

Secondary mainstream teachers' awareness of their contribution to successful English language learning

Sue Edwards & Adie Haultain
Waikato Institute of Technology

Research questions

- What do secondary mainstream teachers know about their ELLs?
- What do secondary mainstream teachers know about resources and strategies for teaching ELLs, and do they use these?

Motivating factors for research -1

- Mainstream subject teachers are expected to play an increasingly important role in facilitating English language acquisition
- The English Language Learning Progressions (ELLP) (2008) "explain what ESOL specialists and mainstream teachers need to know about English language learners in order to maximize their learning and participation"
- Information in the progressions "is relevant to all teachers" (p.2)

Motivating factors for research -2

- How could we enhance the Professional Development of secondary mainstream teachers?
 - Within the Grad Cert TESOL programme
 - In other ways?

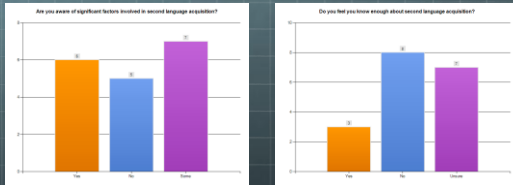
The Participants

- 18 Secondary Mainstream Teachers
- Criteria - teaching either English, Science, Mathematics or Social Science
 - 10 – English
 - 4 – Science
 - 3 – Mathematics
 - 2 - Social Science
- Variety of experience & training

Data gathering

- On-line questionnaire – Survey Monkey
- Questions about:
 - Knowledge of L2 acquisition
 - Knowledge of ELLs' background
 - Knowledge of ELLs' level of English
 - Knowledge and use of resources and strategies for teaching ELLs
 - Factors that had assisted or hindered teachers

Teacher knowledge of L2 Acquisition



Background knowledge of ELLs and its importance

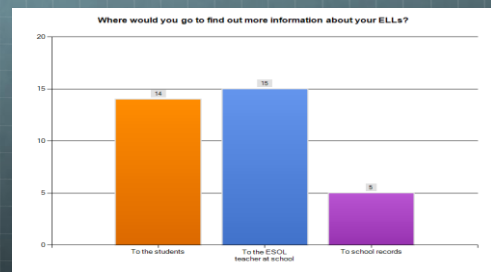
Do you know the following about your ELLs?

- Country of birth – 13
(16 - important or very important to know)
- Receiving ESOL tuition at school - 11 (17)
- First language - 10 (18)
- Culture – 8 (17)
- Educational background – 3 (18)
- Length of time in New Zealand – 3 (18)
- Receiving ESOL tuition outside of school - 1
- Learner's home living situation - 0

How does background information help?

- “Good starting points on whether students can handle mainstream English requirements or will need a more individualised programme”
- “It has helped with understanding the level to pitch the subject at.”
- “Educational background has been helpful as it allows scaffolding”
- “It helps me respond to their needs in the classroom.”

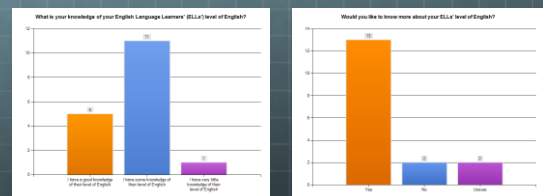
Sources of information



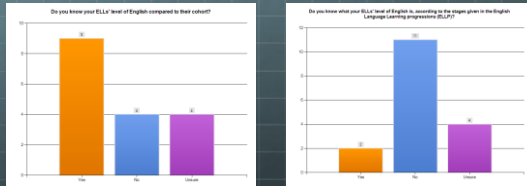
Preventing factors

- 10 – Time
- 4 – Nothing
- 3 – Language barrier
- 2 – Poor records/information
- 1 – Reluctance to pry
- 1 – Poor communication with ESOL dpt.

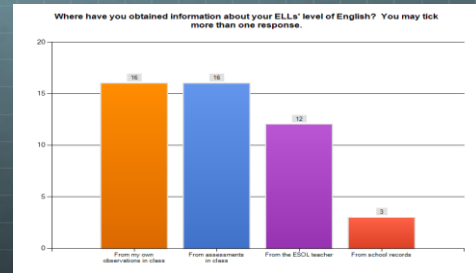
Knowledge of ELLs' English



Knowledge of ELLs in relation to cohort and ELLP stages



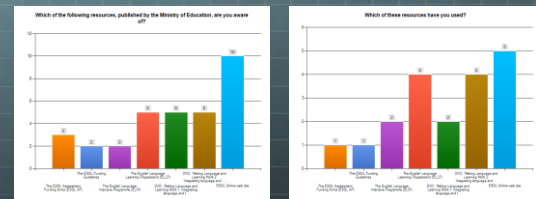
Sources of information



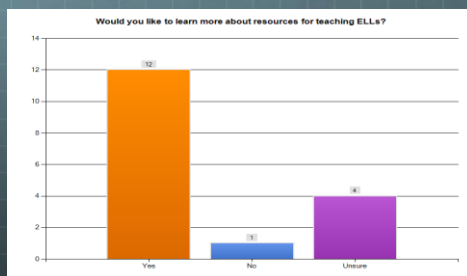
Preventing factors

- 🌐 9 – Time
- 🌐 4 – Nothing
- 🌐 1 – Lack of ELLP stages knowledge

Ministry resources being used



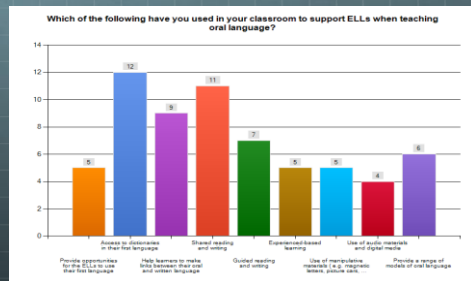
Do they want to learn more?



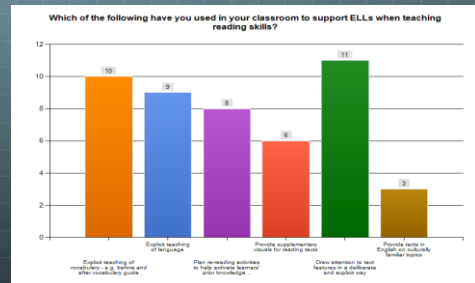
Preventing factors

- 🌐 "Lack of Time. Lack of guidance – where to find things, what's useful, what's important."
- 🌐 "Priority, time."
- 🌐 "Don't know where to go"
- 🌐 "Time constraints"
- 🌐 "Time and awareness of what is out there"

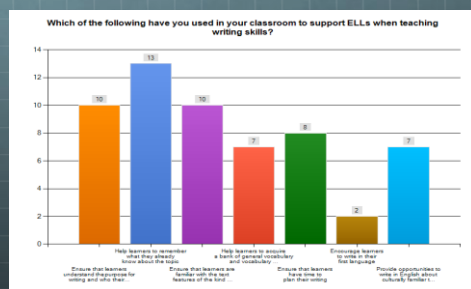
Oral language teaching strategies



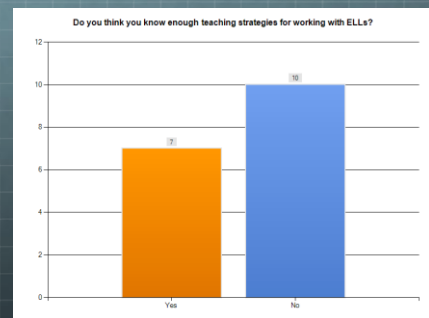
Reading skills strategies



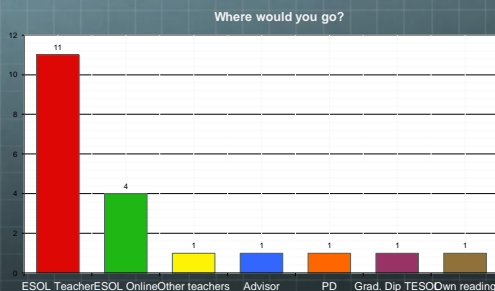
Writing skills strategies



Do they know enough?



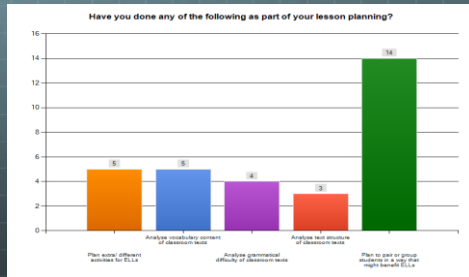
Where would you go for help?



Preventing factors

- “Lack of time, lack of urgency – they are getting by in mainstream classes okay by themselves”
- “Time, lack of direction”
- “Time constrains”

Specific planning for ELLs



Specific planning for ELLs

“Planning for ELLs often benefits the slower students in the class who are native speakers. For example writing the instructions on the board also helps those who wait for the teacher to finish speaking then ask “What are we supposed to do?” Good teaching benefits all students”

“Consider wording of instructions, make sure they have written instructions in case they miss verbal instructions, sometimes group them with students who will support them.”

To summarise: 1) What do they know?

- Teachers have varying knowledge of Ministry resources - most familiar with ESOL online
- Teachers appear to use a range of teaching strategies suggested in the ELLP (but - limitations of this question)

2) How do they know?

- Teachers use different sources of information:
 - Knowledge of ELLs – ESOL teacher/students
 - Knowledge of ELLs’ English – own observations and assessments
 - Knowledge of teaching strategies – ESOL teacher

3) What are the gaps?

- Teachers want to know more about:
 - Language acquisition
 - ELLs’ level of English
 - Teaching resources
 - Teaching strategies
- Teachers think it is important to know about ELL’s backgrounds, but have varying degrees of knowledge about this
- Teachers are not familiar with ELLP stages

4) What’s preventing them from learning more?

- The main factor preventing teachers from furthering their knowledge:
 - ‘Time’

Our conclusion

- We don't think that secondary mainstream teachers are fully aware of the contribution that they are being asked to make to their ELLs' language learning.
- Our limited research has confirmed that:
 - “there is a need for effective teacher professional learning that enables teachers to shape their teaching skills specifically to this group of ... learners” (Price, 2008)

Summarizing teacher quote

- “Even after studying SLT and teaching ELLs for many years there are still strategies and ideas I can learn from others. Time for preparation, the enormous amount of testing and paper work and the large size of classes are the biggest barriers to effective teaching and learning”