed levels of English, and from a range of countries, including Syria, Vietnam, Myanmar, Fiji, Samoa, Tonga, Tokelau, the Philippines, and Colombia.

In 2024, they published *from our hands to yours*, a book of their poems from these five years.

How did this begin?

In 2018, Landing Press, a small not-for-profit Wellington publisher, was compiling an anthology of poems by migrants and refugees. They received many submissions nationwide, but there were big gaps – nothing from recent migrants, or from students, or from people learning English. So, writing workshops were held with English Language Partners and with EAL students in four high schools, to create work for the anthology, entitled *More of Us*.

One school involved was Mana College, where EAL teacher Dave Douglas saw the potential of these classes for his students. So they have continued ever since.

What are the benefits for EAL students of writing poetry?

- It's about language. Poetry is all about finding the right words, and the students gain greater competence and fluency with language.
- It's about building confidence. The students don't only write good poems, they also regularly read them aloud.
- It's about story-telling. We've always believed that when people tell their own stories, it shifts the head of the listener. Poetry is an excellent genre for telling small personal stories in a non-threatening way.

These students have read at conferences, national and local poetry day events, and at a national Armistice Day event at the National Library in Wellington. They've had poems published in *North and South* magazine, in *Best New Zealand Poems*, and in five Landing Press anthologies. They've become part of mainstream New Zealand literature.

The nuts and bolts of teaching poetry

Writing poetry is about doing it. From Day 1, we start doing small writing exercises. We also slowly introduce some basic ideas about poetry, but these are always incorporated into writing.

Basic ideas about poetry are:

1. What is a poem?
2. Poetry is about finding the best words.
3. Poetry is about using the imagination
4. Poetry is about using details, to create a picture in the head.

From Day 1, all the students write a small poem. We set a required number of lines – maybe only two lines, but later it might become six or eight lines. We read the poems aloud, we collect them all, type them up, and the next week we read them again.

Ideas for poems

We start with straightforward exercises that use a simple idea, and often a pattern. For example, choosing a colour and beginning every line with that colour. These suit less competent students, and more competent students create their own challenges with the exercises.



Adrienne Jansen is a writer, editor, and teacher. She taught both ESOL and creative writing for many years. She is also involved with Landing Press, a small not-for-profit Wellington publisher.



David Douglas is the Careers Advisor and Head of ESOL at Mana College, in Porirua, Wellington. He has been teaching ESOL students at Mana College for many years and has facilitated the poetry programme in the senior ESOL class over the last 5 years.

There are many ideas for poems. We always begin with what is familiar. For example, the house/apartment etc. that you grew up in. It's helpful to provide a structure. For example, for the place that you grew up in: Imagine yourself walking up to the door. What do you see? List two details. List three things inside. A person is doing something – what? There is a particular smell or a sound. Go into your old room. What do you see/remember? The students may write a list, or a paragraph, then we talk about transforming it into a poem with fewer words, and line breaks for rhythm.

There is one exercise which begins 'Some people know.' Students list what they know that we (Kiwis) don't know. The last line of the poem is 'And some people don't.'



Here is an example:

Run for your life

Some people know
how to cook kabuh
how to speak Arabic and English
how to bless people
how to wear the hijab
how to dance Syrian dances
how to leave your own country
how to run for your life.
And some people don't.

Hanadi Al Bakhas, *Syria*

There is another exercise – ‘I seem to be, but really I am.’ Here is a student’s poem:

What seems to be?

I seem to be good at physics
but really I am struggling
doing my assessment.
I seem to look tired
but really I am energetic.
I seem to not have a plan for my future
but really I want to be a pilot

Elle Mae Flores, *Philippines*

In poems like these, students can explore personal experiences or perspectives, in a very non-threatening way, and their poems can be illuminating to the reader/listener.

The students learn simple techniques for editing their poems. Then, every year, we make a small book of all their poems, and we have a book launch. This is an important part of the process. In 2024, Landing Press published from our hands to yours, poems from 5 years of workshops. It’s available from www.landingpressnz.com, with extended notes and exercises for teachers under Resources, or from Wheelers and bookshops.



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Sally Hay

Sally is an EAL specialist who has taught in New Zealand for over 17 years after a brief stint in the UK and Japan. Born and raised in Auckland, she originally trained as a Japanese teacher but quickly transitioned into teaching English to English language learners. Most of her teaching experience has been in secondary schools in New Zealand with large migrant populations, where she has been responsible for all aspects of running the ESOL department and coordinating programmes for and supporting students from refugee backgrounds. She has a post-graduate Diploma in Language Teaching and an MA in Applied Linguistics (First Class Honours) from the University of Auckland.



Siân Waite

I am the HoD EAL and the Literacy Coordinator at a secondary school in Auckland, with over 10 years experience teaching ELLs. Vocabulary acquisition and improving writing are the areas I am particularly interested in. It’s a changing time for our sector and I’m excited about being part of the TESOLANZ Executive. I’m looking forward to working with Christine and Oilly on TESOLANZ publications. The challenges and changes to our publications will take time to get right as we strive to ensure everyone’s accessibility needs are met.

Tech Tips:

Digital Bottlenecks: How to Spot Them and Stop Them Slowing Down Learning

Dr Nick Baker

Nick Baker is a PhD graduate from the Higher Education Development Centre at the University of Otago in Dunedin. He is currently working for the University of Otago as a Senior Professional Practice Fellow at the Graduate Research School, running their Master's and PhD candidate workshop programmes and developing comprehensive online learning courses for research postgraduates. Nick is also researching and publishing around the topics of Dialogic Feedback and the Village Formation Tool, practising blues guitar, tai chi, meditation, and philosophy.



As 2025 winds down, many of us in the TESOL community here in Aotearoa are already turning our attention to 2026. If you're like me, a lot of those conversations are about technology. How to use AI more effectively? How to make online lessons more engaging? How to design content that actually gets used? But amid all that planning, one recurring challenge keeps cropping up, something I kept hitting while building writing and productivity modules this year, and that is digital bottlenecks.

But, what are digital bottlenecks?

Basically, these are anything that slows, disrupts, or blocks the flow of online learning. It is what happens when the tools, apps, devices, or internet connections we and our students rely on just cannot keep up with the demands we are putting on them.

And these bottlenecks can sneak up on us. Sometimes they are obvious. Take, for instance, a free platform that we are using that cannot handle more than 15 people at a time. Other times, these bottlenecks are subtle: an activity that uses a video loses momentum because of internet lag, or the device the learner is using struggles with such a large video, thus breaking the immersion and making it harder for the learner to complete the task..

These little interruptions pile up. They chip away at the learning experience, drain students' confidence, and sap their motivation. Over time, they don't just slow things down... they can derail the whole learning experience.

So here's the big question...

How often do we actually stop and think about these bottlenecks? And more importantly, what can we do to prevent them from getting in the way? Take a moment with me to consider these now. Here are the most common culprits I experienced in 2025. Ask yourself, did you or could you, and what can we do?

1. *Platform or app limits:* Some tools restrict the number of participants, file sizes, or number of simultaneous activities or features. A collaborative space that only allows 20 users (or only allows text dialogue between users) or a video call platform that limits breakout rooms can make interaction clunky and less effective.
2. *Bandwidth and speed issues:* Slow internet, underpowered devices, or network congestion cause buffering, poor-quality video, or delays in accessing materials. Once the flow is broken, it's hard to get it back.

3. *Software compatibility:* Not all browsers or devices are created equal. A slick interactive task might run beautifully on a new laptop but be completely unusable on a phone or tablet, potentially leaving some students behind.
4. *Device differences:* Even something as simple as screen size matters. A task that needs multiple tabs or windows might be fine on a large monitor but almost impossible on a small laptop. That in itself becomes a learning barrier.

What can we do?

We can't eliminate every bottleneck. However, we *can* plan for them. Here are a few strategies I've found useful:

- *Know your tools inside out:* Before committing to a platform or a digital space for the resource or lesson, or task, explore its limits. What limits could impact the learning experience, such as how many users can it handle? What are the file size caps? Can it play videos and audio well? Test everything in conditions similar to your class. For example, are they using devices like you at similar locations? Do you know if it will still work? Or do we need to make adjustments? It's better to discover issues before the lesson or before they use the digital resource, not during it.
- *Design for slow connections:* Build in buffer time. For example, give students instructions or a short pre-task while a video loads. If possible, schedule resource-heavy activities for on-campus sessions where internet access is more reliable.
- *Keep it light:* Choose low-demand file types, keep videos short, and avoid content that requires huge downloads or high processing power. The more device-friendly your resources are, the fewer barriers your learners will face.
- *Always have a Plan B or low-tech activity backup:* Things will go wrong sometimes. Have a backup ready, for example, a shared document, a discussion board, or an asynchronous activity alternative, so learning doesn't grind to a halt.

Looking ahead to 2026

The truth is, these digital bottlenecks aren't just "tech problems." They're *design challenges*. When we anticipate them, plan around them, and equip our students with strategies to navigate them, we turn frustrating roadblocks into manageable bumps in the road.

And when we do that, we create digital learning spaces that don't just function, they flow. They become spaces where technology supports learning, rather than standing in its way. It's even these little corrections or future proofing of the learning experience using technology that helps to create a smoother experience for both you and the learner. Best of luck.

Book Reviews

Dr Elizaveta Tarasova

Liza works as the Director of Studies (DOS) at the English Teaching College (ETC) in Palmerston North, where she is responsible for organising the collaborative efforts of both teachers and students. With a profound commitment to language education and more than 25 years of language teaching and research experience, Liza strives to ensure that ETC provides the best learning opportunities to domestic and international students. Liza's main research areas include morphology, morphopragmatics, and cognitive linguistics. Her most recent research projects investigate the role of systemic competence in receptive and productive skills development. These reflect her aim of bringing the results of linguistic research into the classroom.



More of Us

Edited by
ADRIENNE JANSEN

with Clare Arout, Danushka Desinda and Wesley Hallis

Jansen, Adrienne (ed.). (2019). **MORE OF US**. Landing Press. 978-0-473-46349-6. (pbk.) 92 pp. \$22

Reviewer

Mark Webster Hall
UCOL/ Te Pūkenga

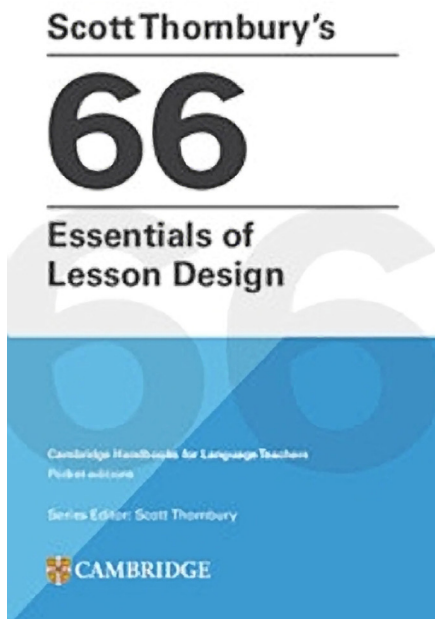
More of us

Immigration is one of the most contested issues of our time with those who cross borders to live among others increasingly scapegoated and maligned by populist autocrats. Given this backdrop of suspicion and politicization it is vital that the migrant and refugee experience be better understood and that the voices of these people more clearly be heard. With the help of others Adrienne Jansen has edited the anthology of poems in *More of us* with that need in mind. In this case the migrant voice derives from many different origins – Eritrea, Rotuman, Samoa, Syria, etc. – with one unifying feature of the collection being that these poets have all had to acclimatize themselves to life in Aotearoa/ New Zealand and cope with the challenges of belonging here.

One key challenge faced concerns adapting to what is physically present in the new country, together with that registered as absent. Where Anne Hollier Ruddy (coming from Fiji) notes that in these islands “[a]ll looked grey, water like squid, / I shivered – the wind was keen” (36), Wes Lee (UK-born) discloses the shock of certain expectations falling flat (“We thought there would be hula girls and white sands” (34)). Used to beaches “with donkeys, fairground rides” and “generic seaside gold” (34) – Lee encounters on “the Kapiti coast” something markedly apart – “dark volcanic silt” – which brings him “close to panic in a southerly” (35). What is refreshing to the newcomer can also, thus, be existentially confronting. Adjusting to a novel seasonal palette – “In New Zealand, it’s the weekend. / It’s grey and black” (Anni Pinedo Bone, 55) means more than just wrapping up, it means improvising a new way of being.

The challenges facing migrants and refugees also naturally enough have a social and a linguistic dimension. On this theme Pushpa John, for instance, dramatizes the voice of the ‘parents’ in a migrant family as follows: “I left everything and everyone behind / To come here and be invisible” (‘Points of view’, 86). Identity and agency, in this case, is felt to have been sacrificed for the benefit of the children (“I looked shame, fear and hurt in the eye / only so that all of the doors in the world / would be open for you” (86)). Elsewhere a poem intimates that speech itself has been subsumed – “I close my eyes and rest my mouth / as silence is the only language that does not / need an interpreter” (Abdalla Gabriel, 41). The perceived quiet of the new land is associated by Kirsten le Harivel, meanwhile, with the near total absence of familiar company: “My childhood had been a field / of people” (31) – but here, the implication is, even those known well keep their distance. The throng and din of community have been muted, emptied out. And what is left? For Brenda Dias, as another example, telephone calls with back home that soon become an encumbrance – “How I wish/ those rings / didn’t ring” (45).

The poems in *More of us* disclose a fascinating range of voices navigating shifting identities with varying inflections and moods (“Torn between two worlds. / Torn because of two worlds” (51)). The editors aimed to select work that “spoke of the migration experience” (8) and in this they have succeeded. Given that some of this work has emerged from workshops in English language classes, one hopes the potential of this approach can be explored further in the future.



Scott Thornbury's 66 Essentials of Lesson Design

Firstly, a bit of a disclosure: I am a big Scott Thornbury fan. He is an academic and teacher educator with decades of experience, and his pragmatism, wit, and engaging style have drawn me in ever since I was fortunate enough to have studied under him during my own TESOL studies many moons ago. In his writing, Thornbury manages to strike a balance between sound theory and the shifting – sometimes messy – lived realities of the language classroom, and this book is no exception.

Scott Thornbury's 66 Essentials of Lesson Design is a recent addition to the Cambridge Handbooks for Language Teachers Pocket Editions series. Like others in the series, this compact paperback is full of practical, research-based ideas for teachers at all stages of their careers, as well as teachers in training and teacher educators.

In the foreword, Thornbury explains why the term lesson *design* is used rather than the more common lesson *planning* (p. ix). Whereas planning can suggest a fixed and linear process, lesson design offers a more flexible approach in which teachers are making decisions which are similar to “those of other professionals engaged in complex and fluid design processes” (p. ix). This shift in terminology encourages teachers to see their work as creative and adaptive. It also affirms the irreplaceable human element in teaching, especially at this time when AI tools are increasingly used in education and are changing – and perhaps threatening – existing models of teaching and learning.

Throughout the book, Thornbury highlights the dynamic nature of teaching and the unpredictable reality of the classroom, and this is dealt with explicitly in the chapter “Adaptive expertise”. He encourages the development of a responsive teaching practice, one in which a teacher should always be ready to pivot from their plan in order to meet the needs of their students. That said, Thornbury acknowledges the potential barriers to achieving a truly adaptive teaching practice, including institutional pressures and syllabus constraints, thereby acknowledging the broader context in which teachers operate.

The book is structured into six thematic sections: ‘The Big Picture’, ‘The Lesson Plan’, ‘Planning Different Types of Lessons’, ‘Lesson Implementation’, ‘Beyond the Single Lesson’, and ‘Testing and Evaluation’. Within these sections, each of the 66 “essentials” is presented in a concise two-page mini-chapter. This layout makes the book accessible and easy to dip into for quick reference.

The chapters cover both the more well-trodden topics such as “needs analysis”, “staging and sequencing”, and “providing feedback”, as well as possibly less familiar ideas like “design thinking” and “retrospective planning”. The book draws on up-to-date research and current trends such as AI and online teaching and learning, and is full of teaching tips, ideas for classroom activities, and suggestions for further reading.

This handy guide to lesson design will be a particularly useful addition to the toolkit of trainee and novice teachers, while also providing some fresh perspectives and ideas for more experienced teachers.

Thornbury, S. (2024). **SCOTT THORNBURY'S 66 ESSENTIALS OF LESSON DESIGN**. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. ISBN 9781009793698 (pbk.) 145 pp. \$41.00

Reviewer

Natasha Groves
English Language Institute
School of Languages and
Applied Linguistics
Victoria University of Wellington

We are very keen to add to our pool of wonderful book reviewers.
If you are interested, please contact
elizaveta@etc.ac.nz



From Our Hands to Yours

When second-language students are learning to read and write in English, they commonly work with simple, practical texts on familiar topics. There are good reasons for this, but students (and teachers) can benefit from exploring beyond the bounds of yet another attempt at “My Weekend”.

Perhaps your students might find inspiration, self-confidence and even belonging through reading and writing poetry – maybe even going on to become published poets, or reading their poems to audiences at public events? That may sound crazily over-optimistic or far too intimidating, but it is just what has happened for the teenaged students whose work is featured in *From Our Hands to Yours*.

This collection of poems is written by ESOL students at Mana College. The students are all immigrants, with diverse backgrounds. Some are beginner students of English; some are more advanced. Many of the poems have been published in prior anthologies, or have been read to audiences at conferences, celebrations and poetry events. For the teenaged authors of these poems to be able to say that they are published poets – in a language they are still making their own – is a remarkable achievement.

The students have been participating in a weekly poetry workshop, run by Adrienne Jansen from Landing Press. Adrienne works with the students for an hour per week, teaching the students about poetry and nurturing them to find their own creative voices.

All very well for Mana College, but what about your students? How can you incorporate poetry in your own teaching? That sounds intimidating! Fear not – the book has an accompanying guidebook (16 pp.) for teachers, written by Adrienne, explaining her process and guiding teachers how to explain poetry and deliver writing prompts to students. It is simple and clear and makes it all feel so easy and fun that you’ll be eager to give it a go yourself.

The poems in *From Our Hands to Yours* are divided into chapters by theme. Each chapter has a name, which is the writing prompt or poetic form of the poems that follow. Some examples of the themes are: “What other people think”, “The wind”, “The house I grew up in” and “The lockdown”. Each theme is quite open-ended, and it is rewarding to read all the poems in each chapter in one sitting, to appreciate each student’s unique interpretation and voice. Some poems are funny, some are poignant, all are interesting.

Two poetic forms get a chapter each – Pantoums (poems with an abab rhyme scheme) and Concrete. Concrete poems are often called shape poems, as the words and blank spaces in the poem work together to form a picture of the poem’s subject. The poems in this chapter are very attractive, but the most difficult to read, as they are handwritten.

The guidebook explains what to do, chapter by chapter.

The students I shared this anthology with are A2/ lower B1 level. They are mostly former refugees. Some students had very limited prior education and little to no previous experience with poetry. Though they come from different countries to those of the poets, they found their poems about adjusting to life in New Zealand while remembering their homelands very relatable. The students very much enjoyed the poems and were eager to do more of them. The poetry generated lively discussion. The poems are edited with a light hand and some ‘errors’ have been left as-is. I pointed this out to my students, as a motivation to the anxious perfectionists that the poems were beautiful and meaningful even though their English wasn’t always perfect. I hope we can all take heart from that and give teaching poetry a go, even if we aren’t great poets ourselves.

Jansen, A. and Heke, A. (eds.). (2024).

**FROM OUR HANDS TO YOURS:
POEMS BY MANA COLLEGE ESOL
STUDENTS.** Landing Press, New
Zealand. ISBN 978-0473724597 (pbk.)
183 pp. \$18.00

Reviewer

Catherine Decker
English Teaching College
Palmerston North

The practical applications of research and theory (PART): A continuing series

Each of the short articles in this series takes a piece of language teaching research and theory and suggests its practical applications for language learning and teaching. The aim is to bridge the gap between research and practice. Most language teachers who are not currently involved in academic study do not have easy access to journals and often do not have the time to read academic articles and reflect on how to apply their findings to their teaching. These short articles do this. They are not summaries of a piece of research but simply attempts to apply the findings of research to practice. The quality of the research has been carefully considered when choosing the articles.

PART: Individual vs group testing

Paul Nation



[Coxhead, A., Nation, P., Woods, L., & Sim, D. (2018). Group vs. individual: How administration procedure can affect vocabulary test scores. *New Zealand Studies in Applied Linguistics*, 24(2), 24-41.]

This study involved native-speakers at secondary school sitting the Vocabulary Size Test. They sat two forms of the same test, once where the researcher administered the test to the whole class, and once when each learner sat next to a researcher who kept them motivated and on-task while they sat the test. For many of the learners in this study, the effects of individual administration were particularly striking. 12.6% of the learners had much higher scores in individual administration (10 points or more out of a possible 100), and an additional 25% had scores of 5 to 9 out of 100 higher. It is clear that for a substantial number of learners, the results on a group-administered test could greatly misrepresent their knowledge. There is no reason to think that this factor is peculiar to vocabulary size tests; it could apply to any group-administered test. A close analysis of the results showed that it was the lower-achieving learners who were most affected by group administration.

The results of this study are not good news for teachers and researchers, because individual administration of a test takes a lot of time. However, for the lower achieving learners, individual administration is necessary if the results are to show what the learners really know. Here is an example to make this clearer. One of the teachers studying in our MA programme had given the Vocabulary Levels Test to a group of his secondary school students. He said he thought most of them were native speakers of English. Their scores on the Academic Word List level were low, less than 15 out of 30. I was surprised at this because my belief had been that young native speakers of English increased their vocabulary size by around 1,000 word families a year, and this can be considered a conservative estimate. Their lexical knowledge by secondary school age should have included all the Academic Word List (AWL) items. I went to the school, and individually with each learner I went through the AWL section of the test that they had previously sat. Initially, I used the procedure of getting them to read the questions and the definitions aloud. I did this to check if their low scores were affected by their reading skills. One learner had trouble with irregularly spelled words like *foreign*, but when asked, she could explain its meaning. I then made them follow a set procedure to make sure they considered all of the choices. When they chose the correct answer, I praised them, and we carried on. If they got all three in a block correct, I said, "Great. You know all of those." Sometimes an answer was incorrect because they had a homograph in mind, for example *seal* where they were thinking of the marine mammal and the test was looking for the verb "close completely".

Each learner got most of the AWL section correct. When walking back to the classroom with the teacher to collect another learner, one learner said, "I didn't know I was good at that." Using the previous results of the test, the school had just

How should teachers administer tests?

Individually administer high-stakes tests, particularly for at-risk learners. During individual administration make sure of the following points, which are given in order of importance.

- 1 Make sure the learners give their full attention to the task. This means that they do their best to answer the questions and are not distracted by other factors. This will be a direct result of having the full attention of the test administrator.
- 2 Make sure the learners are encouraged to remain positive about their chances of answering items correctly. This is encouraged by positive comments from the test administrator.
- 3 Allow the learners to clarify aspects of the task such as whether they should answer items that they are unsure about and clarify aspects of individual items such as the pronunciation of some of the words. The test administrator can provide needed information excluding, of course, the meaning of the word.
- 4 Encourage the learners to take a strategic approach to answering the test items applying what test-wiseness skills they have.

set up a programme to teach the AWL words to the students. It was clear from the later responses of the individuals that they already knew most of the words and that their poor scores on the test were the result of several other factors. The most important was their attitude to taking the test. They did not take it seriously and probably did it quickly without giving it much attention.

Some other studies on test-taking effort have had the computer measure speed of response to items to check that each learner is spending enough time to consider their answers.

[Further reading: Nation, I. S. P. (2007). Fundamental issues in modelling and assessing vocabulary knowledge. In H. Daller, J. Milton & J. Treffers-Daller (eds) *Modelling and Assessing Vocabulary Knowledge*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 35-43.]

PART: Designing a well-balanced course

Paul Nation



[Source: Nation, I. S. P. (2007). The four strands. *Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching*, 1(1), 1-12. This article is available from Paul Nation's web site under Publications.]

This article tries to answer the question *What opportunities for learning should there be in a well-balanced language course?* I arrived at the idea of the four strands by struggling to put together the

various ideas I had gathered through reading lots of research on language teaching and learning. The research showed the importance of spoken interaction and negotiation of meaning. The research showed the importance of comprehensible input and developing fluency in reading through speed reading courses. The research also showed the effectiveness of deliberate decontextualized vocabulary learning using word cards. Some of this research seemed contradictory, for example, the importance of interaction and input, and the effectiveness of deliberate study.

The answer I eventually arrived at was that a well-balanced course needed to have all of these things but they should be in the right proportions.

The principle of the four strands says that a well-balanced language course should have four equal strands of meaning-focused input, meaning-focused output, language-focused learning, and fluency development. Meaning-focused input covers learning through language use in listening and reading. Meaning-focused output covers learning through language use in speaking and writing. Language-focused learning covers learning through deliberate study and teaching. Fluency development covers learning to make the best use of what you already know across each of the four skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. An equal amount of time should be given to each strand. The time calculation includes both class work, homework and opportunities for learning outside class.

When applying the principle of the four strands, it is useful to keep a note of the various activities that you use in a course and how much time you spend on each activity. The activities should then be classified into the four strands, and the time added up for each strand. If each strand does not get roughly equal time, then it is worth considering how you could get a better balance of time.

The four strands work best if the content covered in each strand is the same because this provides opportunities for the important principles of repetition and varied meetings and use (quality of processing) to be applied.

Several years after working out the idea of the four strands I realized that the principle had implications that I had not at first thought of. For example, to answer the question *How do you teach writing?* you just need to apply the principle of the four strands. That is a well-balanced writing course should spend about half of the writing course on meaning-focused writing (meaning-focused output). A small amount of time could be spent on meaning-focused input as preparation for writing. About one quarter of the course time should be spent on language-focused learning as it relates to writing (getting correction and feedback on writing, memorising useful phrase and sentences to use in writing, spelling, forming English letters and typing, learning the format of various types of writing, and so on), and getting fluent at writing quickly, especially when assessment involves timed written assessment. Similarly, the principle of the four strands can be used to guide the design of courses on listening and speaking and reading.

The principle of the four strands can also be used to answer questions related to particular techniques or activities. For example, is it worth doing grammar-translation? The way to answer the question is to see which strand the activity fits into and then consider what other activities it needs to share time with in that strand. The activities then need to be ranked in order of effectiveness and the least effective activities should be left out to allow time for the others.

What should teachers do about the four strands?

- 1 Learn the principle of the four strands and how to apply it to looking at the balance of learning opportunities in your course.
- 2 Apply the principle of the four strands to your course.
- 3 If you use a course book, apply the four strands to your course book. You will find that a course book does not provide enough meaning-focused input and fluency development, especially for reading. You should then consider what you need to be doing in addition to course book work to get a good balance of the four strands. This is likely to include setting up substantial extensive reading and extensive listening programs.



The principle of the four strands is one of the most important principles of language course design. One of its very important implications is that around three-quarters of the time in a course should be spent on meaning-focused language use (meaning-focused input, meaning-focused output, and fluency development), and about one-quarter of the time on deliberately learning about the language (this includes language teaching) and on language learning strategies (language-focused learning). Teaching should make up only a small amount of the time in a language course.

[Further reading: Nation, P. (2013). *What should an EFL Teacher Know?* Seoul, Korea: Compass Publishing. The first chapter of this book deals with the four strands and the rest of the book shows how each of the strands can be realized in a course. It is also worth looking at Nation, I. S. P., & Yamamoto, A. (2012). Applying the four strands to language learning. *International Journal of Innovation in English Language Teaching and Research*, 1(2), 167-181. This article applies the idea of the four strands to learning without a teacher.]

CLESOL 2026 Conference

BACK TO THE FUTURE: CELEBRATING THE PAST TO SHAPE THE FUTURE

MARK DAWSON-SMITH AND CHELSEA BLICKEM
(CLESOL CO-CONVENORS)

UPDATE ON KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

The committee is very pleased to announce that we have already received acceptance from all four of our keynote speakers for our 2026 conference in Hamilton, July 4-5, 2026.

These speakers are:

PROFESSOR DOUGLAS BELL

University of Nottingham, Ningbo, China

DR TIM GANDER

Executive Director,
Education Partnership & Innovation Trust (EPIT)

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR MARGARET FRANKEN

formerly University of Waikato

DR MELISSA DERBY

Race Relations Commissioner,
New Zealand Human Rights Commission

CALL FOR ABSTRACTS

The call for abstracts is now open, with the deadline for submissions on 30 November 2026. Please [click on this link](#) for further information on key themes, types of presentations, submission guidelines, and abstract format.

For further information about the 2026 CLESOL conference, please check out the CLESOL 2026 website (www.clesol.org.nz).



An interview with Mark Dawson-Smith



Mark Dawson-Smith is a Team Manager at the Centre for Languages at Wintec, Hamilton. As well as serving as the Publications Officer for TESOLANZ, he was also Chair of NZQA's Review Advisory Group for the review of the NZCEL qualifications and the EL and EAP unit standards. He is currently leading the review of the NZCEL Supporting Document and is a panel member for the review of the EL & EAP Supporting Document.

1. As the committee member responsible for publication oversight, how did you ensure the association's publications remained aligned with the evolving needs and interests of the membership?

As part of TESOLANZ's Executive Committee, the Publications Officer is kept up to date on issues current to the NZ membership. However, I think one of the main ways I was able to ensure that publications remained relevant with the evolving needs and interests of the membership was by keeping my fingers in a number of different pies (so to speak!). As lead of the NZCEL Providers' Forum, I had a firm understanding of the immediate issues concerning many of the tertiary providers of English language. My passion is language assessment, and so as a member of International Language Testing Association (ILTA), I keep up to date on current trends in that area, and this is also further informed by my involvement on the Executive Committee of ALTAANZ. I have regular communication with organisations such as IELTS, Pearson, and Duolingo, so they also provide updates on their areas of interest/concern. However, probably the best and most useful asset in terms of keeping things relevant has been the contributions from TESOLANZ members. Both the Newsletter and the Journal are dependent on members sharing their own expertise, practice, and concerns, and this has been crucial to the quality of our publications over many years.

2. Can you share a particular issue, special edition, or published work that you feel best represents the vision you had for the association's publications?

I think that the first digital edition of the TESOLANZ Newsletter was a real step forward for TESOLANZ. Before moving to digital copy, the Newsletter was somewhat restricted in so much as the number of pages in each edition had to be divisible by four (so it may have been 20 pages or 24). This was because the copy had to be printed with no blank pages. Once we moved to digital copy, we were no longer restricted by the number of pages that we could include in each edition. And just as a quick test: How many pages did the last edition of the TESOLANZ Newsletter have? (Answer at the bottom of this interview!)

However, this wasn't the primary reason for the change in format. The old print copies used to be mailed out to members in A4 paper envelopes, and we had complaints from some members that sometimes the Newsletter would arrive damaged as the envelope was wet on delivery. We then switched to using clear plastic wrap packaging, but there was agreement that this wasn't environmentally friendly, so things had to change. And, of course, the other huge reason for going digital was that the cost of printing and distributing the TESOLANZ Newsletter was by far the biggest cost for the organisation annually. Moving to digital copy meant that there was more money to support other

professional development for members, including the symposia that we ran in 2019 and 2021. So, increased quality content, better for the environment, and savings leading to more funding for additional activities – what's not to love?

3. Can you share an example of a collaboration or initiative during your time on the executive committee that you feel significantly advanced research or professional development in the field?

I think that probably the key area which we were able to advance during my time on the Executive Committee was around the area of language assessment, and, in particular, language assessment. We were able to organise a symposium in July 2019. This symposium was organised in response to a survey that was conducted across the TESOLANZ membership and which identified assessment as being the key area in which members felt most in need of further professional development. We organised the event at Wintec with a focus on both EAP and assessment (I think the symposium title was "Building the knowledge base: Connecting research to practice in assessment & EAP". The event was very well attended (at least 160 participants), and the content was well-received. Off the back of this event (and trying to fit in around Covid), we organised another event in February 2021, this time held at the University of Auckland. The theme for this symposium was "Focus on Assessment: Practical applications and considerations in the classroom". Again, this was well-attended and well-received, and was one of the last face-to-face events we had before the country went back to additional Covid restrictions. We were lucky that we had great speakers and much appreciated sponsorship from IELTS for both events, helping make both events very successful. I am proud to have been involved in both events.

4. Looking ahead, what advice would you offer to your successor about maintaining quality, encouraging innovation, and supporting emerging voices in the field through publication platforms?

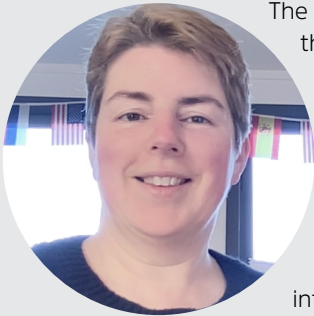
I've already had a good catch-up with Siân Waite, the new Publications Officer, and we discussed quite a few issues. One of the key challenges of the role is making sure that all sectors of English language education in Aotearoa New Zealand are able to take advantage of opportunities for publication in TESOLANZ's Newsletters or Journal. Typically, articles published in the TESOLANZ Journal tend to be mainly from those in the tertiary sector, so attracting articles from the primary and secondary sectors is difficult. We have been able to achieve a fairly good balance of Newsletter content across primary, secondary, and tertiary sectors, but maybe in the future we can look at trying to include content from the ECE (early childhood) space. I think that would definitely be something worth pursuing further in the coming years.

And the last TESOLANZ Newsletter had 29 pages.

Reports

President's Report

Gwenna Finikin | president@tesolanz.org.nz



The AGM was held in Christchurch this year, and I would like to thank CANTESOL for the excellent job they did hosting us. The pre-meeting event was "Welcome to Aotearoa, looking at experiences, challenges, and insights of those new to NZ education communities". This was very informative and led to some robust discussion during the roundtable

part. One of the guest speakers was Anisa MacLean. She shared two chapters from her memoir, *Surviving Marmite*. I encourage you all to find a copy and read it, as it is, in turns, funny and thought-provoking.

At the AGM, we said farewell to two of our executive committee members. Christine Hanley (Secretary) and Mark Dawson-Smith (Publications) have been strong voices on the committee for several years. We thank them for their service.

The current executive committee consists of:

President: Gwenna Finikin

Secretary: Sally Hay

Treasurer: Margi Memory

Publications: Siân Waite

SIG Liaison: Juliet Fry

Branches Liaison: Julie Luxton

PD Liaison (Co-opted): Lucy Macnaught

One of the topics we discussed in the October committee meeting was why it is important for people to belong to TESOLANZ. Julie Luxton provided the following rationale:

Membership of TESOLANZ provides many benefits for teachers and learners. These include multiple English Language networking and PLD opportunities at branch level - face to face and online - targeting ECE, primary, secondary, and tertiary sectors, and through the Special Interest Groups for each sector, at a time when there are few other English Language-specific PLD opportunities available. TESOLANZ also organises the CLESOL conference, held every second year. This attracts speakers and presenters from across Aotearoa and beyond. Moreover, TESOLANZ is a strong advocate for English Language-related matters. We are recognised as a peak body and consulted on educational issues relevant to English language learners. In recent years our voice has been heard and positive, equitable changes have been made on a range of issues e.g. the inclusion of international students in the approved EAP pathway for the NCEA Literacy Co-requisite, adding three EAP unit standards to the list of UE subjects.

I am looking forward to CLESOL next year. The conference provides an opportunity for a variety of new ideas, professional development, and learning about what our insights have to offer our sector. I would like to encourage you all to attend, if at all possible. I would particularly like to encourage members of the public sector to put in an abstract to present at the conference. While we are an international, peer-reviewed event, we also want to hear about creative, evidence-informed practice occurring at the chalk face. If you are interested in presenting, but require support for abstract writing or presenting for the first time, this is available.

AKTESOL

Stephanie Layec

As we come to the end of yet another challenging year for EAL, we continue to show resilience and motivation in advocating for our second language learners.

Committee Updates

We are thrilled to formally welcome three new members to our AKTESOL committee: Sian Waite, Sarah Scholz, and Carol Griffiths. Sian, Sarah, and Carol all come with a wealth of experience in the ESOL field, and we feel very fortunate to have them onboard. Their expertise will be invaluable as we continue to support our members.

Successful Second Event

Our second event of the year was very successful and well attended, featuring two insightful presentations.

- **Dr Tracey Millin** presented her research focusing on the Reading to Learn (R2L) pedagogy. This genre-based approach, which integrates reading and writing instruction, provides a powerful framework for supporting English language learners.
- **Dr Helen McCann** shared findings from her research conducted in China, which explored the interconnected themes of identity, culture, and language.

We extend our thanks to both presenters for sharing their valuable work with our community.

Curriculum News

AKTESOL welcomes the new curriculum, released on October 19th. We are particularly pleased to see the specific inclusion of English Language Learners (ELLs) and the formal recognition of the importance of using first and heritage languages. This is a significant step forward, and we are delighted to see this inclusion in the curriculum document. We also note the main structural change: the "Understand / Know / Do" framework will no longer be used.

Final Event for 2025: A Year in Review

We invite you to our final event for 2025, which will be an opportunity to connect, reflect, and share.



Date: Thursday, 20th November 2025
Time: 6:30pm
Format: Zoom (Link to be provided closer to the date)

The event will focus on the topic: *"What actions have made the most difference to our learners this year?"*

We will use breakout rooms for discussion and collaboration. To guide our conversations, we will use the following prompts across two sessions:

Breakout Session 1: Reflection on Practice

- What was a success for you this year in your work with ELLs?
- What have been the most significant challenges you or your learners have faced?

Breakout Session 2: Learner & Community Connection

- How do we know our learners? (What methods do we use to understand their needs, strengths, and backgrounds?)
- How do we effectively communicate with families, whānau, and mainstream teachers?

We look forward to seeing many of you there for our final gathering of the year.

We thank all our members for their commitment during this demanding year. Your dedication to our learners is the driving force behind our community, and we are excited to see what we can achieve together in 2026.

Waikato TESOL

Joy Yi Wang and Rachel Kaur

2024/2025 AGM

We held the Waikato TESOL AGM on 20 August 2025 in line with TESOLANZ requirements.

Membership: 32 members (down from 48 in November 2024).

We have 20 members with lapsed subscriptions. Membership has dipped significantly this year, largely due to lapsed renewals, and we are working to re-engage members.

We are particularly interested in increasing representation from the school sector.

Committee member updates

At the last AGM (August 2024) the committee members elected were:

POSITION	NAME
Co-Chairs	Joy Yi Wang and Rachel Kaur
Secretary	Jenny Field
Treasurer (banking administrator and first signatory)	Lizzy Arnold
Second signatory (second banking signatory)	Anna Mischefski
Members	Lucy Campbell, Rosemary Granger, Anna Stephens, Sasitorn Kanthiya

At the 2025 AGM, Anna Mischefski and Lizzy Arnold stepped down after three terms as treasurers, but both are remaining as committee members. Anna will continue as Second Signatory for the time being.

Sasitorn Kanthiya, has left Waikato TESOL and WINTEC to take up a position with English Language Partners in Dunedin. Lucy Campbell, Jenny Field, and Anna Mischefski have agreed to stay as committee members.

Election of officers

Joy Wang and Rachel Kaur assumed roles as co-chairs. A treasurer and two new committee members were elected. Anna Stephens was elected and agreed to take the role of treasurer. Bao Huang (from the primary sector) and Rusila Singh (from the Pasifika sector) were elected as committee members.

POSITION	NAME
Co-Chairs	Dr Joy Wang and Rachel Kaur
Secretary	Jenny Field
Treasurer (banking administrator and first signatory)	Anna Stephens was nominated,
Second signatory (second banking signatory)	Anna Mischefski
Members	Lucy Campbell, Rosemary Granger Bao Hoang (primary sector), Roshila Singh Mark Dawson-Smith was coopted onto the committee up and including CLESOL 26.

Treasurer's Report

Lizzie Arnold presented the report for the year ending 31 January 2026. We have a healthy balance of funds and are in a strong position to support future events.

Income		Expenditure	
Capitation payment	\$645.00	Food and refreshments	\$146.00
Non-member entry fees	\$25.00	Zoom subscription fees	\$53.08
Bank interest	\$33.88	Bank service fees	\$0.60
Total income	\$703.88	Gifts and cards	\$102.73
		Total expenditures	\$302.40
		Net surplus for the year:	\$401.48

2025 Event 3

After the AGM, Changezi Liaquat, Executive Director of Refugee Orientation Centre (ROC), presented an excellent and engaging presentation on the 'Resettlement of Former Refugees in Hamilton'. He shared valuable insights into the wide range of programmes, events, and workshops offered by ROC spanning parenting, child and youth initiatives, as well as social and academic programmes such as driving courses, school homework support, and leadership development

Events organised in 2024/2025

Event number	Date	Venue	Speaker	Topic
1	07/11/24 (5:00-6:00pm)	Zoom (National Webinar)	Dr Laura Gurney	How language teachers understand language?
2	07/11/24 (5:00-6:00pm)	Zoom (National Webinar)	Dr Jia Rong Yap	When Machines speak: Multiliteracies pedagogy in the age of generative AI
3	21/05/25 (4.30-6.00 pm)	University of Waikato College LAIN B Room 24/25	Dr Ingrid Huygens	Strengthening connections between ESOL learners and Aotearoa New Zealand
4	20/08/25 (5.00-6:00 pm)	Wintec A1.02	Changezi Liaquat	Resettlement of former refugees in Hamilton
5	22/10/25 (4:30-5:30 pm)	Zoom (National Webinar)	Dr Peter Gu	Formative assessment + a perspective of AI

On the 22nd of October 2025, Dr Peter Gu will be presenting at the final webinar for the year on formative assessment with a perspective on AI. The seminar will be open to all TESOLANZ members.

CLESOL 2026

Hamilton will be hosting the next CLESOL conference from the 4-5 July 2026.

The venue is the University of Waikato. Mark Dawson-Smith (Wintec) and Chelsea Blickem (University of Waikato) are coordinating the local organising group.

The theme of the conference is 'Back to the Future. Celebrating the Past to Shape the Future'.

Please refer to the CLESOL website for further details regarding presentations, schedules and abstracts <https://www.clesol.org.nz/>

Some photos of the AGM and Presentations. (see next page)

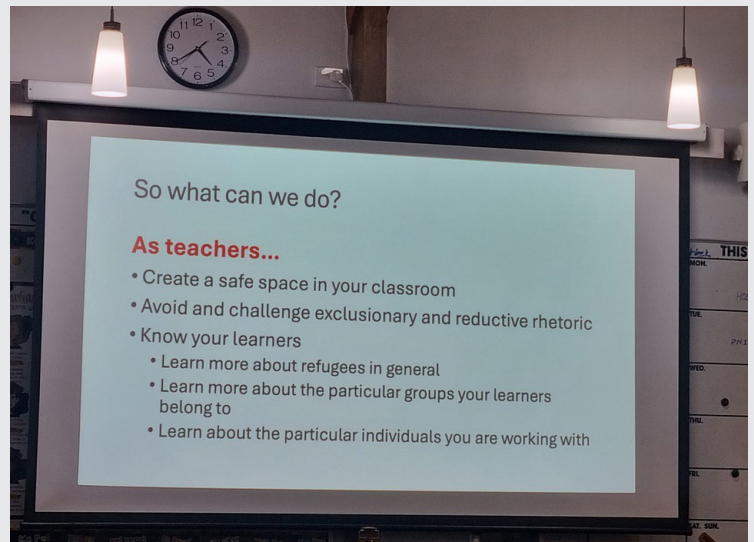
MANATESOL

Hilary Smith

On 17 July, MANATESOL hosted a thought-provoking event on understanding how to better support individuals from former refugee backgrounds to not just settle, but truly thrive.

The event began with a presentation by Dr Hanna Svensson, who shared key findings from her PhD research, titled "But we're just the same humans as you: Refugees negotiating exclusions, belonging and language in Sweden and New Zealand." Dr Svensson, currently the National Quality Assurance Manager for English Teaching College (ETC), explored the complex realities faced by refugees as they navigate systems of exclusion and seek belonging in new societies. Her research illuminated the subtle and overt barriers that persist in both educational and societal contexts, while also highlighting the resilience and agency of those affected.

Following this was a personal story from Zahra Ali Zadah, who arrived in New Zealand in 2017 with her mother and younger sister. Zahra's journey began at ETC, where she started with Level 1 English. Through hard work and support, she progressed to Level 3 in just 18 months. She then enrolled at Massey University, pursuing a Bachelor of Science. In 2024, Zahra graduated with a double major in Mathematics and Earth Science and was honoured as Valedictorian for the School of Science.



Zahra's story brought to life the themes of Dr Svensson's research—showing what's possible when individuals from former refugee backgrounds are given the tools, support, and belief to succeed. One strong message given by Zahra was the importance of looking forward, not back, while on our personal journeys.

This event served as a reminder of the critical role educators and institutions play in shaping inclusive pathways and highlighted the strength, courage, and potential within refugee communities.

MANATESOL thanks all attendees and speakers for contributing to a meaningful and motivating evening.



Waikato TESOL AGM and Presentations



BOPTESOL

Julie Luxton

In August, BOPTESOL members were privileged to receive a presentation by Miranda Howell on teaching Foundation English language learners (ELLs). Miranda is an EAL Specialist with the Learning Village blended English Language online support programme which is used in many primary and secondary schools throughout Aotearoa.

Once teachers have identified learner needs in an orientation interview, Miranda factors in three major considerations: know your learner (ESOL Principle #1), adjust lessons to optimise their learning strengths, and scaffold language with a large range of visual images, realia, flashcards, and games.

Miranda provided guidance on managing diversity in the classroom and supporting pre-literate learners. She shared ways of building confidence through oral language, explicit teaching of reading and writing skills, and vocabulary teaching, incorporating engaging practical tasks and games to support and reinforce her recommended teaching and learning approaches.

Miranda's presentation closed with the following technique checklist:

Technique checklist

It is more useful to ask learners to repeat a phrase than single words.	Teach 5% of the time. Check 95% of the time.	Allow plenty of opportunities to repeat and practise in different ways. Avoid rushing on.	Allow thinking time. Don't fill in the silences.	Games are great but don't focus too much on winners. Everyone needs to understand.
Use gestures rather than overloading the learners with teacher talk.	Are learners having an opportunity to use language independently? Be a guide on the side, not a sage on the stage!	Elicit language after it's been taught not before!	Remember it's much, much harder for EAL learners to listen in English than teachers imagine!	A centimetre of input; a metre of practice!
Avoid putting shy learners in the spotlight.	Use closed concept questions to scaffold learners to problem-solve meaning.	Plan with the end in mind and then create the steps to get there.	Are you observing your learners as you teach and adjusting your lesson accordingly?	How are you explaining the meaning of a word? Remember images, gestures and realia are invaluable.
Recycle language structures and vocabulary in timed intervals to assist consolidation.		Is lots of oral communication happening? Speaking the language structure comes before reading and writing.		

Links to useful resources shared by Miranda include:

Working with English Language Learners: A Handbook for Learning Assistants (MOE, 2022)

<https://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org>

<https://breakingnewsenglish.com>

Our next meeting (Thursday 20 November) will feature Dr Marty Pilott on pronunciation matters. This will be available live online for all TESOLANZ members. Further details will be shared with members via branch chairs.

An online survey was recently conducted with BOPTESOL members to ascertain what PLD topics are most valued and beneficial to inform future sessions, as well as meeting timing. Survey results have yet to be analysed.

WATESOL

Nicky Riddiford

WATESOL Expo, 28 August

Over 80 people attended the WATESOL Expo on August 28th, held at Rutherford House, Victoria University. The programme opened with a keynote address from Dr Olly Balance who challenged us to think further about how we teach collocations, and closed with an address from Adrienne Jansen about teaching poetry writing to ESOL students. Between the two keynote presentations, there were eight workshops on a variety of topics, including: Teaching numeracy, Translanguaging, Pronunciation and Identity, Structured literacy approaches, Universal design for learning, Developing AI literacy for EAP classrooms, Jigsaw reading tasks, and Extensive reading for ESOL students. Conference attendees enjoyed a pizza break at the mid-point, during which Olly Balance distributed the spot prizes of books generously donated by staff members of Victoria University of Wellington.

WATESOL Expo reports

OLLY BALANCE

How to **actually** help learners with collocations: *Dangers and Difficulties*

Olly began his presentation by pointing out how research has shown that many learners have very small vocabularies and that, unsurprisingly, they forget a lot of what they learn. If we, as teachers, then add collocations to the lists of words that students are expected to learn, we are imposing a considerable learning burden on them. In addition, there is debate about which collocations are the best to choose. Research reveals that most words have hundreds of strong collocates and that traditional frequency-based selection criteria are problematic because each collocation provides very little text coverage. Olly challenged us to consider our own teaching practice in this area and to re-evaluate how much of a learning burden we are unwittingly placing on students.

ADRIENNE JANSEN

Writing poetry with ESOL students

The Expo concluded with an inspiring presentation by Adrienne Jansen (writer, publisher, teacher) on teaching ESOL students to write poetry. She began by pointing out the reasons for teaching this:

- It's about language - giving students greater competence and fluency with language.
- It's about confidence.
- It's about story-telling. When people tell their own stories, it shifts the head of the listener. Adrienne has done a lot of writing alongside migrants, enabling them to tell their story. Poetry is the same.
- It provides insights to the listener/reader.

After showing us a collection of very moving poems written by students she teaches in her poetry writing classes at Mana College in Porirua, Adrienne suggested five ideas for teaching poetry writing and four key editing points. These teaching suggestions can be found on the Landing Press website: <https://landingpressnz.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Notes-and-exercises-for-teachers.pdf>



WATESOL Expo
Keynote speakers
Adrienne Jansen and
Olly Balance



WATESOL Expo Presenters

left to right: Ricky Barrow, Rosalind Austin, Tim Edwards, Olly Balance, Adrienne Jansen, Thanh Luong, Natalia Petersen, Margaret Corner, Celestina Froude.
Absent from photo: Areej Alharbi

Final WATESOL event for 2025 on 13 November

Professor Paul Nation will be presenting on *What should every ESL teacher know?*. This event is online and is open to all TESOLANZ members. Details are on the TESOLANZ website.

CANTESOL

Kerstin Dofs

The year is passing in a flurry... already October. Looking back to the 2025 CANTESOL PD events, we can see that the CANTESOL committee has provided some great PD opportunities. In March, thanks to WATESOL, we organised a well-received meeting with an introduction by Paul Nation, who presented "The twenty most useful teaching techniques", on a link from Wellington. Then we discussed his suggestions and shared our best ideas for teaching and learning.

Our next event was a workshop, on 19 June, "Shifting Practice – Putting Professional Learning to Work". This was an inspiring and practical session where three ESOL experienced member presenters, Miranda Satterthwaite, George Horvath, and Jocelyn Howard, shared how professional learning has influenced and shaped classroom practice of kaiako. They offered real-life stories, practical insights, and fresh ideas for the members to take back for their own teaching.

On 27 September, we helped organise the TESOLANZ AGM. Before the AGM, we held an online event for all members of TESOLANZ. Under the theme of "Welcome to Aotearoa" – looking at experiences, challenges, and insights of those new to NZ education communities", we learned about new New Zealanders' journeys through experiences by six key organisations, services, and from an excerpt from a personal published account by the author. (see the separate report about this in this newsletter).

The CANTESOL AGM, on 13 November, is again aimed at giving our members an opportunity to enjoy networking in a more relaxed way. We are once more thankful to WATESOL for organising the second presentation by Paul Nation, as his presentation will be the lead-in for discussions on "What Every ESL Teacher Should Know". We are, of course, including the more formal AGM, and we hope it will be well-attended. Our PD and AGM always presents a memorable evening with lots of laughter, personal connections to make, and food and drinks to enjoy.

CANTESOL Event Report

Title: Welcome to Aotearoa – Experiences, Challenges, and Insights of Newcomers to NZ Education Communities

Date: Saturday, 27th September 2025

Time: 9:00 – 11:00 (Presentations) | 11:00 – 12:00 (TESOLANZ AGM)

Location: Room L233, Ara Institute of Canterbury, City Campus

The half-day CANTESOL event offered a comprehensive exploration of the experiences of newcomers navigating New Zealand's education system. Organized by the CANTESOL Committee, the symposium brought together professionals from education, community services, law enforcement, and personal storytelling to provide insight into the challenges and successes faced by newcomers, while sharing strategies to support their integration into Aotearoa's educational communities.

The event opened with remarks from Kerstin Dofs, who welcomed participants and emphasized the importance of cultural responsiveness, empathy, and collaborative practice. She highlighted the critical role of schools, tertiary institutions, and community services in facilitating smooth transitions, supporting well-being, and fostering a sense of belonging. Kerstin also introduced the TESOLANZ AGM, situating the symposium within a broader professional framework.

The presentations addressed multiple facets of newcomer experiences. Mireille Weldschidt from Te Āhuru Mōwai o Aotearoa, Māngere, discussed the initial challenges newcomers face, such as navigating unfamiliar educational structures, adapting to new cultural contexts, and building trust within school communities. She emphasized that orientation programs, mentorship, and proactive communication form the foundation for successful engagement. Gail Moore from the Pōwhiri Team, Purapura Whetu, explored strategies for supporting newcomers in urban settings, highlighting the importance of culturally safe spaces, language support services, and community hubs. Her presentation underscored the interconnection between practical support and cultural affirmation in fostering belonging and inclusion. Gail also mentioned principles of a Māori approach to learning, particularly *whanaungatanga* (relationships), *manaakitanga* (care and respect), and *ako* (reciprocal learning), which together nurture a sense of community and shared responsibility for newcomer success.

Lan Lan of Asian Family Services addressed the challenges newcomers encounter when accessing social services, healthcare, and educational resources. She stressed the importance of culturally informed advocacy, trust-building, and equitable access to ensure full participation in community life. LiYing Cai, an Ethnic Liaison Police Officer, discussed the role of law enforcement in supporting culturally and linguistically diverse communities. LiYing shared initiatives that promote safety, trust, and effective communication between schools, families, and police, emphasising the need for culturally sensitive approaches.

Emma Lumb, Tertiary Pathways Advisor and Senior Well-Being Leader at Hagley Community College, explored how educational institutions foster belonging through pastoral care, peer mentoring, and culturally responsive teaching strategies. She highlighted the significance of affirming students' cultural identities to support both academic achievement and social well-being. Complementing the professional perspectives, Anisa McLean shared her personal journey as a newcomer to Aotearoa, offering insights into resilience, adaptation, and the role of supportive networks. Her narrative provided a humanized perspective that resonated with the attendees.

After a delicious morning tea, the symposium concluded with a panel discussion featuring all presenters, providing an interactive platform for participants, both online and onsite, to ask questions and explore overarching themes. The discussion emphasized collaboration across education, community services, and law enforcement, highlighting practical strategies for inclusion, well-being, and culturally responsive practice.



Following the panel, the TESOLANZ AGM was held, during which members discussed strategic priorities, upcoming initiatives, and professional development opportunities.

Overall, the event was widely praised for its professional organisation, insightful presentations, and engaging discussions. Attendees left with a deeper understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing newcomers and practical strategies to support their successful integration into New Zealand's education and professional communities.

Report compiled by George Horvath



Otago TESOL

David Woodfield

We have enjoyed two sessions at Otago of late. In July, Amilcar Oliveira and David Woodfield shared on the teaching of listening in an EAP class, and in September, three local graduate students introduced their research into aspects of English language instruction. In the July session, Oliveira focused on how students can be introduced to various kinds of note-taking methods, and Woodfield on how the listening opportunities available in commercial materials can be aptly supplemented by drawing upon topically related 'texts' available online. Then in the September session, Savithri Karunanayake outlined her project seeking to a) identify the sources of anxiety about speaking in the Sri Lankan tertiary English language classroom and b) implement a programme to help students overcome such feelings. This talk was followed by an engaging presentation by Sukma Septian Nasution on translanguaging-informed practices for teaching narrative writing in an Indonesian university context. Nasution outlined how his students were able to craft a discourse more uniquely their own through being able to use the various languages they spoke in co-constructing their texts and through locating their stories in their cultures and using terms from their languages in the telling. Then, finally, Serena Qin introduced how peer collaboration can be used in learning how to write an argumentative essay. Drawing upon a study in a tertiary English language classroom in China, she explored different variables that can contribute to the success of such pair work, suggesting that collaboration works better when learners are taught how it may be done and they are allowed to choose their own partners and, if needs be, change them.





Primary SIG

Karen Cebalo

The Primary SIG provides a voice for Primary school ESOL specialists, English Language Assistants (ELAs), and Teacher Aides working in the Primary ESOL space. We aim to present termly webinars that have relevance to our sector. We would love to encourage Primary members to volunteer to present on their own experiences, teaching innovations, passions, and contexts in these webinars and at CLESOL.

The theme for CLESOL 2026 is 'Back to the Future: Celebrating the past to shape the future'. It will be held on the 4th and 5th July in Hamilton. Book it in! Please do consider presenting - we have strong representation from our sector at CLESOL generally, and workshops led by Primary members have often had strong interest across the sectors.

Our Primary webinars this year have included an exploration by Haidee Jenkins of how well the new Maths curriculum caters for ELLs. This was very well received. Haidee will also present our term 4 webinar on ELLs and Structured Literacy, first examining what Structured Literacy is, then best practice and principles, and how to ensure it works for our bilingual learners.

Some of the topics we are interested in exploring during 2026 webinars are assessment and support for neurodivergent ELLs, and we will continue to explore ways of supporting our learners through the new curricula. If you are interested in hearing more about Primary-focused webinars and discussions, please ensure you have selected 'Primary' as one of the SIGs in your TESOLANZ account, and you will then be on our mailing list for communications.

Secondary SIG

Sarah Roper

After a quiet start to the year the Secondary Specialist Interest Group held two online events in August. The first, titled 'Numeracy Approved Standards and how they could work in an ELL context' was presented by Vanessa De Souza Cameron, MOE curriculum advisor for the Wellington region. We have talked a lot about CAA literacy and how we can help ELLs achieve this, but ELLs are also not doing well with the literacy-heavy numeracy CAA test. Vanessa outlined how two NCEA Level 1 standards from Commerce and Geography could be used by EL teachers to help ELLs gain the required 10 numeracy credits for NCEA level 1. This approach offers an alternative for students who are struggling to pass the CAA numeracy test. Vanessa encouraged EL teachers to consider these standards and collaborate with teachers from Commerce and Geography departments to help set up teaching and learning programmes to scaffold students to success.

The second event was about reading assessments, particularly placement testing. Rosemary Gillies, MOE Senior ESOL verifier, introduced the need for a reliable EAL reading assessment, the work that has been done on the Indicator, and emphasised the importance of explicit teaching of reading skills. Chris Parkin from Triune Initiatives then explained 'The Indicator', a specially developed reading assessment for ELLs in New Zealand that aligns with ELLP stages. Miranda Howell spoke about the AssessEP product that offers an online assessment of reading and listening that is also aligned to ELLP stages.

Both of these resources are available for schools to purchase.

Excited by the news that EAL is now categorised as a subject, we are following the Ministry of Education's developments in curriculum for EAL and are actively working to have input. We are pleased to have Angela Bland representing TESOLANZ on the Secondary Curriculum Focus Group.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the work and dedication of Sally Hay as Secondary SIG coordinator for the last 5 years. Sally has taken on a new role within the TESOLANZ executive and has therefore stepped aside from this role. Sally, an experienced EAL specialist, has thoroughly enjoyed co-coordinating and leading online professional development events for educators. We now have a new coordinator, Kathryn Teeboon, EL HOD at Northcote College. Kath is also her school's Literacy Coordinator and runs the PLC for the North Shore ESOL cluster. Kath has been teaching since 2016, starting with English before she transitioned to ESOL in 2018. She brings a deep understanding of what it feels like to be a language learner from her four years living in Taiwan with minimal Mandarin - now she knows just enough to be annoying for her Chinese students!

Sarah and Juliet are looking forward to working with Kath and the steering group to come up with interesting events and presentations relevant to secondary teachers across New Zealand. As always, if you have any ideas or want to present something, please get in touch.

United Nations Day



United Nations International Days

as established by the General Assembly

Consider ways in which these select days could be incorporated into classroom programmes or your workplace.

NOVEMBER

- 10 Nov** World Science Day for Peace and Development
- 16 Nov** International Day for Tolerance
- 20 Nov** World Children's Day
- 25 Nov** International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women
- 26 Nov** World Sustainable Transport Day

DECEMBER

- 3 Dec** International Day of Persons with Disabilities
- 5 Dec** World Soil Day

- 10 Dec** Human Rights Day
- 18 Dec** International Migrants Day
- 20 Dec** International Human Solidarity Day

JANUARY 2026

- 4 Jan** World Braille Day
- 24 Jan** International Education Day
- 26 Jan** International Day of Clean Energy
- 27 Jan** International Day of Commemoration of the Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust

FEBRUARY

- 2 Feb** World Wetlands Day
- 4 Feb** International Day of Human Fraternity

- 20 Feb** World Day of Social Justice
- 21 Feb** International Mother Language Day

MARCH

- 1 Mar** Zero Discrimination Day
- 3 Mar** World Wildlife Day
- 20 Mar** International Day of Happiness
- 21 Mar** International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination
- 30 Mar** International Day of Zero Waste



tesolanz

te rōpū kaiwhakaako reo ingarihi ki iwi reo kē

teachers of english to speakers of other languages aotearoa new zealand

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TESOLANZ invites you to join us as a member.

Over the past 2 years, TESOLANZ has made significant gains in serving its members.

These gains include:

- New events
- Improved newsletters and website
- Increased advocacy/engagement with key stakeholders

Membership fees are:

- Full Membership - \$65/year
- Low Waged Membership - \$35/year
- New Graduate - \$0 for one year

Membership options can be viewed on our website:

<https://www.tesolanz.org.nz/join-us/>

TESOLANZ advertising charges

Full page

200mm(W) x 287mm(H) \$600

Quarter page horizontal

200mm(W) x 71.75mm(H) \$150

Half page

200mm(W) x 143.50mm(H) \$300

2 column half

120.33mm(W) x 129mm(H) \$200

1 column half

57.16mm(W) x 129mm(H) \$100

Please submit your advertisement in High Res (300dpi) Jpeg or PDF form to:

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Deadline for
the next issue is
20 March 2026