

How well prepared do beginning NZ primary school teachers feel they are to teach English language learners?

Antony Easto
St Plus X Primary School, Hamilton
antandjo@xtra.co.nz


Sue Edwards
Waikato Institute of Technology, Hamilton
sue.edwards@wintec.ac.nz

Overview

- o Our aim for this session
- o Who are English Language Learners? (ELLs)
- o Who are Beginning Teachers? (BTs)
- o Initial Teacher Education (ITE) and the teaching of ELLs
- o Our research
- o Our recommendations

Who are ELLs?

- o ESOL-funded students:
 - o Migrants
 - o Refugees
 - o New Zealand born
- o Previously funded ESOL students
- o IFP students
- o Students whose home language is not English
- o Students transitioning from Māori-medium to English-medium
- o Students in bilingual education
- o Students with specific, identified language learning needs.



ELLs receiving ESOL funding

32,487 students in 1,303 schools:

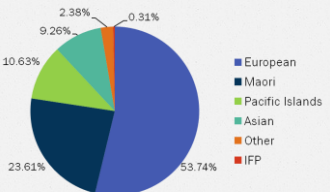
- o 25,789 in Years 0 – 8
- o 6,698 in Years 9 – 15
- o 161 different ethnic groups
- o 158 different countries
- o 116 different languages spoken

(2012 Period 1)

<http://www.tesolanz.org.nz/Site/SIG/secondary.aspx/#MOESTATS>

True numbers of ELLs in our primary schools

There are many other ELLs in schools who have either completed their funding entitlement or exceeded the benchmark (112+).



Ethnicity	Percentage
European	53.74%
Maori	23.61%
Pacific Islands	10.63%
Asian	9.26%
Other	2.38%
IFP	0.31%

TOTAL – 23% OF PRIMARY SCHOOL POPULATION

Who supports ELLs?

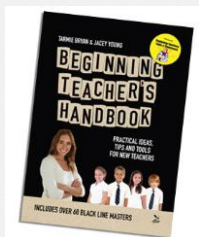
- o **ESOL specialist teachers**
 - o Not in all schools
 - o Are they a dying breed?
- o **Teacher aides**
- o **Mainstream teachers**
 - o What training do they get to work with ELLs?

Who are 'Beginning Teachers'?

PRTS and BTs?

- Both terms are used to describe teachers who have completed ITE but are not fully registered
- Most teachers will gain full registration within a three year timeframe

<http://www.teacherscouncil.govt.nz/r1/whatisproreg.stm>



What should graduating teachers know?

Graduating Teacher Standards (Teachers Council, 2007):

Standard One: Graduating Teachers know what to teach

(d) have content and pedagogical content knowledge for supporting English as an Additional Language (EAL) learners to succeed in the curriculum.



ITE and EAL in NZ

University	Course Title	Core	Option
	Promoting achievement for diverse learners.	✓	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Language, social and cultural studies. Literacy programmes and learning languages. Te Reo Maori, ESOL, and Social Studies in the classroom and beyond. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ ✓ ✓
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teaching Learners of English as another language Learning English as another Language. Understanding migrant cultures in Aotearoa/NZ 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ ✓ ✓
	Working with cultural/linguistic diversity	✓	
	Te Aka-Professional studies 2	✓	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teaching ESOL Learning Languages 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ ✓

Researchers have reported:

- A shortage of an 'explicit programme of study for teaching EAL learners at the ITE level'.
 - Teachers expected to 'learn on the job'.
 - Thought that good instructional practices will be enough for students to learn a second language.
 - A lack of systematic training for EAL at ITE level.
 - This leads to a belief that pupils will 'pick it up' as they go along.
 - Teachers need the knowledge to develop pupils' awareness of language structure and functions.
- (Skinner, 2009)

Our research

- Aim**
 - To find out how well prepared BTs feel they are to teach ELLs
- Participants**
 - 20 BTs/PRTs (4 – 1yr PGDip; 16 – 3 yr degree)
- Method**
 - Survey
 - Ranking items on Likert-type scale Asked teachers to rate aspects of their ITE programme
 - (1-5 scale: Strongly agree – Strongly disagree)

What did we ask BTs about?

How well their ITE prepared them in these areas:

- Knowledge of second language acquisition
- Gathering information about ELLs
- Knowledge of the specific learning needs of ELLs
- Knowledge of resources for teaching and assessing ELLs
- Knowledge of strategies for teaching and assessing ELLs

Overall Results (%)

Sections of survey	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Knowledge of second language acquisition	0	25	35	25	15
Gathering information about ELLs	0	10	55	25	10
Knowledge of Specific Learning Needs of ELLs	0	25	50	15	10
Knowledge of Resources for teaching ELLs	0	5	35	45	15
Knowledge of strategies for teaching and assessing ELLs	0	0	40	50	10

Where did BTs feel most prepared?



- Only 5 of the 34 items gained an average rating over 3 (out of 5)
- The highest was a rating of 3.85 for:
 - My teacher education programme provided me with an awareness of the need to cater for English language learners in the classroom
- 5 BTS – rating of 5 (strongly agree)
- 11 BTs – rating of 4 (agree)

Other areas rating above average

- Information about the difficulties that ELLs may have in learning to read (3.25)
- Information about the difficulties that ELLs may have in learning to write (3.10)
- Information about the difficulties that ELLs may have in the development of their oral skills (3.10)
- Information about how children learn English as a second or additional language (3.10)

Comments from the BTs

- "I feel I was made aware of the difficulties in teaching ELLs and the struggles they may have in a mainstream class, but I feel I have not had enough information on how to best plan and teach them in a classroom that may have children with their own learning difficulties." (1)
- "I feel that you were made aware of learning needs for ELL and resources including assessments and why and how ELL learn, but were not given enough in-depth knowledge of specific ways of helping these learners, rather we were given – this is an ELL learner, they have different needs." (6)

Where did BTs feel least prepared?



2 items rated less than an average of 2:

- Knowledge or skills that would enable me to use the ESOL Assessment Form (1.85)
- Knowledge or skills that would enable me to use the ESOL Online web site (1.95)

Summary question - each section

Sections of survey	Mean response
Knowledge of Second Language acquisition	2.35
Gathering information about ELLs	2.20
Knowledge of Specific Learning Needs of ELLs	2.50
Knowledge of Resources for Teaching ELLs	2.15
Knowledge of strategies for Teaching and Assessing	2.15

Comments from the BTs

- o "ELLS was a topic covered only briefly as part of the literacy paper one year. They certainly made us aware of the issue, but didn't provide us with enough specific information regarding strategies or assessment." (9)
- o " We were introduced to ELLP but not taught how to assess or cater for the needs of ELLs in the classroom – which I think needs to be taught." (7)

Interesting findings

- o **2 BTs** answered **1** for everything
- both had a 1 year PG Dip Ed
- o **3 BTs** said ELLs were referred to as part of 'cultural differences' and/or 'literacy'.
- o **7 BTs** asserted that they had learned nothing or very little about ELLs



Comments from the BTs

- o "Unfortunately this issue wasn't formally addressed at all during my course..." (12)
- o "Can't remember spending much if any time learning about English language learners" (11)
- o "Extremely under prepared to help ESOL children." (18)
- o "I was/am really disappointed by the lack of information we were provided with. I came into teaching blind with how to teach/work with ELLs apart from using my own common sense." (20)

Our conclusions

- o **BTs feel under-prepared to teach ELLs.**
- o **BTs feel they were made aware of the needs of ELLs.**
- o **BTs feel they were not provided with enough knowledge or skills to teach and assess these learners.**
- o **BTs feel they were not provided with enough knowledge about the different resources that are available to help them teach ELLs.**

Our recommendations

Is it rocket science?

- o We know what teachers need to know about ELLs
- o Include a core paper about teaching ELLs
- o Include a practicum with an ELL focus
- o Re-write the Graduating Teacher Standards to reflect the importance of both knowledge and skills for teaching ELLs



References

- Hall, B. & Cajkler (2008). Preparing newly qualified teachers in England to teach pupils who have English as an additional language. *Journal of In-Service Education*, 34 (3), 343 - 360.
- Skinner, B. (2010). English as an additional language and initial teacher education: views and experiences from Northern Ireland. *Journal of Education for Teaching: International research and pedagogy*, 36(1), 75-90.