

Highlighting the Superdiversity among English Practitioners in New Zealand (Part One)

By Leslie Forrest and Jono Ryan, Waikato Institute of Technology

Note: This is the first of a two part article. The second part will be published in the July, 2016 TESOLANZ Newsletter.

In October 2015, the New Zealand Herald introduced a new series aptly called Superdiversity. This six part series highlighted the findings of the diversity stocktake research report written by Mai Chen, constitutional law expert and the Chair of Superdiversity Centre for Law, Policy and Business. This stocktake is now publically available at <http://www.superdiversity.org/>, providing policy recommendations and addressing the implications of the current and future projections of the New Zealand cultural and ethnic landscape. The term *superdiversity* was first introduced by sociologist Steven Vertovec in 2007, referring to population diversity that is much higher than anything previously experienced and according to Mai Chen, New Zealand is now the fourth most diverse country among OECD nations. By 2038, Statistics NZ estimates that 51 per cent of New Zealanders will be Asian, Maori and Pasifika.

As I read through the Superdiversity Series and later the diversity stocktake report I began to think not only about the super diverse nature of English language learners, but also the super diverse nature of NZ's English language practitioners. What experiences, skills, and lessons can these practitioners contribute to discussions of the social,

political, and economic implications of superdiversity in New Zealand? The influx of migrants from various areas will require more robust English learning and cultural support to tackle the needs of the steady stream of new comers. As such, my colleague Jono Ryan and I wanted to uncover the stories and lessons of English language practitioners from a range of multicultural backgrounds and share their experience of teaching English in New Zealand. In this article we profile teachers contributing to the field of ESOL in NZ, presenting - in their own words - insights from their many and varied teaching experiences.

We hope you enjoy reading about these English practitioners and hope it can lead to an open discussion on the direction of English language teaching and learning.

**Alages Andre,
Originally from Malaysia
Programme Coordinator,
Manukau Institute of Technology**

How long have you been in this field?

About 30 years, including 11 years in N.Z.

What was the catalyst for deciding to become an ESOL practitioner?

To me becoming an ESOL practitioner was a natural progression from teaching



Alages Andre

English in a secondary school, undergraduate and postgraduate programmes at university and Business English for corporate clients in Malaysia. Also coming from a multilingual and multicultural society like Malaysia, I have the added advantage of appreciating where my ESOL learners in NZ come from. For a myriad of reasons they've moved to NZ and they want to engage with that society on different platforms: social, study, and work. I understand their motivations and challenges and so am able to help them develop learning skills and strategies to help them optimize their learning and empower them to become successful learners.

What has been your greatest professional achievement/accomplishment?

Completing my PhD

Can you share a critical incident that you have encountered in teaching and ways you overcame it?

It wasn't one single incident but a series of similar incidents that set me thinking and reflecting on my practice. When I first started teaching I focused on encouraging my learners to do their best and if they didn't, I felt hugely disappointed and this initially led to some tension in the classroom. When I got to know them better and understood the challenges they faced at home and/or at work it soon dawned on me that I needed to allow them to progress at their own pace and to help and support them each step of the way. Not everyone wants to progress onto further study or obtain employment. Some are satisfied at building their confidence and actively engaging with learning in a formal environment.

Any changes you would like to see in the ESOL field in N.Z.?

One change I would like to see is better and more widespread use of technology in the classroom. Smart phones are increasingly becoming valuable learning tools in the classroom and can be used effectively to further engage learners. The phones have multipurpose functions and learners seem to enjoy using them to facilitate and enhance their learning. For example, in the speaking and listening classes, learners can use them to record their conversations, group discussions or oral

presentations. Then they can listen to the audio files and self- and peer-correct using checklists. These audio files can be emailed to the teacher for further feedback. Also there are lots of apps that learners can use to help them improve, for example, their vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation. It is important to note though that the use of technology is not meant to replace but to supplement teaching.

What is some advice you would give a person (non-Kiwi) considering a career in ESOL in N.Z.?

One of the first questions prospective employers ask is, 'Do you have any experience teaching in NZ?' So it's best to get some hands-on teaching experience in NZ possibly through part-time and/or relieving work. Plus it enables the person to develop contacts and build networks. This would certainly give him/her a clear advantage and with the right qualifications and aptitude, they would be on the right path to a successful career in ESOL. Be persistent, be passionate, and be courageous in pursuing your dreams.



Jim McLarty,

Originally from Bristol, UK (moved to the U.S. at age 11)

Teacher, Lincoln University

How long have you been in this field? In N.Z.?

Nearly all of my adult life; in NZ, since I first arrived in November 2000.

What was the catalyst for deciding to become an ESOL practitioner?

I worked as an ESOL tutor at university working with Libyan and Iranian students. An opportunity

to visit Japan after university prompted me to apply for a job there as a teacher which I thoroughly enjoyed. During my time in Japan, I attended a variety of workshops, encouraging me to upskill. Upon arriving in Australia and later New Zealand, I considered other sorts of work but the one that I had enjoyed most is being an ESOL practitioner. I really enjoy teaching.

What has been your greatest professional achievement/accomplishment?

Writing, performing, and having a book of jazz chants published in Japan in the 1980s is something I am proud of. Unfortunately I am quite sure that it would be nigh impossible to obtain a copy now. The other thing I'm proud of is the number of students - in particular nurses and doctors - that I have worked with and helped to obtain the IELTS score they required to continue their professional careers in Australia and New Zealand.

Any changes you would like to see in the ESOL field in N.Z.?

None that I can think of at present. The biggest issue is balancing academic requirements with economic feasibility.

What is some advice you would give a person (non-Kiwi) considering a career in ESOL in N.Z.?

Get as much experience as possible and do post-graduate work especially in linguistics. Be prepared to start at the bottom until you prove yourself and expect to put in extra hours, both at work and at home.

Sasitorn Kanthiya,
originally from Chiang Mai,
Thailand
Team Manager,
Waikato Institute of Technology

How long have you been in this field? In N.Z.?

I started teaching English in a secondary school in Thailand soon after I graduated 30 years ago, and went on to teach ESL to adult Indochinese refugees in a refugee processing centre for resettlement. From there, I decided to do a Master's degree in TESOL.

I arrived in New Zealand in November, 1994, and started teaching at the Otago Language Centre (now the University of Otago Language Centre) in 1995. I have also taught at other schools in the South Island including the Otago Polytechnic, Dunedin College of Education (now University of Otago College of Education), and Christchurch College of English.

What was the catalyst for deciding to become an ESOL practitioner?

I had always wanted to be a teacher as a child and since English was the only subject at school that I excelled in, it made sense for me to pursue this career path.

What has been your greatest professional achievement/accomplishment?

To be where I am now (one of the Team Managers for Centre for Languages) is a great accomplishment, mainly because, for a non-native speaker of English, the road to success is often longer and harder.

Can you share a critical incident that you have encountered in teaching and ways you overcame it?

As a non-European teacher, I had not always been aware of the impact I may have created in my learners' perception of a typical English language teacher in New Zealand, but one incident in particular brought this awareness



Sasitorn Kanthiya

forward. It was when I first taught a group of Saudi students. The fact that it had taken longer for me to build trust and rapport with this group of students made me keenly aware of my personal 'difference'; this fact made me feel inadequate, which in turn became a barrier to my relationship with the students. I outgrew this feeling eventually but the experience gave me insight into the human psyche and how much we allow appearances to guide us in our judgement of character and capacity.

Any changes you would like to see in the ESOL field in N.Z.?

Professionalism in the ESOL field is what I would really like to see more of in New Zealand and the world in general. There are a lot of ESOL providers in New Zealand and effort needs to be made to establish a certain standard of practice and teachers' qualification requirements. I know we have come a long way and people have more or less accepted the fact that not anyone who speaks the language can necessarily teach it. Nevertheless, English Language Teaching has continued to develop and new ideas are being explored all the time, so people in the profession need to keep moving with it.

What is some advice you would give a person (non-Kiwi) considering a career in ESOL in N.Z.?

There are already quite a number of non-native English speaking teachers in New Zealand and among them some excellent ones. This is a pleasing development. The key to success for every teacher, regardless of their race, in my opinion, is the passion and commitment to making an impact and contributing to our students' success. All living languages in the world keep on evolving, so you never stop learning, and as a teacher, you pass on your passion for learning to your students. That, to me, is what makes language teaching interesting and rewarding at the same time.

Michelle Hecksher,
originally from Brazil, naturalized New Zealander in 2013,
Teacher, Language International

How long have you been in this field? In N.Z.?

My first teaching job was in 2000 in Brazil. I worked with the audio-lingual method for six years in Brasilia before deciding to move to New Zealand. In 2008, I did my CELTA in Auckland and I have been teaching here ever since.



What was the catalyst for deciding to become an ESOL practitioner?

I was fortunate enough to live in China and in the USA in the late 90s and it was then that I became fluent in English. When I returned to Brazil, I was desperate to find a job and I thought teaching would be a good way to have an income while finishing uni. Back then, I never thought I'd be still teaching today!

What has been your greatest professional achievement/accomplishment?

After doing my CELTA and working for the first time with the communicative approach in 2008, I realised I loved teaching! Doing the DELTA became my next goal. In 2009, I applied for it but was advised not to do it then since I'd finished the CELTA only the year before. I insisted on doing it and even though it was one of the hardest things I've ever done, I completed it successfully and ended up getting Merit for modules 2 and 3.

Can you share a critical incident that you have encountered in teaching and ways you overcame it?

The school I work at in Auckland has a wide range of nationalities and some of these international students have a hard time adapting to their new environment due to cultural differences as well as language barriers. I remember one of the first Cambridge classes I taught - most of the students were Swiss and some were from Asia (Japan, Korea and China).

I believe that due to their cultural similarities, the Swiss-German and Swiss-French students tended to sit together and the Asian students did so too. It was difficult because both groups were very reluctant to mix. Mingle activities, in which students were always paired up with someone from a different nationality, helped them bond. It also helped the classroom dynamics and the feedback I got from students at the end of the term was very positive as they seemed to have benefited from working with each other. I think this experience in class also helped them cope better with adapting to life in Auckland and being open to learning from other cultures.

Any changes you would like to see in the ESOL field in N.Z.?

Unfortunately the Kiwi dollar plays a key role in determining whether international students come to study English in New Zealand or not. Language schools and teachers depend on student numbers to survive and I've seen way too many colleagues being made redundant because of low intake. Some excellent teachers are forced to find other sources of income and the industry, as a whole, loses. I am biased, of course, but I think Aotearoa is a great choice for anyone thinking of studying English. We have great schools and highly qualified teachers (as well as the bonus of being in one of the most beautiful countries in the world). I'd love to see New Zealand being considered the first option for international students for the excellent teaching practice we have here.

What is some advice you would give a person (non-Kiwi) considering a career in ESOL in N.Z.?

It is important to have a recognised entry-level qualification, of course, and I would also recommend enhancing it with

further professional development. For example, having the DELTA and/or a Masters in TESOL definitely helps when looking for a job. I'd also remind this person of the fact that NZ is far away from everything. It is such an amazing country, however, that it is really hard not to fall in love with it! So I guess my point is that once you find a job here, it will be very difficult to leave!

Tech Tips. Giving feedback through Microsoft Word.

By Nick Baker

Digital technology is everywhere at work, in our homes and in the classroom. No matter what level you are teaching, you will find digital technology is part of your trade through videos, pictures, email, websites and word processors. Digital technology can help the learning and teaching experience to be more mobile, engaging and enjoyable for both teachers and learners. It can also save time. Here is a cool tech tip to do with feedback.

Feedback is a very important process in the learning experience. It provides a platform for showing learners' strengths and weaknesses, giving suggestions to improve on their work. Receiving regular feedback is also one of the biggest expectations many students have of their teachers. As education goes progressively more digital, typing on word processors has become the norm

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President's report

Greetings,

Since taking up the position of president in October last year, I have increased admiration for my predecessor Hilary Smith, and the other members of our executive committee. All work extremely conscientiously and thoughtfully on behalf of our membership, and the super-diverse English Language Learners here in Aotearoa. I'm doing my best to keep up with them!

I have been involved in a range of interesting meetings, events, and discussions since my election and as I reflect on these, they have all included a focus on the importance of English Language Learners' mother tongues.

In November last year, along with fellow exec members Angela Bland and Denise McKay, I attended the launch of Ngā Reo o Tamaki Makaurau, the Auckland Languages Strategy. Our individual reflections are included in this newsletter. The launch was a culmination of hard work and determination from a wide range of stake holders, and reflected a genuinely collaborative process which included community language groups, iwi leaders, academics, city councillors, and educators. The strategy working group was facilitated by COMET (City of Manukau Education Trust) and endorsed by a wide range of organisations including TESOLANZ. It is hoped that the development of a strategy at a city level will lead to other major New Zealand cities following suit, with a view to establishing a national languages policy.

International Mother Languages Day was celebrated on February 21st, and CLANZ (Community Languages Association of New Zealand) worked hard to organise workshops for families across the country, to provide support and ideas for mother tongue maintenance. TESOLANZ supported this initiative by networking and making suggestions for workshops. Some TESOLANZ members facilitated workshops – thank you for this important work. We made suggestions for how families could bring their language

