

English Language for Adults

Goal three: Auckland Regional Settlement Strategy

Introduction

The ability to communicate impacts on every area of our lives, yet the 2001 Census revealed that some 50,700 New Zealand adult residents felt they did not speak English well enough to have a basic conversation about everyday things. More than 65 percent of New Zealand's non-English speakers reside in the Auckland region and English language ability is particularly limited within refugee communities. Forty percent of New Zealand's United Nations quota refugee intake since 1999 were not literate in any language and a further 40 percent had some literacy skills in their first language, but not in English.¹

Comparisons with English-speaking residents show that insufficient English language skills seriously disadvantage migrants' and refugees' ability to participate in the workforce, and significantly restrict their earning potential. The needs of learners who require English language skills vary significantly and not all adults learn at the same pace, nor do they all require the same level of English language teaching and class time. Accessible language courses, matched to skill level and need, and a standardised learning progressions framework are, therefore, essential for adult migrant and refugees from non-English speaking backgrounds to become self-sufficient and confident in using English in their everyday lives.

It is widely recognised that English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) education plays an important part in assisting migrants and refugees to achieve good settlement outcomes. New Zealand has a long-established history of ESOL education and the sector is now a significant foreign exchange earning industry.

This chapter describes the barriers and challenges identified by migrants and refugees relating to ESOL provision. It also outlines current Government support and arrangements for such provision, as well as the strategic frameworks within which this support is located. It goes on to identify some key opportunities to overcome barriers and enhance adult ESOL learning and English language outcomes.

The Ministry of Education, the Tertiary Education Commission, Auckland ESOL providers, assessors and purchasers, and Work and Income New Zealand (which uses ESOL specialist services) were among those consulted.

Barriers and challenges: what migrants and refugees said

During the engagement process migrant and refugee communities indicated that some community members who were not competent and/or confident in using English language in New Zealand settings struggled to access appropriate provision. They identified a range of barriers in adult ESOL provision in Auckland, which they perceived as limiting their ability to become confident in using English. These were:

¹ Ministry of Education (2003b, p.13).

Access and affordability of ESOL services

- expensive course fees;
- difficulties getting to classes for those who have limited ability to participate socially and in ESOL courses (e.g. women with children, older persons). See Appendix 1 for some further discussion about this group;
- few part-time or after-hours learning options available to adults with other settlement-related commitments;
- the lack of appropriate local ESOL provision which, in Auckland, means additional costs for transport and parking.

ESOL services not meeting the range of learning needs

- inadequate information on class content to enable migrants and refugees to readily identify classes that meet their specific learning needs;
- classes failing to provide migrants and refugees with the 'everyday' English needed for living and working in New Zealand;
- insufficient bi-lingual teachers to support 'high-need' learners, many of whom have limited education experience before coming to New Zealand; and
- insufficient work-focused English to help migrants and refugees find employment or to support them in their current employment situations and to progress to more skilled positions.

Context for government support

Learning a new language is not easy and busy adult learners, who are also adjusting to settling themselves and their families into a new land and culture, face significant challenges in finding the time to study English. Most adult migrants and refugees realise that English language proficiency will assist their settlement and are therefore highly motivated to learn English.

Many migrants have already paid for tuition before arriving in New Zealand. Recent immigration policy means that primary applicants in the skilled/business migrant category must be proficient in English language. In addition every skilled migrant's partner and any family member over 16, who does not have the level of English language proficiency required for entry to New Zealand, must pre-purchase English language tuition (up to \$6,650) to be taken up on arrival in New Zealand. Refugees and migrants entering New Zealand under international humanitarian or quota systems, and family sponsorship schemes, are not required to pre-purchase English tuition. These latter groups usually require considerable support with learning English.

Auckland has a complex web of adult ESOL programmes offered by a range of tertiary education providers (universities, polytechnics and

wananga), private training establishments, adult and community education providers and specialist ESOL services. Most of these programmes are subsidised by government funding, which is provided in varying amounts, via a range of different funding sources².

Government support for adult ESOL provision

The Government recognises the importance of adult ESOL learning and the acquisition of English in helping refugees and migrants from non-English speaking backgrounds to settle in New Zealand. The Tertiary Education Commission administers Government funding for ESOL services, including those for migrants and refugees, across a range of different providers.

One of the goals of the *New Zealand Settlement Strategy* is for migrants and refugees and their families to become confident using English in the New Zealand setting or able to access appropriate language support. The Government has injected significant additional funding for ESOL-related initiatives over the last two years. In 2004, it provided additional funding for new initiatives to assist new migrants and refugees to enter the labour market. This included funding of \$1.6 million over four years to extend adult ESOL provision.

Further new funding support was provided in 2005 for two Ministry of Education adult ESOL initiatives. These are:

- \$0.8 million each year from the 2006 academic year to provide study grants to help foundation learning professionals undertake a suitable adult literacy qualification. Some of these grants will be available for bilingual people to gain adult ESOL teaching qualifications; and
- \$7.0 million per annum available from January 2006 from the Foundation Learning Pool to support the provision of intensive community-based adult learning (including ESOL) for priority learners;
- in Auckland the Tertiary Education Commission funds two ESOL assessors to support migrants and refugees from non-English speaking backgrounds, and to refer them to courses appropriate to their needs and language skill levels. Migrants, refugees and other stakeholder groups have indicated that whilst this support is helpful, it is insufficient to meet the needs of such a large geographical area containing a significant number of people

² Funding sources include: equivalent full-time student (EFTS) funding, Training Opportunities programme funding, adult literacy funding, adult and community education funding, and adult ESOL funding. Provision of ESOL, under all of these funding arrangements except for EFTS, is capped with fixed levels of tuition subsidy.

requiring ongoing support to become confident using English in the New Zealand setting.

Strategic frameworks

The following government policies, developed by the Ministry of Education, are aimed at supporting English language acquisition in New Zealand. The Tertiary Education Commission is responsible for implementing these strategies.

More than words: The New Zealand Adult Literacy Strategy 2001
Addresses the need to strengthen adult literacy skills so that people can participate in New Zealand's economy and society. Many refugees and some migrants have participated in foundation language and literacy programmes delivered under this strategy.

Tertiary Education Strategy 2002-07
Includes a strategy to "raise foundation skills so that all people can participate in our knowledge society". This strategy is supported by the objective of significantly improving adult foundation skill levels through increased access to foundation education in a range of learning contexts.

The Adult ESOL Strategy 2002
Acknowledges that accessing the appropriate level of English language provision is key to facilitating an individual's participation in, and contribution to, New Zealand society. The strategy identifies four key areas as priorities:

- better co-ordination and collaboration within the adult ESOL sector;
- enhanced access and affordability of adult ESOL provision;
- expanding services and increasing the quality of adult ESOL;
- ensuring the diversity of learner needs is matched by appropriate adult ESOL services.

Learning for Living Strategy 2004
This strategy builds on the *Tertiary Education Strategy*, the *New Zealand Adult Literacy Strategy* and the *Adult English as a Second or Other Language Strategy*. Its focus is on building an evidence base about what works in foundation learning so the effectiveness of foundation learning across the tertiary education sector can be improved. This strategy will involve expanding the provision of foundation education to new learners, particularly to those who need it most.

Despite the fact that ESOL has long been taught in this country, and there are a range of strategies aimed at improving ESOL outcomes, an ongoing challenge within the sector (highlighted by migrants, refugees and other key stakeholder groups) is how best to ensure these strategies are fully implemented. This is vital if migrants and refugees are to access ESOL tuition that caters for the broad range of English language learning needs and delivers consistent learner outcomes across the range of providers.

Addressing broad learning needs

*The Adult ESOL Strategy*³ notes that the needs of learners who require English language vary significantly. It offers examples of potential learner needs, and the factors that impact upon the type of ESOL required including settlement and resettlement issues faced. These differences are useful. However further work should be undertaken to identify broad categories of need (incorporating a cluster of similar learner needs) that affect the relevance of, and access to, ESOL provision. Appendix 1 provides examples of broad-need groups and initiatives for addressing their needs.

Applying a consistent framework

At present there are a range of assessment processes in place, as each provider is responsible for creating and/or using their own. This can mean that one provider's 'upper intermediate level' might equate with another's 'advanced' level. The ESOL unit standards on the National Qualification Framework are the only outcomes-focused assessment framework for ESOL with national recognition. However stakeholders have indicated these do not necessarily address their requirements to achieve the desired ESOL outcomes. This lack of standardisation can be counter-productive for migrants and refugees who require a clear and consistent progressive ESOL learning path.

Because English language is a pre-requisite for entry to many areas that impact upon settlement such as employment, professional registration and ongoing study, end-users require a common framework to reliably inform them on the English language competency of individuals who have completed ESOL courses.

Proposed attributes for developing a consistent learning progressions framework to achieve adult ESOL outcomes are outlined in Appendix 2.

³ The Adult ESOL Strategy 2002, Ministry of Education.

The way forward: *The Auckland Regional Settlement Strategy*

Goal to enhance adult ESOL outcomes

The *Auckland Regional Settlement Strategy*'s goal for achieving successful and sustainable ESOL outcomes is drawn from the *Adult ESOL Strategy*:

All Auckland residents from non-English-speaking backgrounds have opportunities to gain English language skills so they can participate in all aspects of life in New Zealand, in family and community, for learning and education, and within the workplace.

Opportunities to enhance adult ESOL learning

It is recommended that the longer-term work programmes for the *New Zealand Settlement Strategy* and the *Auckland Regional Settlement Strategy* consider enhancing the opportunities for refugees and migrants from non-English speaking backgrounds to become self-sufficient and confident with using English in their everyday lives through the following initiatives:

Implementing ESOL policies and programmes

- The Tertiary Education Commission and other relevant agencies fully implementing the ESOL recommendations contained in existing Government strategies including specifying deliverables, investment requirements, timeframes and organisational responsibilities;

Matching ESOL needs and services

- The Tertiary Education Commission, as the funder of adult ESOL provision, will work with providers to develop, implement, and co-ordinate a process to identify, map and match ESOL learner needs with current ESOL provision that includes:
 - identifying broad-need groups;
 - mapping the geographical location of broad-need groups and ESOL provision in the local area to build a picture of how need (in this case broad-need groups) and provision are connected and whether there are any gaps or overlaps at the local and regional level;
 - using the information from the mapping exercise to plan for future adult ESOL programme purchase and to help ESOL providers to plan and tailor ESOL provision to local need.

Applying a consistent framework

- Central government agencies developing a consistent learning progressions framework for use by all those involved in the assessment, planning and provision of ESOL. This framework would

clarify how the attainment of an English language achievement level equips the learner in the New Zealand context.

Appendix 1

Meeting a broad range of English language needs

This appendix describes initiatives for addressing the needs of two broad-need groups – foundation-level learners with limited social participation and learners requiring ESOL for employment.

Foundation-level learners with limited social participation

This group may be family members of ‘breadwinners’ such as older people or women with pre-school or school-age children who may be several years away from, or may never, participate in the workforce. Yet this group needs to feel welcome and connected to their new country and this in turn will enhance the settlement within their wider families and communities. However, without the opportunity to learn English, there is an increased likelihood that this group of people may become or remain socially isolated.

There is a range of factors that might impact upon the ability for this broad-need group to learn English. For example, people with limited social participation benefit from learning in environments that are community-based, provide bi-lingual tuition, and where the tuition focuses on practical English for everyday situations. Bi-lingual teachers and teaching assistants from refugee and migrant communities can play a valuable role in supporting this.

English for employment

Employment and ESOL are both key contributors to successful settlement, and migrants and refugees often face the dilemma about which of these to focus on when they first arrive. New Zealand currently has high employment levels and many migrants and refugees cannot afford to miss out on the available work opportunities. It is therefore important that in an environment of a learner-driven tertiary funding system, where dollars follow enrolments, that many education providers do not retain ESOL learners when jobs are available to them. Employers need the skills that migrants and refugees bring to New Zealand. To meet these needs, education providers need to equip migrants and refugees with the knowledge and language required to:

- enter and integrate into the New Zealand workplace, often through entry-level jobs;
- assist those already in employment in entry-level jobs with language support that will help them move on to work more appropriate to their qualifications, skills and experience.

Both of these areas are important and will require different levels and types of English language support. Common to both groups is the ongoing need to learn or improve English, which does not stop once they have a job. This requires access to ESOL classes held outside of working hours in

locations that are accessible and nearby home or work. This is important to ensure that the many learners who cannot afford to take time off work and are unable to access study grants can continue to improve their confidence in using English in the New Zealand work environment.

Service provision for those with limited social participation

Some examples of service provision aimed at addressing the English-learning needs of those whose social participation is limited and who require foundation learning include:

- *The ESOL Home Tutor scheme* - this provides customised home-based tuition for adult migrants and refugees, and brings them together for classes in their local communities. The scheme also trains and employs bi-lingual tutors, who provide high learning need migrants and refugees with a bridge into learning English;
- *Classes established and run by bi-lingual tutors on behalf of migrant and refugee communities* – for example:
 - The Chinese New Settlers' Trust which runs ESOL programmes in at least six locations around Auckland (with grants and charitable funding);
 - Some Auckland refugee communities have received funding to provide bi-lingual ESOL courses to members of their communities, most of whom were pre-literate in their first language or had only a beginner's level of English. Most were unable to attend English classes in the past or failed in mainstream classes. Research suggests they have achieved rapid progress in oral and general literacy skills⁴;
- *Ethnic community homework centres* – these are funded by the Ministry of Education and offer an opportunity for inter-generational learning, with school-aged children studying at the same time that their caregivers receive ESOL tuition. These programmes foster community development and are also able to address general resettlement issues that may arise;
- *Mainstream after-school care or homework schemes* – these enable mothers to synchronise their ESOL courses with their children's learning time. The Ministry of Education's Out of School Care programme (OSCAR) is an example of this;
- *Locally-based services with integrated childcare*
 - Selwyn College receives additional government funding to provide for the ESOL needs of local adults, particularly refugee groups that have been resettled locally. Class provision is

⁴ The adult ESOL Strategy Review of Adult Refugee Programmes, Ministry of Education.

supplemented with a fully-staffed crèche on site, while the older children of class participants usually attend the school. Classes are offered during school hours five days each week, and a strongly supportive learning environment is offered, which learners are able to attend until they feel comfortable with their level of English. Access is available to participants for a number of years. It is the only such programme funded in this manner.

- The Waitakere WEA is an example of a community education provider of ESOL that has invested in a registered childcare facility that is on-site and affordable for learners.

Service provision for those on work-focused programmes

Work-based literacy and training programmes

Two workplace literacy funds, one administered by Workbase in Auckland and the other by the Tertiary Education Commission, are aimed at employers of migrants and refugees whose productivity could be enhanced with better literacy. The funding helps companies provide employees with subsidised workplace-specific ESOL while they are on the job. However, the need has outstripped the available funding and employers who would like to offer workplace ESOL have not been able to access more funding.

Work-based training is also built into some Training Opportunities and Youth Training programmes administered by the Tertiary Education Commission. These programmes assist many migrants and refugees, who meet the participation criteria of unemployment and low educational qualifications. The programmes' work-based training components are not, however, widely known or promoted amongst eligible migrant and refugee learners.

Trades-based English

The Manukau Institute of Technology's trades-based English provision was developed in response to requests from migrant and refugee communities. The Manukau Institute of Technology is a provider of Training Opportunities carpentry and mechanics programmes. It has developed a trades-based English component to these programmes for migrants and refugees who already had qualifications or experience in these trades, but had been unemployed long-term in New Zealand.

Language teaching is integrated into the workshop experience, which parallels a real workplace situation. The programmes also offer work-based training with employers. This approach has consistently achieved success, with 100% of students moving onto further training, or employment once they graduate.

Appendix 2

A proposed ESOL learning progressions framework to achieve consistent adult ESOL outcomes

There is a need for a consistent framework with a focus on adult ESOL outcomes, that incorporates what is termed by the International Second Language Proficiency Ratings⁵ as a general proficiency model (used in situations when what is required is a focus on learners' proficiency with no particular purpose specified) and a specified purpose model (usually used when a 'consumer' or end-user of the results, such as professional registration board or an employer, states they are interested in a particular focus on a particular domain or domains of language use). Such a framework would assist in ensuring the investment made in ESOL by Government and end-users effectively equips migrants and refugees with the spoken and written English language skills that will enable them to settle and participate in New Zealand society by:

- offering a consistent approach to ESOL assessment for migrants and refugees regardless of who undertakes the assessment;
- providing a consistent framework that supports migrants and refugees on a progressive ESOL learning path from the time they first arrive in New Zealand;
- increasing the confidence of consumers or end-users (such as employers, professional registration board etc) that the English language skills of migrants and refugees will relate to their requirements;
- building the confidence of migrants and refugees about how the achievement of different levels of English language skills will equip them for life in New Zealand.

There are international examples of frameworks that support consistent approaches to ESOL language tuition and common outcomes for learners and end users.⁶ These could provide guidance for the development of a similar approach in New Zealand.

⁵A scale that describes the development of second or foreign language proficiency in adolescent and adult learners developed in Australia.

⁶ An overview of the International Second Language Proficiency Rating (ISPLR), Elain Wylie Centre for Applied Linguistics and Language, Griffith University, Australia.
www.gu.edu.au/centre/call/content4.htmlThe ISLPR is a scale that describes the development of second or foreign language proficiency in adolescent and adult learners. There are two models of the ISLPR, the *specified purpose* model and the *general proficiency* model. The former is used when some party (usually a 'consumer' or end-user of the results such as a professional registration board, an employer, or a court of law) states that they are interested in a particular focus on a particular domain or domains of language use.

