Declaratio

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This Thesis Research Project entitled:

Teaching and learning challenges facing primary school teachers of students from non-English speaking backgrounds is submitted in partial fulfilment for the requirements for the Unitec degree of Master of Education

**CANDIDATE’S DECLARATION**

I confirm that:

- This Thesis/Dissertation/Research Project represents my own work;
- The contribution of supervisors and others to this work was consistent with the Unitec Regulations and Policies.
- Research for this work has been conducted in accordance with the Unitec Research Ethics Committee Policy and Procedures, and has fulfilled any requirements set for this project by the Unitec Research Ethics Committee.

Research Ethics Committee Approval Number: 2012-1103

Candidate Signature: ………………………………………………………….Date: 19/12/2013

Student number: # 1109779
Teaching and learning challenges facing primary school teachers of students from non-English speaking backgrounds

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master in Education

Unitec Institute of Technology, 2013
Abstract

This study examined the teaching and learning challenges faced by teachers of students from non-English speaking backgrounds in three Auckland primary schools.

A qualitative methodology was chosen for this research project. An interpretivist approach was utilised as the study drew on gaining understandings and insights from experiences of teachers and English Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) coordinators in the three primary schools (Bryman, 2008). Data was collected through the use of questionnaires and semi-structured interviews.

The findings in this study highlight key challenges and strategies regarding the teaching and learning of their students from non-English speaking backgrounds (NESB) relating to three main themes: teacher professional development, learning and teaching issues and the importance of communication.

Teacher professional development regarding second language learners varied in nature and relevance among schools. The findings implied positive effects on teacher practice when teachers opted to take on self-directed study in the area of Teaching English in Schools to Speakers of Other Languages (TESSOL). Resource availability presented a range of implications regarding the use and availability of Ministry of Education documents, funding and time issues. Literacy issues regarding learner proficiency in their first language were common. Helping NESB students meet National Standards for Mathematics, Reading and Writing was a concern for classroom teachers. The importance of communication between teachers, NESB students and their families was evident. The challenges experienced by participants and ensuing the strategies they employed to meet these challenges give rise to a number of implications for the teaching and learning of English language learners in primary contexts.
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Table of Contents

Abstract ................................................................................................................................. i

Acknowledgements ............................................................................................................... ii

Chapter 1: Introduction ....................................................................................................... 1

Chapter 2: Literature Review ............................................................................................. 8

Chapter 3: Methodology ..................................................................................................... 26

Chapter 4: Findings ............................................................................................................. 37

Chapter 5: Discussion of Findings ................................................................................. 69

Chapter 6: Conclusion ........................................................................................................ 86

Recommendations ............................................................................................................. 94

References ........................................................................................................................... 98

Appendices ......................................................................................................................... 108

Table of Figures

Table 3.1 Forms of triangulation involved used in this study ............................................ 33

Table 4.1 School roll, decile and research participants ..................................................... 38

Table 4.2 Research participants’ details ......................................................................... 41

Table 4.3 Teacher ratings in Confidence in establishing home–school relationships .... 57

Table 4.4 Teacher development and use of ELLP .............................................................. 63
Chapter 1: Introduction

Introduction

New Zealand is a melting pot of many diverse and different cultures. The implications for our education system as a result of these factors are significant. This research project focuses on the teaching and learning issues regarding students from non-English speaking backgrounds (NESB) in primary school settings. The research gained the insights and experiences from primary school teachers and coordinators in charge of English Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) in three Auckland primary schools.

This chapter presents the rationale behind this study and outlines the research aim and questions. The study’s background is highlighted along with the researcher’s motivation for undertaking research in the area of English as second language learners. The scope of the project as a small qualitative study carried out over three Auckland schools, is discussed alongside the project’s limitations. Lastly, the chapter presents an overview for the following chapters that comprise this thesis.

Rationale of this study

Teachers have often received limited specific professional development regarding the teaching of students from non-English speaking backgrounds (Da Silva Iddings & Katz, 2007, Franken & McComish, 2003; Haworth, 2005b, Harvey, Richards & Stacey, 2007). This can result in teachers having an under-developed pedagogy regarding teaching approaches required for NESB students. NESB students provide a wide spectrum of language and literacy issues for teachers within their classrooms. These issues have shaped this research which proposes to investigate these key challenges facing primary school teachers in supporting children from non-English speaking backgrounds (NESB) learning in Auckland primary school settings.

Teachers in New Zealand are not only faced with teaching English-speaking students the New Zealand Curriculum, they are also required to teach children from a range of
different ethnic backgrounds. These children have varied English language development. In some cases, children are born here but begin school with limited English as their native tongue is spoken at home. With around thirty students in a class and already a range of differentiated programmes in place designed to suit different learning needs, this is yet another need to be met. This is a challenge I have experienced in my role as a classroom teacher.

Teachers of NESB students encounter a range of literacy issues, particularly in relation to children’s knowledge of their first language. McNaughton’s (2002) research based in New Zealand primary schools highlights how schools are challenged with creating literacy settings that are conducive to learning for students of different backgrounds. Schools need to have differentiated programmes and recognise the different literacies of these learners. They must also provide opportunities for children to develop reading and writing literacies both at home and school. Census data from 2001 from the Ministry of Education (2003a) showed that 40 percent of New Zealand’s population of both Asian and Pacific ethnicities spoke two languages. Being bilingual requires a person to be proficient in two languages; the conflict raised here is that many of these children may know both English and their native tongue, but they may be proficient in neither. The Ministry of Education (2003a) highlighted the fact that as a result of the rising population, the numbers of bilingual children would be growing, making research in the area of NESB learners important.

The use of funding to adequately meet the needs of NESB learners in schools is a common challenge. Previous research showed that 30% of ESOL-funded students were New Zealand-born, while the remainder were residents who were born overseas (Ministry of Education, 2003a). The funding provided in New Zealand schools is limited to four years, so children may lose funding, before they have developed their understanding of English to a level that allows them to be successful academically.

Issues pertaining to teacher professional development, the diverse nature of NESB learners in New Zealand classrooms, literacy issues, Ministry resources and funding all provided valid areas for research in this study, as these issues have great influence on
education in New Zealand classrooms. This project adds to past research by examining what is presently happening in primary schools with regard to teachers being prepared to effectively teach children from non-English speaking backgrounds.

Research Aim

The purpose of this study is to examine teaching and learning issues facing the teachers of NESB students in a cluster of Auckland primary schools.

Research Questions

The research questions guiding this study are:

• What initial training, professional development and other professional support have teachers received in relation to teaching NESB students?

• What teaching and learning issues do primary teachers of NESB students face in the following areas?
  i. Pedagogy and curriculum issues
  ii. Student literacy and language
  iii. Other (e.g. organisational and policy issues, communication with parents)

• What strategies do teachers adopt in response to teaching and learning challenges presented by NESB students?

• How effective do teachers believe their professional preparation and their current teaching strategies are for NESB learners?

Background of study

This research project is an exploration of my own interests concerning the teaching and learning of students from non-English speaking backgrounds. In this study, I identify challenges and strategies employed by mainstream primary school teachers in
supporting NESB learners. My own experiences as a primary school teacher have influenced the decision to follow this path of study. As a teacher at a school where there are a limited, but increasing, number of NESB students, my colleagues and I have often encountered challenges in catering for these students. This is an area where most staff have received little professional development despite this growing issue.

Not all NESB students are eligible for ESOL funding. Classroom teachers are required to fill out forms yearly to assist the school’s ESOL coordinator in placing an application for funding. Government funding is available for NESB students for four years. Schools use the funding at their own discretion to best meet the needs of their NESB students.

My own experiences have been both with new immigrants, international students from Asian backgrounds and children from non-English speaking countries living in New Zealand. These students can either be born in New Zealand, have lived here for a number of years or be newly arrived. These children have largely grown up speaking their mother tongue or a mixture of both their mother tongue and English. Therefore, their English language proficiency is not what would normally be expected from monolingual students’.

Quite often when international students first arrive in New Zealand, they are placed in our classes for a number of weeks. Teaching colleagues and I have felt largely ill-equipped to cater for these students effectively in our classrooms.

The largest group of New Zealand-born NESB students are predominately Pasifika and largely of Samoan descent. Many ethnic groups (e.g. Chinese and Indian) have become established in New Zealand with family members now being born in New Zealand and have become established minorities (Corson, 1999, p.172). The significance of these learners is recognised by the Ministry of Education (2003, p. 4): “NESB students represent a diverse group of students in terms of their language backgrounds and cultures. Students also vary in terms of the size of their communities,
the newness of their communities, and their links to existing communities in New Zealand.”

In response to these issues, the Ministry of Education developed The English Language Learning Progressions for Years 1-4 (Ministry of Education, 2008a) and The English Language Learning Progressions for Years 5-8 (Ministry of Education, 2008b). This document is aligned with the Literacy Learning Progressions (http://esolonline.tki.org.nz/ESOL-Online/Student-needs/English-Language-Learning-Progressions) where learners from non-English speaking backgrounds will be working towards proficiency in the same reading and writing competencies as all New Zealand students. However, the document notes their pathways and rates of progress will differ from those of other students (English first language speakers).

The achievement rates of NESB learners is a concern, with many government research projects being undertaken to address this issue with large numbers of NESB learners falling behind and educational gaps widening between NESB learners and their peers as they progress with their schooling (Wylie, Thompson & Lythe, 2001). Research undertaken by the OECD Programme for international student assessment (PISA) in 2000 displayed large gaps in New Zealand among other countries in reading literacy for minority students who speak a different language at home than at school. Interestingly, the gap was smaller in Australian students tested (OECD, 2001). Wylie et al. (2001) also revealed that these gaps grew over time among children with other language speaking backgrounds in most learning areas. Understanding the nature of NESB learners’ learning barriers and how we as educators can overcome these to support this group of learners is an important consideration for teaching in a New Zealand classroom context.

**Scope of study**

This was a small-scale qualitative study involving three Auckland primary schools of the same decile rating. The value of the research lies within the study’s small, in-depth nature. This research examined the teaching and learning issues regarding English
second language learners. Semi-structured interviews and questionnaires were used to gain insights and experiences from 21 primary school teachers and three ESOL coordinators over the three primary schools involved. Relevant school policies were also analysed to complement the research.

The research was conducted in three low-decile Auckland schools, as there are higher numbers of NESB students than in high-decile schools. A larger sample group was available in these schools with access to wider experiences from teachers due to the high numbers of NESB students. Ethnicity patterns in lower-decile schools show around thirty percent of students coming from a European ethnic background, 21% coming from a Pasifika background and four percent of Asian descent (Ministry of Education, 2003a). However, in higher decile schools, European descent is around 80% with Pasifika about 2% and Asian 8%. As a result, the language and learning contexts for NESB learners are varied. Schools all experience challenges in meeting the needs of NESB students. Schools employ different strategies in order to overcome these challenges. It is these challenges and ensuing strategies that the researcher investigated in order to identify ways in which schools can improve support for their students from non-English speaking backgrounds.

**Overview of thesis organisation**

This thesis is structured in six main chapters. This chapter provides an introduction, outlines the aim and main research questions driving this study. It also provides information drawing on why this research problem was selected and its relevance in the New Zealand primary school setting.

Chapter 2 explores relevant research literature relating to teaching and learning issues facing teachers of students from non-English speaking backgrounds. The literature will be discussed in three sections: the role of professional development; communication issues; and teaching and learning issues.
Chapter 3 outlines the nature of this research project as a small qualitative study. It will discuss the suitability of the chosen qualitative paradigm and the validity of the selected research methods: interviews, questionnaires and document analysis.

Chapter 4 reports the research findings from both the semi-structured interviews, questionnaires and relevant documents. The chapter discusses the findings in two sections: challenges and strategies. The findings are further organised into three sub-themes: professional development, teaching and learning issues and the importance of communication.

Chapter 5 explores the findings regarding professional development, teaching and learning issues and the importance of communication in discussion alongside the literature introduced in Chapter 2.

Chapter 6 summarises this study. It revisits the chosen qualitative methodology and the methods used: semi-structured interviews; questionnaires; and document analysis in the study. The chapter then revisits the findings regarding teaching and learning challenges experienced by primary school teachers of NESB students. Furthermore, implications of the research are discussed as noted in Chapter 5. Lastly, the chapter provides consideration for future practice and research regarding the teaching and learning of NESB students.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter will review relevant literature regarding the teaching and learning of NESB (students from non-English speaking backgrounds) learners. Key themes that have helped to shape this research project will be analysed and examined. These themes include professional development, teaching and learning issues and the importance of communication. The research of Harvey, Richards and Stacey (2007), Haworth (2005a, 2005b) and Franken & McComish (2003) are particularly noteworthy in relation to this topic as their work is New Zealand-based.

Professional development issues

The literature highlights two themes regarding teacher professional development and the teaching and learning of NESB students. The first theme explored is the lack of teacher development regarding NESB learners with a particular focus on teacher's development in terms of a culturally responsive pedagogy. The second theme examined is collegial sharing as a form of development.

Lack of teacher development in NESB

There is a substantial body of research about teachers’ lack of professional development in the area of teaching English second language learners as problematic (Cameron & Simpson, 2002; Da Silva Iddings & Katz, 2007; Franken & McComish, 2003; Harvey et al., 2007; Haworth, 2005a; Huang, Clarke, Milczarski and Raby, 2011). Cameron and Simpson’s (2002) New Zealand-based research was conducted in two secondary schools, one in Auckland and the other in Hamilton. This study suggested classroom teachers felt considerable pressure attempting to meet the needs of increasing numbers of NESB students. It was noted teachers in Auckland schools, with greater numbers of NESB students, were managing better. The researcher believed
this was a result of teachers in Auckland having access to more professional development opportunities regarding the teaching and learning of NESB learners.

Teachers' lack of pre-service training is highlighted by Franken and McComish (2003). These findings resulted from a large-scale study commissioned by the Ministry of Education to establish how New Zealand schools were using ESOL funding and to inform future provision for NESB students. Through this study it was clear teachers were poorly prepared when encountering learning and teaching issues regarding NESB learners. Haworth’s (2005b) findings from a study of four schools suggest a need for pre-training initiatives to be established for teachers in the area of NESB. Another New Zealand-based study carried out over two years aimed at establishing effective practice of ESOL paraprofessionals in New Zealand schools (Harvey et al., 2007) reflected this conclusion also. This study identified mainstream teachers as being inadequately trained to differentiate approaches, programmes and resources and work alongside paraprofessionals to support NESB students.

Two of Haworth’s (2005a, 2005b) studies will be examined in this review. Haworth's (2005a) smaller study focused on two teachers and the NESB students in their classrooms in a New Zealand primary school. The second study (Haworth, 2005b) followed four different primary schools, where each school was examined over a school term over the course of one year. This study involved interviews with teachers in charge of ESOL programmes and classroom observations. It was noted that NESB students spent most of the day in their classrooms, highlighting the need for teachers to be well prepared to cater to their needs. Verdugo and Flores (2007) note effective schools develop not only language specialists, but all staff, regarding English second language learners. Furthermore, this development must be based on students’ learning needs.

In contrast, Coleman's (2011) Australian-based study of NESB learners in non-metropolitan Catholic diocesan primary schools in New South Wales argued that, despite teachers’ pedagogical responses to NESB students’ pastoral care being strong, their academic pedagogy regarding NESB learners was weaker. This study outlined despite these teachers meeting NESB children’s personal needs, they were not
confident their teaching programmes were meeting the learning needs of these students. This reinforced the claim for teachers’ teaching and learning approaches for NESB students to be further developed. This also provided a contrast to literature that suggested not all teachers had developed a culturally-responsive pedagogy (Da Silva Iddings & Katz, 2007; Ell, 2011; Verdugo & Flores, 2007).

A consistent theme in these studies was the importance of teachers developing a culturally responsive pedagogy, which was identified as paramount in meeting the learning needs of NESB students (Alton-Lee, 2003; Da Silva and Katz, 2007; Ell, 2011; Verdugo & Flores, 2007; Wendt Samu, 2006). Ell’s (2011) research concerning the teaching of Maori students in mainstream New Zealand schools’ discusses the importance of teacher education preparing teachers to be ‘culturally competent’. Ell (2011) makes reference to this claim as being important for other students from non-English speaking backgrounds. The need for teacher development to create inclusive classrooms for NESB students was determined by Da Silva Iddings and Katz’s (2007) research. This study noted many classrooms actually limited opportunities for NESB students to feel included and valued as opposed to creating them.

Pedagogical considerations for educators concerning classroom contexts and how they influence the collaboration of children’s home and school identities are important (De Silva Iddings & Katz, 2007; Wendt Samu, 2006). Research by Alton-Lee (2003) outlined in a Best Evidence Synthesis (BES) reinforces these claims by highlighting the importance of engaging students’ prior knowledge and its impact on learning. Creating these connections with students is vital for teacher effectiveness (Wendt Samu, 2006). The literature points to teacher professional development regarding cultural responsiveness as important to improving teacher effectiveness of diverse learners.

Teachers receiving extra development, specifically in the area of NESB, through further training and gaining of credentials can strengthen their pedagogy in this area (Reeve, 2010). Reeve’s (2010) study is based in the American school system with a focus on teacher professional development to gain ESOL teaching credentials. The study outlines in particular experienced teachers taking on development in the area of NESB
as beneficial, as they already possess a strong understanding of curriculum and teaching practice. In turn, these teachers should be able to use this training to successfully adapt programmes for NESB students’. Reeve’s work further emphasised the importance of teachers development in the area of ESOL as being on-going in nature.

*Collegial sharing as a form of teacher development*

There is debate surrounding not only inadequate teacher preparation for catering to NESB learners but also teachers' ability to work alongside paraprofessionals. Franken’s (2005) literature review suggested that when schools are designing effective programmes for English language learners, goals for not only students but curriculum and teacher development needed to be included. The positive effects of collegial sharing between teachers, to develop teachers of NESB learners is examined in many studies (Fletcher et al., 2009; Franken, 2005; Gleeson, 2012; Verdugo & Flores, 2007).

Research by Fletcher et al. (2009) in a cluster of five schools (three primary, one intermediate and one secondary) in New Zealand’s South Island, based around literacy issues for children also identified teachers being able to experience valuable development from other colleagues who are knowledgeable in the area of ESOL. Gleeson’s (2012) study of ESOL teachers’ roles in secondary schools supports this finding, noting the importance of the relationship between individual teachers and ESOL teaching colleagues. Although Gleeson’s research was based in a secondary school context, this finding is also relevant for the primary sector as schools often have an ESOL coordinator/leader or paraprofessional who could be utilised to professionally develop other teachers.

Haworth’s (2005a) study also recognised the benefit of utilising staff with specific strengths in ESOL as a source of development. However, it was revealed that those with expertise in teaching NESB students were often teacher aides or senior teachers and were often not allocated time to support classroom teachers. An American study emphasised schools’ use of collaboration between both language specialists and content teachers as enhancing student achievement, understanding and creating a
smoother transition into mainstream classes for these students (Verdugo & Flores, 2007). Although this was American-based research, it provides relevance for the relationship between classroom teachers, teacher aides and ESOL teachers in New Zealand classrooms as this can be mirrored with the classroom teacher and their interactions with the ESOL coordinator and paraprofessionals.

An American study aimed at creating an ESOL curriculum in schools provided valuable findings regarding the value of collegial sharing (Sharkey, 2004). This study was undertaken over three years, in one school district, with teachers of varied experience from nine schools working together. Participants felt the collaboration experienced on the project, through engaging in collaborative dialogue and sharing created a consistency across classrooms, schools and the district regarding the teaching of NESB students. This provides implications for teachers and schools regarding the benefits of collegial sharing to improve practice.

Teachers in general receive limited training in the area of teaching children from non-English speaking backgrounds. The literature reinforced this along with providing considerations for schools in response to this issue. In particular, the importance of teacher preparation in the area of ESOL and the benefits of using ESOL teachers and paraprofessionals with expertise in the area of ESOL to develop others was clear.

**Communication issues**

*Home–school connections*

There is an extensive literature base acknowledging the importance of teachers bringing both home and school identities together to create effective learning environments for English second language learners (Da Silva Iddings & Katz, 2007; Dickie, 2008; Gregory, 2004; Lucas, Villegas, & Freedson-Gonzalez, 2008; McNaughton, 2002; Verdugo & Flores, 2007). Language barriers and lack of knowledge of many students’ backgrounds can create communication issues for teachers of NESB students. Verdugo and Flores (2007) and Lucas, Villegas & Freedson-Gonzalez (2008) state the teacher
knowing a student’s culture and background are critical factors in the teaching and learning process.

Verdugo and Flores (2007) further elaborate the importance of building bridges between home and school as essential for effective schools. Encouraging parents to become involved in their child’s education through parent committees and newsletters is important as this contributes to a positive school culture. Other studies by Fletcher et al. (2009) and Biddulph, Biddulph and Biddulph (2003) clearly outline effective home–school partnerships as being a powerful way in which schools can meet the needs of students from diverse backgrounds. The literature points to schools developing positive relationships between home and school as an important factor in supporting the needs of NESB students in schools.

**Teacher confidence in creating home–school links**

Haworth (2005a) notes that many teachers involved in her study of an urban Auckland school found it difficult, particularly due to cultural distance, to develop relationships with NESB students' parents to enhance their own knowledge and understanding of ways in which to support their children.

Limited teacher professional development regarding teaching of NESB students as discussed earlier, links to this area of the literature (Da Silva Iddings & Katz, 2003; Franken & McComish, 2003; Harvey et al., 2007; Haworth, 2005b). As teacher development is normally limited to learning on-the-job and TESSOL courses provided as part of teacher training or through extra study at tertiary level, teachers can experience confusion regarding pedagogical choices for NESB students. Teachers can improve their ability to meet the learning needs of NESB students through developing a culturally responsive pedagogy. Moll and Gonzalez (2004) suggest teachers need to foster regular teaching interactions with these students, not leaving them on the periphery and to engage with other colleagues for support.

Teachers’ confidence regarding the teaching of NESB students is shaped largely by their past experiences, background and knowledge and around whether their
experiences had been positive or negative (Haworth, 2005a; Reeves, 2009). Many expressed they had low confidence in their teaching abilities of NESB students but high levels of confidence in their regular teaching. Teachers recognised the importance for catering to the needs of NESB students but lacked confidence in their ability to do so (Hammond, 2012). Several studies suggest that those with positive prior experiences teaching NESB students were more confident, displaying strong self-efficacy in the area (Allen, Tufalasi & Robertson, 2008; Gibbs, 2005; Hivers, 2013).

Huang, Dotterweich and Bowers (2012) identify intercultural miscommunication as an issue for teachers of NESB students. Intercultural miscommunication is defined as a breakdown in communication occurring between speakers of different languages and backgrounds, as they may have differing views on social interactions. A key focus for teachers of second language learners is to help these students not only develop communicative competence but also to develop their awareness of using their second language appropriately according to sociocultural rules (Chang, 2009). Chick (2005) discusses when people from other cultures interact with others, despite speaking the language, they retain their own cultural values, for example, some Pasifika cultures—where children will not make eye contact with an adult that is speaking to them etc. Huang, Dotterweich and Bowers (2012) stress the importance of teachers modelling these interactions to NESB students and the importance of fostering verbal interactions between themselves and NESB students and between NESB students and their peers (Dooley, 2009). The importance of teachers undergoing professional development to learn their students’ cultures and develop their understandings of cultural differences is also identified. Once all cultures understand each other, intercultural miscommunication can be prevented with successful communication occurring between the teacher and student. This provides valuable insights for teachers to consider and utilise to help overcome communication barriers with NESB students.

The use of NESB students’ literacy tools to enhance learning

Teachers familiarising themselves with their diverse students’ literacy practices can use them to their advantage by using them alongside school literacy practices (Gregory,
This study identifies an example of a Bangladeshi community teacher using reciting as a part of the classroom literacy programme as a form of developing children’s memory, as this was a style of learning they were familiar with when practising prayers. This finding supports the notion of teachers of ESOL learners being aware of their students’ cultural values to support student engagement in learning (Da Silva Iddings & Katz, 2007; Dickie, 2008; Gregory, 2004; Jimenez & Rose, 2010; Lucas, Villegas & Freedson-Gonzalez, 2008; McNaughton, 2002; Verdugo & Flores, 2007). As one Ministry report stated, “Ensuring cultural engagement is particularly important were the students come from diverse backgrounds, especially when their cultural backgrounds differ from the teachers” (Ministry of Education, 2003b, p. 23).

McNaughton’s (2002) research conducted in New Zealand primary settings (as cited in Dickie (2008)) describes ‘incorporation’ which is defined as when the class programme incorporates features in which the student has developed expertise from out-of-school settings. This provides great relevance for teachers of NESB students. Dickie (2008, p. 248) suggests “effective teaching of NESB students can be developed if teachers are aware children come to school with ‘funds-of-knowledge’ which include social and cultural resources from their home settings.”

There is also research that emphasises the importance for second language learners to maintain their mother tongue (Amituanai-Toloa & McNaughton, 2008; Dickie, 2009; Garcia, 2003; Starks, 2005; Tabors & Snow, 2001; Tuafuti & McCaffery, 2005; Wylie et al. 2001). Dickie’s (2008) research based around school-age Pasifika children’s perspectives in regards to their culture and education provided valuable insights for teachers of NESB learners. Students involved were questioned regarding the use of their mother tongue. Many students revealed that, despite speaking their native language at home, many felt ashamed to speak it at school. However, it is not stated whether their shame came from personal feelings or negative experiences. Many students stated they had attended a Pasifika preschool i.e., a Samoan preschool and explained they were comfortable in their early years at school to still use their first language. However, by the time they reached the middle school after about two years at
school they stopped, as they wanted to be like everyone else. This provides implications for teachers of NESB students regarding the use of students’ first languages in the classroom.

This literature highlights key considerations concerning the importance of schools developing positive teacher–student and home–school relationships to support NESB students. The importance of teachers identifying students’ literacy strengths so they can be incorporated in classroom projects to improve teaching and learning opportunities for NESB students is emphasised.

**Teaching and learning issues**

*Language issues*

Literacy issues based largely on student’s knowledge of their first language and the learning of English as a second language are a significant issue explored in the literature. Starks (2005, p. 533) states: “In immigrant communities with a strong dominant language, such as English in New Zealand, language shift is inevitable.” However, Starks (2005) explains that the speed of a family’s shift from the mother tongue can vary and can occur in fewer than two generations, depending on household rules for the speaking of language and other community factors. Starks (2005) also reports alarming statistics when presenting the self-confidence in the speaking ability of many Pacific Islanders in their mother tongue. Starks study found a decline in first language confidence among younger generations of Pacific Islanders.

Teachers have moved away from earlier ideas where preventing students from speaking their first language at school was considered a way in which they could develop their English proficiency (Barker, 2003; McMillian & Rivers, 2011). Many teachers are unsure of how to provide students with opportunities to use their first language in the classroom (Kibler, 2010). In particular, teachers with limited knowledge of students’ first languages are less likely to value their place in the classroom (Barker, 2003; Macaro, 2005). Harvey et al. (2007) explored the use of mother tongue practices in the classroom, along with resources used to support NESB learners in their literacy
development. Several studies highlight that speaking another language at home is considered a high risk factor for poor school achievement. However, research suggests that if both languages are developed to a proficient level, this issue can be resolved. (Crawford, 2004; Flockton & Crooks, 2003; Lucas, Villegas & Freedson-Gonzalez, 2008; McMillan & Rivers, 2011; Wylie et al., 2001). These issues are largely literacy based with children’s knowledge of their first language playing a key role in the learning of their second language.

In the early years of schooling, NESB students may be supported by a bilingual assistant or teacher aide who speaks their native language and will be helped by them to develop fluency in their second language, through their first (Harvey et al., 2007). This is particularly useful if the student is a minority in the class with few or no other speakers of his/her language. The use of the native tongue needs to be adjusted to suit the needs of the specific group (Verdugo & Flores, 2007).

The literature emphasises the importance for second language learners maintaining their mother tongue (Amituanai-Toloa & McNaughton, 2008; Dickie, 2008; Garcia, 2003; Starks, 2005; Tabors & Snow, 2001; Tuafuti & McCaffery, 2005; Wylie et al., 2001). However, even within cultures, the values and attitudes of immigrants to maintaining their native tongue can vary, as many families will work hard to maintain their cultural identity and ensure children retain their mother tongue. This value is supported in our educational system particularly with the implementation of bilingual or fully immersed language learning units in both early childhood, primary and secondary settings (May, 2002; Tuafuti & McCaffery, 2005; Amituanai-Toloa & McNaughton, 2008; Palmer & Winktor Lynch, 2008). Some however, simply choose, as a response to negative experiences or their own values and attitudes, for their children to adopt the new language and culture as their own and consider it more important to become proficient in the new culture and English language. A considerable amount of literature has been published on dual language programmes as a strategy for improving second language learners’ educational outcomes (Amituanai-Toloa & McNaughton, 2008; May, 2002; McMillan & Turnbull, 2009; Palmer & Winktor Lynch, 2008; Tuafuti & McCaffery, 2005).
The literature suggests there are strategies that can be employed by mainstream teachers regarding literacy issues for second language learners. The Ministry of Education’s (1994) English Curriculum document stated that children should, initially, use their first language and move between that language and English as they developed confidence. This is reflected in the literature: Verdugo and Flores (2007) highlight that the use of a student’s native language as an instructional tool is important for creating a conducive learning environment. Using a student’s first language can be a tool for providing valuable content and understanding.

Although, overseas based, Palmer and Winktor Lynch’s (2008) study provides relevance for ESOL learners in the New Zealand primary context. This study explores the idea of dual language programmes to help children develop their second language alongside their first. Palmer and Lynch (2008) discuss a policy for Spanish children to learn English called Transitional Bilingual Education. Transitional bilingual programmes aim for English language learners to develop their English language skills without falling behind academically. These programmes aim to develop proficiency in both a child’s native tongue and English. When proficiency in English is attained, children exit the programme to English mainstream instruction (Crawford, 2004).

Children are taught basic subjects in their primary language, during their first few years of schooling while they learn English. Students are slowly transitioned into all English instruction. The transitional bilingual programmes are characterised by the use of both students’ primary language and English to varying degrees for instruction. The programme aims to have children become proficient in both their native tongue and English. Starks (2005) discusses bilingualism (meaning that someone is proficient in both languages). In this case, students speak both Spanish and English. When ESOL children become literate, they move to the mainstream and are instructed completely in English and expected to sit standardised tests in English, which also requires students to perform well with schools being accountable for performance. This, in turn, has ultimately led to many cases where teachers are ‘teaching to the test’ to ensure English language learners can meet educational benchmarks (Palmer & Winktor Lynch, 2008). This use of a student’s first language to develop their second is supported by the New
Zealand English curriculum (Ministry of Education, 1994) that outlined that children should initially, use their first language and move between that language and English as they develop confidence in their second language.

Despite being international policy written for educating bilingual students in Texas, United States, Palmer and Winktor Lynch’s (2008) study reflects opinions regarding the place for ESOL learner’s mother tongue as well as development of English in the New Zealand school system. Franken and McComish (2003) note bilingual education experiences often only occur if there is a large number of students from the same background. This research further suggests bilingual education support is not common in New Zealand.

These language and literacy issues including first language maintenance and bilingualism are key considerations regarding the teaching and learning of NESB students. The literature points to the importance of children’s first language and incorporation of their culture in learning opportunities as vital for the success of NESB students.

**Learning support for NESB students**

A key issue expressed in the literature was the challenges teachers faced in meeting the needs of diverse learners in their classrooms. Haworth (2005b) noted that teachers involved in the research were aware of the NESB students in the class, but were challenged to meet their needs due to other demands in their busy classes. As students were from different backgrounds, they needed different strategies to help them access the curriculum. The Ministry of Education (2000) stated New Zealand schools have a high range of diversity among students in classrooms. Conner, McGrath and Lancaster (2008) note the increasing emphasis on meeting the individual needs of learners in New Zealand schools, particularly those who come from different cultural backgrounds. The literature presents important considerations for meeting the needs of diverse students in mainstream classrooms.
Gleeson (2012) asserts that not only are ESOL teachers being expected to respond to these students but so are teachers of curriculum. Harvey et al. (2007) highlight it is common in primary schools that trained teachers are not necessarily entirely responsible for the support of these learners but are supported by paraprofessionals (teacher aides) as a way of providing specific worthwhile instruction to a group. It is reflected in this study that often the paraprofessional knew more about the support of ESOL learners than the classroom teacher.

Both studies by Haworth (2005a, 2005b) and Gleeson (2012) noted teachers experienced difficulty catering to the needs of diverse learners in the classroom. This was because of class size and also the diverse range of NESB learners within classes. Harvey et al. (2007) discussed observing a large amount of reading and follow-up work being completed with paraprofessionals, rather than the teacher. Meanwhile, writing was completed with either the mainstream teacher or specialist ESOL teacher. This reflects the importance of the classroom teacher being able to meet the needs of NESB students in all subject areas and also to work alongside other staff to support these learners. Another key consideration outlined by Haworth (2005a) was classroom teachers failing to establish the difference between the specific needs of NESB learners and students with learning difficulties. The importance of acknowledging the abilities and knowledge of NESB students who are literate in their first language is noted as these students are able to transfer some of their existing skills to tasks in English.

A strategy in the area of ESOL support is schools using paraprofessionals who speak the same language as NESB students. Harvey et al. (2007) noted where children were working with paraprofessionals who spoke the home language of students, many often gave long explanations in the mother tongue and this seemed to lack significance for all children in the group if they were not of the same background. However, the research also noted some observed were able to achieve a balance between both languages to support learning effectively. In this case, particularly to support others who may have arrived more recently in New Zealand than other students. However, it was noticed that initial encouragement to use the student’s language was withdrawn if translation became difficult. Franken (2005) observed that it was not often this was experienced in
New Zealand schools, as not all paraprofessionals or other staff will speak another language.

In contrast, Amituanai-Toloa and McNaughton (2008), May (2002) and Tuafuti and McCaffery (2005) also discuss variations of dual-language programmes. One strategy used is bilingual units, classrooms in mainstream schools where teachers instruct children in both languages such as English and Samoan. The availability of funds, diversity of languages and skill level of teachers to run such programmes is seen as an issue (McNaughton, 2002), particularly, as teachers involved need to be bilingual in the specific language of the NESB students. However, some schools have established language units’ for example providing a Samoan bilingual class if the school has a high number of Samoan students generating funding for a specialist classroom and teacher.

The literature provides important considerations for the New Zealand primary school context regarding the use of students’ mother tongue in the classroom and the role of ESOL teachers and paraprofessionals to support ESOL learners and classroom teachers. The literature shows that the use of ESOL teachers and paraprofessionals to support English language learners is varied as well as recommendations regarding opportunities for NESB students to access bilingual education experiences. These are all important points to be considered in this area of study.

Resource support for NESB students

Some studies raise concerns regarding the need for a specific curriculum for teachers to assist in the teaching of NESB students. Gleeson’s (2012) study although referring to secondary school subject specialist teachers, has relevance for the primary sector. There is no specific primary curriculum and, despite the development of the English Language Learning Progressions (Ministry of Education, 2008a; Ministry of Education, 2008b) it is a guide, not a mandated document.

It is important for students from diverse backgrounds to have access to learning materials they can relate to, in order to develop ownership of their learning (Au, 2003; Cummins, 2008; Vine, 2006). The development of NESB students’ literacy through use
of specific materials was discussed in depth by Harvey et al. (2007). Their findings suggested a need for a wide range of supporting materials and texts to support ESOL learners. Many schools have bought commercial specialist materials and resources like games and cards to update programmes alongside teacher-made resources as well as PM readers, Rainbow Readers and journals that are at learners’ needs levels. It was noted that, in cases where these learners were given the same materials as classmates they were often too difficult and the grammar was too complex.

Vine’s (2006) study involved a lone ESOL child in a new entrant classroom. The case study found that the ESOL child involved was often following and engaging in classroom routines, but was not always making a connection with the actual content being taught. This displays the need for NESB students to have learning resources they can relate to and that provide them with deeper levels of understanding.

Academic achievement of education standards for NESB students

The achievement of ESOL learners is important as many will need to eventually meet various academic milestones to ensure future academic success. The literature identifies a challenge regarding the lack of mandated curriculum for the teaching of English second language learners (Gleeson, 2012), although the Ministry of Education (2008a; 2008b) has produced the English Language Learning Progressions (ELLP). This document details expectations for these learners, based on important foundations of English language development. Nevertheless, as children progress with their education they still need to gain formal New Zealand qualifications.

Pasifika students make up a growing proportion of the New Zealand school populations, half of whom are Samoan (Dickie, 2008). Crooks, Flockton and White (2007) and Crooks, Smith and Flockton (2009) noted although some Pasifika students were achieving better in literacy than previously, there was still a pattern of lower test scores and achievement for this group compared to the majority of primary school students.
This highlighted a key issue for teachers regarding achievement of NESB students from Pasifika backgrounds.

Tuafuti and McCaffery (2005) discuss that while a range of government initiatives have been undertaken to improve educational achievement for Pasifika students, they view the use of bilingual education as being overlooked. High levels of Samoan language use outside school continue, while other Pasifika community languages have waned and deteriorated over time. McCaffery and Tuafuti (2003) discussed the implementation of a range of Samoan bilingual education projects, when 18 primary schools had Samoan bilingual projects underway. This research highlighted the importance of bilingual programmes for other Pasifika languages to be established to prevent further language loss among Pasifika peoples. The literature outlines academic success through the gaining of academic qualifications and language maintenance as two fundamental concerns for Samoan parents and the wider Samoan community.

Tuafuti and McCaffery (2005) propose that further emphasis on bilingual/immersion education alongside other current Pasifika-based initiatives could improve educational outcomes for Pasifika students. This literature also involved research in a low decile South Auckland primary school with established Maori and Samoan bilingual units. This school had provided students with this opportunity and positive educational results were evident. It is important to know this school and many other schools with bilingual units have established these units without guidance or extra funding from the Ministry of Education. Previous research provides consideration regarding the implementation of bilingual units to better meet the needs of many NESB students, particularly in schools with high numbers of students from the same backgrounds.

The English Language Learning Progressions document (ELLP) shows ESOL children will meet literacy standards but at a different rate to their cohort (Ministry of Education, 2008a; Ministry of Education, 2008b). Harvey et al.’s (2007) claims contradict this conclusion as they claim the educational gaps widen between NESB students and their cohort as their schooling progresses. Without attainment of school qualifications, they may be ineligible for higher education, as ESOL funding is only available for a set
number of years after arriving in the country. This raises further issues for NESB children who are born in New Zealand and their educational achievement within our educational system.

Harper and de Jong (2004) raise an issue identified by teachers regarding NESB students. While younger NESB students may develop social language skills at a faster rate in their second language, proficient academic language skills and literacy knowledge in their second language take longer to develop. Harper and de Jong (2004) also explain NESB students will develop their second language skills at different rates, teachers should not expect all NESB students to follow the same learning path and timeline for English language development. This provides implications for the academic achievements of these learners as their language development rates will vary, making achievement difficult to measure. Allison (2011) reinforces this by noting as the curriculum becomes increasingly complex it poses even greater difficulty for ESOL learners to meet the academic standards.

This issue arises again regarding difficulties experienced by NESB students in obtaining university qualifications (Bretag, 2007). Bretag’s (2007) study conducted in ten Australian Universities addressed the issue. Despite students mastering social language skills, these students’ academic language skills are often still not developed enough to meet the demands of tertiary study. The research concluded further support systems and induction programmes needed to be introduced to help support NESB learners. It was also suggested the level of English required to gain entrance to these institutions needed to be increased. It would be expected that ESOL learners beginning their English development at primary school would have gained this level of competency by the time they reached university age. However, as discussed earlier English language learners progress at different rates this is not a certainty (Harper & de Jong, 2004, Harvey et al., 2007).

Funding
To date there has been limited research into ESOL funding issues. A previous literature review by Franken (2005) found that funding was often used to provide teacher aides to withdraw these students from class for support and their instruction is often not purposeful and meaningful with regard to the curriculum. Ministry of Education research (Kennedy & Dewar, 1997) discussed schools receiving discretionary funding for NESB students to use as they see fit. Students were assessed in five categories that determined their level of need. Most schools noted using the system as a quick way to easily categorise NESB students. However, a small number of teachers felt this was too broad and did not see it as a true reflection of learners’ needs.

Some research has raised concerns regarding the validity of ESOL assessment forms for funding (Haworth, 2005a). Teachers involved in Haworth (2005a) study raised issues around the accuracy of rating younger children in writing as many were ‘at their cohort’ level as other non-ESOL children were also still developing writing skills. However, if the teacher was to rate the child as ‘at their cohort level’ they in turn would miss out on funding that would provide much needed support. Haworth (2005a) further noted another issue that in some schools teacher aides were responsible for the completion of these assessments. This was considered a concern as they would not have the experience to make these judgments based on cohort levels.

Overseas research by Huang et al., (2011) conducted in the American school system regarding ESOL learners with learning disabilities provided interesting thoughts regarding the classification of NESB students. Their research outlined schools often classified NESB students as special needs or special education students in order to gain support for these learners (Anderson, Minnema, Thurlow & Hall-Lande, 2005; Huang et al., 2011). However, NESB students have very different needs to those with learning difficulties. Furthermore, this issue is complicated for schools with NESB students who do indeed also have learning difficulties, particularly as assessments are designed for English speakers. Schools across America reported inadequate services to address the unique needs of NESB students (Huang et al., 2011; Rinaldi & Samson, 2008). Franken and McComish’s (2003) report regarding services in the New Zealand system for NESB students also reflected these inadequacies. Their study found
schools could be further supported with funding for increased teaching time, extra resources and teacher support. Schools’ ESOL funding was being stretched a long way but could not cover all-day support for these learners. It was stated increased support would enable these schools to develop ESOL learners’ English language proficiency at a faster rate. The study surmised schools were not currently receiving enough funding to do so.

The literature presents a number of factors relating to learning and teaching issues for teachers of NESB learners. The use of paraprofessionals and ESOL teachers to support teachers and NESB students, language issues (particularly with regard to first language development), resource support, academic achievement against the National Standards and funding all provide relevant considerations for the learning and teaching of NESB students in New Zealand primary schools.

Summary

This chapter has reviewed the relevant literature pertaining to the research topic of the teaching and learning challenges experienced by teachers of ESOL learners. The literature has presented key considerations for the research regarding professional development issues, communication and teaching and learning issues encountered by teachers of NESB learners. There is limited current New Zealand-based literature on this topic. This study will seek to address some of the gaps in this literature while also determining if the issues presented in this literature review are still evident. The literature will be revisited along with the discussion of findings in Chapter 5. The next chapter will outline the methodology and relevant methods used in the research.
Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

This chapter outlines the qualitative methodological framework for this research and details the choice of an interpretivist approach. It considers the research process including participant selection, the chosen research methods: interviews, questionnaires and document analysis. It discusses validity including triangulation and ethical issues encountered in the research.

Research methodology: qualitative research

Research design

The nature of this research problem and the findings presented in the literature review have guided the choice of the selected research paradigm. The qualitative paradigm was selected as it enabled the researcher to take on an interpretivist view. A qualitative framework aims to gain insights and understanding through the experiences of others and the researcher (Bryman, 2008). Davidson and Tolich (2003) elaborate that qualitative research places great importance on the meaning that people associate with their experiences. This view allowed the researcher to gain a range of perspectives from ESOL coordinators and classroom teachers regarding their experiences and perceived teaching and learning issues for NESB students.

Coleman and Briggs (2002) highlight how the world of educational research differs from that of natural science research as much educational research derives from experiences of the people involved. As this research project examined the experiences of teachers supporting the teaching and learning of English as second language learners, a qualitative framework aligns itself well with the purpose of this study. As the research examines the experiences of teachers and ESOL coordinators it is interpretative in nature. Interpretivist researchers attempt to make sense of the world through applying the collective experiences of their participants to sense-making
activities (Weber, 2004). The interpretivist style lent itself well to this study, as the researcher sought to gain a range of insights and experiences from the study participants. Creswell (2002) interprets this view as questioning participants broadly, thus, enabling the researcher to construct meaning from situations where generally they have engaged in discussions or interactions with the participants. An interpretivist view was selected as the study aimed to examine teachers’ and ESOL coordinators’ experiences in teaching students from NESB.

The methods used were selected specifically as they were able to ensure validity. The validity of findings was strengthened by the use of participant and methodological triangulation (see Table 3.1, p.35). The research entailed a range of ethical considerations, which were considered and upheld throughout the research process.

**The research process**

Three qualitative data collection methods were used in the research: semi-structured face-to-face interviews, questionnaires and documentary analysis. Data collection occurred over a four-week period. The researcher initially engaged in one-on-one semi-structured interviews with ESOL teachers in three schools. During these interviews, participants also provided the researcher with copies of their schools' ESOL policies or with instructions regarding the relevant person from whom to obtain documentation. Questionnaires were also distributed to the teaching staff in the three schools involved in the research.

**Sampling techniques**

Sampling in this research was important to ensure validity. The schools used in the research were selected as they had reasonably high numbers of students from non-English speaking backgrounds. Bryman (2008) highlights the importance of interviewing people who could identify with the questions to ensure a purposeful sample. This was important when selecting schools as the numbers of NESB students in Auckland schools vary considerably. Through consultation with school principals, the researcher attended two staff meetings (at times specified by the principals) and spoke briefly to
staff inviting them to take part in the teacher questionnaire. One school had the researcher provide an invitation via email to participate, and, in turn, distributed questionnaires to those staff who were interested. This was due to current organisational constraints in the school at the time.

The participating staff members were given two weeks to complete the questionnaire and a staff member collected completed questionnaires. The researcher collected the copies from the school at a time agreed with the principal. In the other two schools involved, as the questionnaires were distributed by the researcher at a staff meeting, completed copies were given to the ESOL coordinator in an envelope. Completed questionnaires were then returned to the researcher at the interviews by the ESOL coordinators.

The sample size used in this research was three Auckland Schools, involving seven to eight teachers per school and the lead teacher in charge of ESOL from each of the schools involved. The questionnaire was open to all teachers at the selected schools. The response rate at each school was at least a third of teachers completing the questionnaire, providing 21 teachers in total. The use of three schools enabled the researcher to access a range of perspectives around the research problem and supported the interpretive nature of the project. All schools were approached via principals for permission and in turn, provided organisational consent before any research was conducted.

**Semi-structured interviews**

Bryman (2008) states that research questions in qualitative studies often vary in their degree of explicitness. This is why semi-structured interviews are useful in this type of research (Bryman, 2008), and why face-to-face semi-structured interviews at participating schools with ESOL coordinators were undertaken. ESOL coordinators were provided with an information sheet (see Appendix C) prior to booking a mutually acceptable time and place for the interview to occur. All interviews were conducted at the participants’ work site. Interview questions (see Appendix F) were sent one week prior to interviews to provide participants time for reflection and to stimulate quality
responses (Bell, 2007). Interviews were recorded by the researcher with additional notes taken by hand throughout the interview process. This was to provide a backup for audio recording. This was a necessary precaution as during one of the interviews the testing of a fire alarm damaged the accuracy of the recording, so the notes were able to fill the gaps.

The interviewees were provided with a transcript/summary of interview responses to check and make any corrections or revisions before the researcher moved on to the analysis stage of the research. Transcripts were checked by all participants and verified by participants via email after the interviews. Any necessary changes or additions were emailed to researcher by the participants and adjusted to meet participants’ approval. The interviews provided in-depth responses to the research questions (Hinds, 2000).

**Teacher questionnaires**

The researcher attended staff meetings at two of the schools and spoke to staff briefly about the project, inviting them to participate. The researcher then left copies of the questionnaire behind for teachers to complete if they wished. In one school, as they were particularly busy, the researcher prepared a brief invitation email that was passed on to staff via the principal. Interested teachers were able to collect a questionnaire the researcher had dropped at the school, which ensured participants were involved only if they wished to be. Through doing so, the researcher was able to adjust recruitment methods to suit different organisations, and in turn, ensure greater involvement by proposed participants. Bell (2007) advocates the importance of asking prior permission from the staff/schools. The researcher ended up using paper questionnaires (see Appendix G) in the schools after piloting the questionnaire in paper form with great success in the researcher’s own work environment. This method was chosen as it meant the researcher was able to ensure all participants were able to access the questionnaire and complete by a set date relatively easily. The researcher then collected completed questionnaires from research sites.

When wording questions the researcher considered timeframes (Bell, 2007) in order to ensure that respondents were able to give adequate answers in the time given.
Another consideration was avoiding leading and double or at times even triple questions in the questionnaire (Bell, 2007; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011; Fontana & Frey, 2005). Key considerations in the way questions were structured focused on ensuring their neutrality to ensure clear answers were given, and to ensure relevant answers to the researcher’s questions during the data-gathering process.

Likert scales were used in the questionnaire: participants were asked to circle a number in order of their agreement or disagreement to specific questions (Bell, 2007). This technique was used to evaluate teacher’s confidence in some areas of the questionnaire. This also provided a variation of questioning for participants from open-ended questions requiring a written response. The researcher was also able to draw generalisations relating to some aspects of the data from teacher’s ratings of themselves using the Likert scales.

The order of questions and their appearance were a key consideration. Bell (2007) suggests the number of sensitive or complex questions need to be limited and should be placed towards the end of the survey to ensure respondents are not deterred or develop unease with the process. The question type began simply and grew in complexity as the questionnaire progressed. An issue that occurred during the questionnaire stage of the research was that one of the questions had been written incorrectly and this was missed in the checking process. Fortunately, the meaning and data from the particular question were still valid as participants had still interpreted the question correctly.

**Documentary analysis**

The researcher also analysed relevant policy documents (Bryman, 2008) to examine current policies and procedures with regard to the teaching of NESB students in the three schools. Access to these documents occurred when the researcher visited schools for interviews. One school however, was unable to provide this as their document was currently under review. The ESOL coordinator in this school however, did provide an overview of the purpose of the document. This was able to be utilised by the researcher in place of the actual document. The other two schools involved had a
copy of either a policy or procedure that they provided to the researcher. The purpose of the English Language Learning Progressions (ELLP) was also analysed alongside the findings in Chapter 5. This document was readily available as it is a public document and is provided to all schools by the Ministry of Education.

**Analysing data**

*Analysis*

Analysis enables raw data to be organised into a set of established findings or outcomes (Lofland, Snow, Anderson and Lofland, 2006). Researchers may approach data analysis in a number of ways. In this study, the researcher used a thematic approach. The thematic approach is common when dealing with qualitative data (Bryman, 2008). The findings presented two main themes, with four sub-themes. These sub-themes initially stemmed from those discussed in the literature review. They were then reshaped by responses to the questionnaire and interview questions. Ryan and Bernhard (2003) note the identification of common themes is useful in order for researchers to compare similarities and differences in data.

Open coding was used to sort and organise data into a range of categories (Bryman, 2008). These categories were aligned with the line of questioning used by the researcher. Coding essentially “is the process of sorting your data into various categories that organise it and render it meaningful from the vantage point of one or more frameworks or sets of ideas” (Lofland et al., 2006 p.200). Through collation of the data I was able to identify specific relationships and variables in the data (Bryman, 2008).

Bryman (2008) highlights a possible limitation of coding such as when understanding can be lost when grouping large chunks of information. This stressed the importance of breaking down the themes further to ensure all relevant information was retained. This was used to separate the themes of professional development, use of Ministry documents, learning and teaching issues and the importance of communication into two separate areas: challenges and strategies. Data gathered from both teacher participants
and ESOL coordinators demonstrated both similar and contrasting trends. These trends will be outlined and discussed in Chapters 4 and 5.

Validity and triangulation

In qualitative research it is important to ensure that research findings accurately reflect the domain of the research (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). Merriam (1998) explains there is no statistical measure of validity, ensuring data collection and data analysis is authentic can help to ensure validity in research. Triangulation is used in qualitative research to ensure reliability. Triangulation involves using different methods of data collection and data checking (Bryman, 2008). Three semi-structured face-to-face interviews were carried out with ESOL coordinators. Twenty-one questionnaires were distributed and completed by classroom teachers. Lastly, school policy and procedure documents from two of the three schools were gathered and analysed alongside the findings. Peer triangulation (see Table 3.1, p.35) was used with another person checking data and coding. The researcher met regularly with a research supervisor, seeking feedback and advice on draft work. All participants involved in the research checked transcripts of their contributions to ensure accuracy.

Table 3.1 Forms of triangulation involved used in this study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Form</th>
<th>Evidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Methodological triangulation</td>
<td>Multiple sources of Data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer triangulation</td>
<td>Another person checking data/coding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervision</td>
<td>Regular meetings with supervisor and feedback on drafts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member checking</td>
<td>Relevant participants checking of transcripts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

33
Reflexivity

Engaging in this research has been a reflective process for the researcher. Lincoln and Guba (2005) note reflexivity is the process of reflecting critically on oneself as a researcher. In order to complete this study the researcher needed to reflect on possible ways to access schools and data to ensure maximum participants and rich in-depth data. The preparation of questionnaires and the quality of responses gained provided a large source of reflection for the researcher as the researcher found the interviews provided a far greater depth of information than the questionnaires. The questionnaires did provide the researcher with clear findings, but the researcher needed to be clearer regarding length of desired response, as some responses were too brief.

Ethical considerations

Prior to conducting research, ethical approval was gained through Unitec Research Ethics Committee (UREC). All ethical considerations for this study were explored in this process. In particular, the researcher was aware of the importance of confidentiality, informed consent and any cultural sensitivity issues that could occur. These issues were considered throughout the research.

Confidentiality and maintaining anonymity

Privacy is crucial for all participants (Bryman, 2008). No participants are named in this study. Primary schools and individual teachers are anonymous in presentation of research findings with schools being named School A, School B, School C and individual teachers being labelled T1 through to T21. Prior to beginning any data gathering the researcher ensured all participants gave informed consent. This process occurred through the researcher discussing the objectives with the participants and having them sign an agreement outlining the parameters of research and how the information gained from them would be used. The researcher provided information for both school principals and teachers to complete research in the schools involved: Consent forms, a written letter of intent, and an information sheet on area of study for participants were provided prior (Appendix A).
Informed organisation consent

To gain informed consent from schools involved in the research, the researcher approached principals of potential Auckland schools via an email invitation. This avenue was selected as, prior to gaining access to staff within schools it is appropriate to first consult the principal. The email provided the principals with a brief outline of the research and the invitation for their schools to be involved. The principals were also provided with an information sheet that provided an overview of the study (Appendix A). The three schools involved in the research emailed the researcher confirming their interest. The schools then provided the researcher with a signed letter agreeing to participate using a template provided by the researcher. It was made clear to principals their organisations would be completely anonymous, with all names omitted from research findings to provide anonymity.

Informed consent for research participants

The same process was used with teacher participants and ESOL coordinators. As previously mentioned, teachers were invited to participate. In gaining access to schools, two schools allowed the researcher to meet with staff at a staff meeting. Alternatively the other school’s principal forwarded an email from the researcher that included an information sheet and invitation (Appendix B). Those who were interested then collected a copy of questionnaire from a designated staff member. During the two staff meetings the researcher gave a brief outline of the study to teachers, inviting them to take part. All teacher questionnaires contained an initial page with an information sheet containing all relevant information (Appendix B), which was followed by a consent form (Appendix E). The consent form explained the findings would remain anonymous and would be used for the study. The ESOL coordinators also received, via email, an information sheet to look over prior to this meeting (Appendix C).

Wilkinson (2001) notes the importance of voluntary consent being gained by researchers. Participants were explicitly told their inclusion in the study was voluntary. This enabled participants to be comfortable and aware of their control over their own
participation. All questionnaires were left behind at the staff meeting and in turn returned to a designated staff member after completion.

If teachers wished to complete the questionnaire, they signed the consent form (Appendix E) attached to the questionnaire before completing the questionnaire. The consent form outlined the parameters of the research, participant anonymity and the option to withdraw their contributions within two weeks after completion of the questionnaire. Prior to the one-on-one interviews, the researcher and ESOL coordinator interviewee discussed the consent form (Appendix D), anonymity and the two-week withdrawal period after they had returned approved transcripts to the researcher.

Summary

The qualitative paradigm guided this study. The chosen methods of interviews and questionnaires allowed the researcher to access valuable insights and experiences regarding the teaching and learning of NESB students. This chapter explained the choice of appropriate methodology and methods and their ability to meet the criteria of reliability and validity. Informed consent and anonymity were ethical principles well considered throughout the research process, in order to protect participants. Triangulation was also used to provide greater validity of findings, through the use of semi-structured interviews, questionnaires and document analysis. The next chapter will present the research findings from this study.
Chapter 4: Findings

Introduction

The findings from both semi-structured interviews and questionnaires are presented in this chapter. Policy documents from two of the three schools involved in the research are also analysed. Semi-structured interviews were completed by ESOL coordinators/teachers in each of the schools involved. This was followed by classroom teachers individually completing questionnaires. Both interviews and questionnaires aimed to establish perceived learning and teaching challenges in supporting ESOL learners in primary school settings. The interviews and questionnaires were organised into three areas: professional development, perceived learning and teaching challenges and communication for NESB students and strategies used in response to these challenges. The data gathered from the research participants in both groups were based on a similar line of questioning and will be discussed together in the chapter.

Structure of the findings

This chapter will present the data in three main sections. The first section provides a document analysis of relevant school policies and procedures. The second section will present the teacher questionnaire and interview findings regarding teaching and learning challenges faced in supporting ESOL learners. The third section will outline strategies adopted by schools and teachers in response to these challenges. Both sections will consist of three sub-themes; teacher professional development, learning and teaching issues and communication issues.

Background and demographic information

This study involved three decile four primary schools located in Auckland. The schools were multi-ethnic. All had a large number of children from Pacific Island backgrounds. Twenty-one teacher participants completed questionnaires, consisting of six teachers from School A, six from School B and nine from School C. These teachers ranged from
beginning teachers to teachers with 20 years of teaching experience. Three head ESOL teachers from each of the schools were also interviewed. They were all females with 20 years' plus experience in education. Two participants have completed the Diploma in TESSOL from Auckland University and one other participant was in the process of completing this qualification. A coding system was used to protect teacher and ESOL coordinator confidentiality: teacher participants' responses were referred to as T1 through to T21 and ESOL coordinators’ responses were labeled EC1, EC2 and EC3. The table below contains an overview of the coding for each primary school involved in this research, their roll number, the number of teacher participants and ESOL coordinators (Table 4.1, p.40). The table on the following page (see Table 4.2, p.41) provides general information regarding the teacher participants involved, age, gender, qualifications held and their length of teacher service.

Table 4.1 School roll, decile and research participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Schools involved</th>
<th>Roll (as at October, 2012)</th>
<th>School Type</th>
<th>Number of teachers</th>
<th>ESOL coordinators interviewed</th>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>School B</td>
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<td>Contributing</td>
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<td>School C</td>
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<td>Full Primary</td>
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Table 4.2 Research participants’ details

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualifications</th>
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<tr>
<td>Bachelors Degree</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postgraduate/Graduate diploma in teaching</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masters Qualification</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Total number of participants involved | 24 |

Document analysis

School A and C had specific policies and procedures regarding the teaching and learning of English Language learners in their schools. School B was unable to provide their procedure as it was currently under review. However the ESOL coordinator gave a brief summary of the procedure.
Our procedure is currently under review...However some key aspects are the enrolment form is looked at and reviewed with parents to ensure all information is correct i.e. Languages spoken at home, parent born overseas etc. The deputy and I work together and decide who is withdrawn. [EC2]

School A and C’s policy and procedures both included elements of the three main themes: Teacher professional development, teaching and learning issues and communication. Both documents displayed the schools’ commitment to professional development in the area of ESOL:

Support and guidance for classroom teachers will be provided by the school through on-going staff development. [ESOL Policy, School C]

[School A] is a multicultural school and values teacher knowledge of language acquisition. Teachers are encouraged to study the Auckland University TESSOL papers. Teacher Only Days and other professional development are held as appropriate, often using the resources from English Online and resources such as the English Language Learning Progressions (ELLP). [Parent School Procedure, School A]

Both documents indicated they would provide NESB students with the opportunities to work with other speakers of the same language. It was also stated that students would be given learning support either individually or in small group situations. The use of teacher aides to provide specialised support was evident along with schools’ commitment to assessing NESB students to monitor their progress.

ELLs [English language learners] will, where possible, have opportunities to work with children of the same ethnicity. [School C]

ELLs lessons will be scaffolded through the learning process with individual and/or small group support. [School C]
Teacher aides work in class to assist teachers with reading and writing programmes. They also run small group reading and oral language programmes. The parent reading programme gives students an opportunity weekly to read with an adult. Some ESOL students are catered for as part of the Reading Recovery programme. [Parent School Partnership, School A]

**ELS will be regularly assessed by their classroom teachers…The teacher of ESOL will collate and track ELLs using Ministry of Education guidelines. All ELLs are tracked on the school’s Special Needs Register. [ESOL Policy, School C]**

School A used identifiers outlined in their policy to target what home languages children spoke when they enrolled in the school in order to immediately identify if they are eligible for funding. ESOL learners’ eligibility was clearly defined.

**New entrant ESOL children are not put on the ESOL status report for the first six months unless they are migrants. [School A]**

The two documents clearly demonstrated the importance of acknowledging students ethnic backgrounds. The value placed on students’ first language and culture was evident in both documents. It was clear schools were proactive in their intent to establish home school relationships with NESB students and their families and endeavoured to embrace their diverse backgrounds.

**We endeavour to meet the learning needs of all students regardless of ethnic background. [School C]**

**The school will show a commitment to appreciating and celebrating our cultural diversity. [School C]**

**Students will be encouraged to use their first language where possible. [School A]**

Specific examples of how schools foster relationships between the school and its students’ families were evident:
We run regular home/school partnership meetings, particularly around Maths and English. We run student led conferences each year. Children write personal invitations to parents. [School A]

If children are from a family already enrolled here, they put the child with the teacher that the family knows best. (Often the teacher who taught the siblings.) [School A]

The influence of these policies and procedures on teacher and school practices was evident in the teachers’ and ESOL teachers’ responses. The schools' ESOL documents outlined a strong commitment to celebrating students’ diversity, the first languages spoken by students and providing learning support to ensure these learners’ access to the curriculum. It was clear schools were striving to form positive relationships with NESB students and parents to support this. The next two sections will outline the findings from both semi-structured interviews and questionnaires.

**Teacher questionnaire and Interview findings regarding challenges**

This section will present key findings regarding perceived challenges regarding teacher professional development, learning and teaching issues and communication issues from both interview and questionnaire participants.

**Teacher professional development**

This section regarding professional development will present findings relating to teachers’ initial experiences of professional development, on-the-job professional development and self-directed study.

**Initial experiences of professional development**

Many of the teacher participants noted the lack of specific development directly relating to the teaching and learning of English as second language learners. Seven teacher participants had received no initial training at university in the area of teaching ESOL
learners. Of the 21 teacher participants, five stated they had completed a single TESSOL paper as part of their teaching degree.

An experienced teacher of 20+ years stated regarding their own lack of initial training:

_ I was unprepared when I first started teaching as ESOL wasn’t the issue it is now. [T12]_

A large number of teachers reported their inadequate training at university prior to beginning their teaching career. Two teachers with 3-7 years’ teaching experience noted the limited nature of ESOL development they had experienced in their initial training:

_ During teaching training there was some learning around ESOL, though limited. [T18]_

_ You are given some support at school but nothing for example prepares you at uni. [T8]_

Three other participants with similar experience built on this highlighting the difficulties faced putting their minimal university preparation into practice in the classroom. The limited pre-training in ESOL was perceived by these teachers as out of context.

_ ESOL wasn’t taught in a practical way at university. [T17]_

_ It’s hard to put into practice what you have learnt. [T9]_

_ Preparation is all theory and then you have to apply it to deal with realities [T2]_

One teacher as mentioned above noted the theoretical nature of the learning opposed to the practicality, which in turn, posed difficulty when applying learning to the classroom. Limited initial professional development for teachers regarding the teaching and learning of NESB students will be revisited in the next chapter with reference to the literature.

_On-the-job professional development_
Many teachers first encountered ESOL professional development in their schools. Fifteen participants listed school-based professional learning as their only development regarding ESOL. All but one teacher had experienced on-the-job professional development in this area. Professional development experiences were listed as school professional learning days, staff meetings on ESOL or support from the school ESOL teacher. In one case, a school had outlined a year-long focus a few years ago.

In all schools involved in this study the ESOL coordinators facilitated these staff meetings and professional development days as the following extract highlights:

> Last year we ran a day long professional development for staff where my offsider and I shared learning from TESSOL course and ran staff through the use of ELLP and its accompanying support booklets. [EC1]

One beginning teacher felt her training in reference to development regarding the English Language Learning Progressions (ELLP) document had occurred too early in her career and was therefore wasted as it had had no relevance to her at that point.

> It was in my first year of teaching and I was so focused on other areas that a lot of it went over my head. [T7]

Two teachers had missed development on the ELLP document as the development in the school had occurred prior to their employment. Three teachers, despite receiving this PD had not applied any new initiatives or strategies to classroom practice (see Table 4.3).

There were significant findings regarding professional development. Despite teachers experiencing some degree of professional development regarding ESOL, experiences were varied. This issue will be further discussed in Chapter 5 alongside the literature.

**Self-directed study**

All three ESOL coordinators had taken on self-directed study in the area of TESSOL. Two participants completed their TESSOL Diploma prior to obtaining their ESOL
coordinator roles. The other ESOL coordinator was currently completing the Diploma in TESSOL from Auckland University along with other members of the schools’ teaching staff. Teacher participants undertaking the course noted its impact on their development.

Three teachers commented on the positive effect of their self-directed TESSOL study on their own practice regarding the supporting of ESOL learners:

*I have applied many of the theories/practical tasks introduced through TESSOL diploma e.g. speaking/writing frames, barrier activities, lots of oral language, visual supports and encouraging the use of first language. [T1]*

*Post graduate Diploma in TESSOL is a really good course has really helped me a lot with ideas and understanding of how teach ESOL children. [T6]*

*TESSOL has been fantastic. I have had nothing else as far as school based professional development goes except for general writing. I feel better prepared since beginning study in the area. [T5]*

The improvement in teacher practice in supporting ESOL learners through self-directed study in the area of TESSOL was evident.

**Learning and teaching issues**

Three key findings will be presented in this section regarding learning and teaching issues faced by teachers of ESOL learners. Firstly, the difficulties encountered in identifying learning difficulties in NESB students are presented. Secondly, the findings regarding student proficiency in their first language are outlined. These are followed by findings noted by teachers regarding the pressure to help NESB students to meet the National Standards in Reading, Writing and Mathematics are presented.

**ESOL vs learning difficulties**
Both groups raised issues in identifying if NESB students have other learning needs beyond the language barrier. A key issue raised in this research was the difficulty for teachers of NESB students who are struggling, to identify whether they are struggling to learn because of their language background or if there are other learning needs present.

*A key issue is not knowing if a child is struggling solely from their language or there is more...It is often hard to gauge and can take a long time into the child’s schooling to recognise if learning problems go beyond simply being ESOL.* [EC2]

This was a great concern particularly as the child may progress through many years of schooling making little progress with teachers assuming it is a result of them being from a non-English speaking background when there are deeper issues.

**Students proficiency in their first language**

Both groups highlighted that those students with a limited knowledge of their first language were a concern. It was this group that teachers perceived as experiencing the most difficulty meeting the National Standards in Reading, Writing and Mathematics. Both groups also outlined those who had come from overseas with a sound knowledge of their first language often found it easier to then pick up English, as they were able to separate the two languages.

NESB learners lacking proficiency in their mother tongue were highlighted as a key concern for participants. One ESOL coordinator mentioned:

*It is important for parents to encourage children to speak their mother tongue at home. There are different perceptions of parents about maintaining mother tongue. Many children end up learning native language later in life.* [EC3]

Both an ESOL teacher and two experienced teachers added more detail to this claim by specifically outlining that these learners, without a solidly developed first language, struggle to obtain literacy National Standards.
Children who are not strong in their first language, is one of the biggest issues. Those who are born elsewhere and are confident in first language often cope better. If children haven’t learnt to read or write in their first language it is a lot harder for them. [EC1]

One teacher in the early year levels of the schools noted:

Of most concern are issues facing students who are not strong in their first language of English. I have several students who fall into this category and many fall very far behind in all areas of literacy. [T11]

Another teacher from the senior area of one of the schools identified this issue in linking it to issues regarding the National Standards:

Many NESB children are well below current age in both oral and comprehension, they have a real lack of vocab knowledge. They sometimes do not have a full grasp of their own language and this hinders their progress. [T8]

A clear issue expressed by both groups was children who were born in New Zealand to parents from different non-English speaking backgrounds who hear a mixture of both languages. These children are unable to distinguish the separate languages spoken at home.

Another major issue is children born in New Zealand who have smatterings of different languages and have no dominant language. This makes it very difficult for them. Parents speak other languages and children understand but can’t necessarily speak it back to parents. They are unable to clearly separate Samoan/English etc. As they have no dominant language so they get a cross cultural mix up of both languages that it is very confusing. [EC1]

A key issue highlighted by participants was children having a poor grasp of their first language and therefore struggling to pick up their second language.
Often children born here who have a mixture of languages and find it harder to pick up and achieve at necessary levels than those who come from other countries with a strong foundation base of their first language. [EC3]

This pattern appears to have become more prevalent in recent years as outlined by an experienced teacher in the study who compares the importance of this issue today compared to when she first began teaching fifteen plus years ago.

Most ESOL children had a fluent primary home language that included an understanding of structure and a wide vocabulary. The concern now is the number of children who do not speak a fluent primary language, lack of understanding of structure-do not speak in sentences and have a limited vocabulary. [T12]

Language issues were notably one of the most significant findings in this project as they provided implications for other areas identified in the findings as challenges. These key findings regarding language issues, particularly the importance of ESOL children having a solid grasp of their first language when learning another were apparent in all schools involved in the study.

Pressure to meet the National Standards

It was clear in the research both groups expressed concern regarding NESB students’ ability to meet National Standards in Reading, Writing and Mathematics. Teachers stated the levels expected by the Reading and Writing National Standards are too high. They also commented that more time was needed in the school day to work with these students in order to help them obtain these levels.

This was supported by a number of teacher participant comments regarding NESB students meeting the Literacy National Standards:

Where children should be is too high. [T9]
The number of students to the teacher and the amount of help NESB learners need to get to acceptable standard is very difficult as there is not enough time [T7]

Teachers further commented on limited vocabulary as a key issue regarding children attaining Reading and Writing National Standards. This in turn made attainment of the standards very difficult for ESOL learners.

I teach new entrants and a big concern at the moment is getting children up to the national standard. Often their oral language isn’t great—even first language speakers. [T5]

An ESOL coordinator stated regarding her school’s student achievement in relation to the National Standards:

Literacy levels are a huge issue as these language issues translate to literacy problems for these learners. We have a large tail in our data, a lot of children are below the National Standard, as they are unable to access curriculum well enough. [EC1]

As this is a new issue with the National Standards being introduced only three years ago, it is still unfolding. It was clear in the findings there was a growing concern among teachers regarding ESOL learners and their attainment of the Reading, Writing and Mathematics National Standards.

Time issues

Time management and job size were identified as important challenges by participants. However, both teacher participants and ESOL coordinators had different views of why this issue was important. Teachers viewed time management and job size from an in-class view, with large numbers of students and busy programmes. It was noted as being difficult to make time to provide NESB students with differentiated learning opportunities. ESOL coordinators viewed this from an organisational perspective,
including timetabling, organizing both small group and in-class support for ESOL learners.

A number of teachers made reference to the difficulties they encountered catering to NESB learners in the classroom. Many commented that, as the NESB students had different abilities and were often from different backgrounds, it was hard to manage time in the classroom to provide adequate support in many cases.

*A big challenge is children with vastly different abilities–time to be able to cater to all levels.* [T6]

*The range of NESB learners makes it more difficult.* [T21]

*The number of students a teacher has in class is challenging and the amount of help that NESB learners need to get to an acceptable standard means there is not enough time.* [T7]

ESOL coordinators noted their challenges from a timetabling perspective. Among the three schools involved in the research their approaches to timetabling support for ESOL learners varied. In two schools teachers were fully dedicated to ESOL and reading recovery work every day. The third ESOL teacher was released for the first half of the day for ESOL work and then used to release teachers in the afternoon. Schools A and C used ESOL teachers and teacher aides not only to withdraw these ESOL children for support but also used them in classrooms to provide extra support.

*We have teacher aides working alongside groups of ESOL children in their own classes to help them better access the curriculum.* [EC1]

*Time is a huge factor, different children different classes often children may be in same class which helps with withdrawal and in class support.* [EC3]

Teachers raised the issue of job size being a challenge as English second language learners make up a proportion of the class, even if they are not the whole class. Therefore, extra time is needed to plan and adapt programmes to better suit these
learners. Many teachers met difficulties in catering to these learners effectively while meeting other requirements of the job. Learning time is limited in a day and teachers felt NESB students needed longer for both explanation time and completion of tasks. Another challenge here was that groups of NESB students are often made up of children from a variety of cultures. This made the teacher/ESOL teacher/teacher aides' task even more challenging to help students with limited time to cater to all needs.

Funding

All three interviewees highlighted funding as a challenge in providing support for ESOL learners. ESOL teachers noted timetabling as a part of this. All schools involved used allocated funding to provide opportunities for learners to work with teacher aides and ESOL teachers. One of the teachers outlined a key issue here. While the school had 80 funded NESB students, there was still a large number who were not eligible for funding and so missed out; although they could have benefited from extra assistance, the resources could not be stretched any further.

   We have 80 children qualifying for support so we are unable to provide specific support for those who aren't funded as we are already sharing teacher aide and ESOL teacher time in a week between these children. [EC2]

In School C, the ESOL teacher had experienced that being in the classroom could result in a lot of wasted time i.e. waiting as the teacher completed other classroom routines.

   The ESOL teacher aide can waste a lot of time in classroom with the teachers going over instructions and other classroom admin. We have found it more effective to withdraw students from the room where they work with either myself or the teacher aide. [EC2]

The ESOL teacher in this school opted to drop classroom support and solely work with children on a withdrawal basis. It was viewed by this participant as a more effective use of time and meant that NESB students were able to access specific instructions. In this
school, this approach was used solely with those children who qualified for funding, as the number of ESOL children was so high.

A key finding highlighted in Schools A and C was children who are ineligible for funding, where possible, were included in groups working with the ESOL teacher or teacher aide in the classrooms.

In the case of School C, using an in-class support system also looked at including these children:

*Non-funded ESOL children are often identified and if needed will still be given ESOL support. We try to fit them in with the classroom teacher aide for support alongside others. [EC3]*

One of the interviewees identified that teachers experienced difficulty in accurately completing funding application forms. Furthermore, an interviewee highlighted that if children had been removed from funding too early, funding could be re-applied for. The interviewee in this instance was concerned that this was not widespread knowledge among teachers. The interviewee here stressed the importance of teachers utilising the available 12 full terms of ESOL support for which these children are eligible.

One ESOL coordinator noted, regarding teachers completing funding application forms:

*It is important for teachers to err on the side of caution and get funding. Funding verifier has stated many children are actually taken off before they should be and they can be put back on. Often teachers don’t feel like they can do that or even know that this is possible. Unless children are really competent do not mark them too high. Get full 12 terms of funding to utilise with teacher aide support etc. [EC1]*

ESOL teachers commented on the difficulty encountered by some teachers in completing the ESOL funding forms. Knowing what the criteria look like and how
exactly to rate the particular child is important. This was highlighted by one of the interviewees who commented:

_The teachers not understanding what criteria are and what they look like to make correct judgements about children to complete ESOL form is a challenge._ [EC1]

Another smaller issue, is the availability of funds for professional development in the area of ESOL for teachers. One teacher commented on the importance of school professional development being needs-driven. As ESOL learners were a priority in the schools involved, these participants had experienced some development. Although as one teacher commented, schools only have set amounts of money to be spent in certain areas and have to prioritise.

_You have to rely on school PD to bring you up to standard but schools only have so much to spend on PD._ [T7]

The findings reflected a wide range of learning and teaching issues. Considerations for students’ first language, identifying learning difficulties, pressures to meet the National Standards and ESOL learning support regarding resourcing, particularly time and funding issues with links to teacher professional development were evident.

**Communication issues**

The communication issues discussed below will be separated into separate sections. Firstly, the findings regarding teacher/pupil communication issues will be outlined. This will be followed by home/school challenges regarding communication that were evident in the research findings.

**Teacher/pupil communication**

Communication issues between teachers and pupils factored in both interviews and teacher questionnaire findings as a key challenge faced by teachers of NESB students. Nearly all those involved outlined a limited vocabulary as being the key hurdle for teaching and learning of ESOL children. Only two of the 21 questionnaire participants
were not native English speakers. Most of the teachers found it difficult as they themselves had never learnt another language so did not have a clear understanding of how to overcome this issue.

Teacher participants commented on the difficulty of teaching English second language learners as monolingual speakers themselves:

In being an English speaker you don’t fully appreciate the implications of being immersed in a different language. [T3]

Teachers from NESB have a shared understanding with the students….My first language was [European language], it has helped me to understand the importance of maintaining your first language. Firstly, because it helps you to learn your second language and also maintains a link to your culture. [T1]

One of the interviewees felt the delivery of teacher instructions was a huge challenge experienced by classroom teachers in communicating with NESB students. Teachers needed to be very specific with NESB students, as instructions can be very easily misinterpreted, with children just hearing the words they know. This could result in mixed messages being transmitted between teachers and students.

One ESOL coordinator commented on a perceived issue regarding teachers’ delivery of instructions to students…

Teachers often may not be specific enough. Instructions need to be very clear. ESOL children may pick out certain aspects of instructions and perceive wrongly. Teachers need to be mindful of colloquialisms or everyday school words/phrases children may not be aware of. Use of negatives don’t do this–can quite commonly be confused as do it. As children may just hear a few words…..A teacher may say “Don’t jump in the pool” The students hear “jump” “pool”…Children can often not articulate their needs, they can struggle to communicate questions. [EC3]
A third of participants reinforced issues regarding the communication of instructions as previously outlined by an ESOL coordinator. Participants noted specifically the challenges experienced when both giving and providing instructions for NESB students.

Children can’t articulate their needs and struggle to communicate questions. [T16]

Conveying normal classroom messages quickly to ESOL students is a challenge. [T3]

Eleven teachers in the study also outlined limited vocabulary and limited experiences as a barrier for the development of literacy skills for NESB students. Teachers further expressed the possibility of some ESOL children becoming isolated from the rest of the class as a result of communication difficulties.

NESB children can struggle to express themselves…NESB children can be confused with language used by other children as they usually don’t have same experiences. [T4]

Communication issues between teachers and pupils also link to teacher perceptions. A key communication issue raised by all ESOL coordinators was a disconnection at times between some teachers and ESOL children. This was evident among teacher participants also, who felt having little experience or knowledge about the ESOL child’s culture can result in challenges making connections and supporting learning/behaviours appropriately for the particular child. Both groups involved in the research saw great benefit in having multi-cultural staff.

Multi-cultural staff enabled the school to have a greater access to NESB communities and teachers were able to seek advice from others when needing assistance in supporting the learning and teaching of NESB learners. Although only two participants were from non-English speaking backgrounds, many had wider experiences or knew teachers with some link to other cultures or similar backgrounds who found it easier to relate to and understand NESB students in their classrooms.
A number of teachers commented on the importance of a diverse teaching staff:

Growing up in a multi-cultural neighbourhood, I believe this has given me a huge insight into the learning/teaching of NESB learners. [T10]

It helps having a diverse teaching staff at the school as they are able to connect with families and support other staff members in dealing with these children. [EC3]

Another issue raised here was the conflicting expectations for what is expected in their culture as against New Zealand culture e.g. behaviour, learning styles, etc. Teachers commented on these complexities regarding teacher and ESOL student relationships:

Teachers can take for granted what ESOL kids already know. [EC2]

Sometimes parents are unsure of what is expected of children can be very different to their own experiences. [T8]

The findings reflect important considerations regarding communication issues between teachers and NESB students. This area also provides links to teacher professional development issues in relation to teachers’ development of a culturally responsive pedagogy.

Home/school communication

Schools involved in the research had experienced varied success in establishing home–school relationships. Schools A and B struggled to involve parents and gain community buy-in. Both schools had made many attempts to involve parents through cultural nights, Maori and Pasifika Literacy and Numeracy nights with varied success. Both Schools A and B had experienced limited parent turn-out at these nights.

A few years ago we trialled the Home–school partnership program, the first few meetings had people, but it wasn’t successful. [EC2]
We still haven’t found the right members of the community that will lead to wider buy in by other parents. Furthermore, we haven’t yet managed to get into the Pasifika community in the right way. [EC1]

However, School C experienced a different response. The school had two successful Pasifika homework groups established. Both groups had gained community buy-in, with parents providing support. The school community had a positive response to school activities.

We have two well established homework groups; One Tongan and one Samoan run by teachers in our school....We have a Tongan teacher and the teacher in charge of the Samoan group uses older and ex-pupils to help her....Parents come and help, bring in afternoon tea...Works well as these groups also then participate in cultural festival...It definitely helps having a diverse teaching staff. [EC3]

Teacher participants rated themselves on confidence from low to high regarding confidence in their ability to establish effective home–school relationships with both NESB students and their families. Nineteen of the 21 teacher participants answered this question. The table below outlines these teacher responses. The rating scale ranged from 1-5 with 1 reflecting low confidence and 5 being very confident regarding establishing home-school relationships. It is evident half of the participants rated themselves in the top two categories, an above average level of confidence; these teachers had been teaching for a longer period of time. The other participants had average or below confidence in this area and were noticeably those with less experience.

**Table 4.3 Teacher ratings in Confidence in establishing home–school relationships**

<table>
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All participants offered a range of issues pertaining to the issue of home–school communication barriers. All ESOL co-coordinators commented that forming trusting relationships with families was challenging:

*Developing trust with families is a big issue, families don’t always know how to approach school/teachers. [EC2]*

*We have some very socio-economically disconnected families—very hard to engage with. [EC1]*

It was also noted that participants often found it difficult to meet with appropriate family members for a number of reasons:

*ESOL families who are struggling financially can be hard to get in to school i.e., problems with transport, money, etc. [EC3]*

*Challenges are parents who work long hours and seldom or never come to meetings and events. [T6]*

Communication issues were a significant finding in the research. Communication issues between both teachers and students and home and school presented themselves both as key issues regarding teaching and learning challenges for children from non-English speaking backgrounds.

This section has highlighted a range of teaching and learning challenges faced by teachers of second language learners. Important findings regarding professional development, teaching and learning issues and communication have been highlighted.
Strategies adopted by schools and teachers in response to these challenges will be presented in the next section.

**Strategies adopted by schools and teachers in response to challenges**

**Teacher professional development**

The schools involved have approached the lack of initial ESOL professional development differently. In one school, the head ESOL teacher and her colleague, who are working on completing the Diploma in TESSOL, have passed this knowledge on to their staff through professional development days and speaking at various staff meetings. A flow-on effect has occurred through these two teachers taking on extra study, with 3-4 other staff members taking up the same course of study. In turn, this has strengthened teacher’s confidence in the teaching and learning of ESOL in the school. Although the study taken on by several members in the school is self-directed, it is important to note the school management was supportive of staff members who make the decision to take on study as outlined in the schools policy.

One of the ESOL co-ordinators outlined the support given to fellow staff members undertaking in self-directed study:

> Already we have three teachers studying with TESSOL scholarship, two more have just begun study also with school supporting them through paying fees.  
> [EC3]

Of the two staff members mentioned in the above quote, one of them is the ESOL co-ordinator. Across all three schools teachers had received varied on-the-job professional development in supporting the teaching and learning of children from non-English speaking backgrounds in some form. In all schools, there were expert teachers in this area who supported other colleagues through professional sharing and discussion. Fifty percent of teachers outlined school ESOL teachers as being a large source of professional development, either through collegial discussion and support, staff meetings or professional development days.
Teachers commented on professional development through collegial discussions with the school’s ESOL coordinators and other colleagues as a source of professional development. Four teachers noted either having appraisal goals in the area of ESOL, working alongside or receiving ideas from their school’s ESOL teacher or observing and following what other colleagues were doing. Teachers’ perceptions and attitudes in supporting the teaching and learning of NESB students are an aspect that relates to professional development. The need for some teachers to develop a culturally responsive pedagogy was noted by all ESOL coordinators.

One ESOL teacher, when emphasising the importance of teachers understanding ESOL children’s backgrounds and family situations, suggested this strategy:

   *It could benefit many of our teachers to spend a weekend in these families’ homes. To gain a better understanding of how they live and family dynamics and that it is different but children are OK in these environments.* [EC2]

The role of teacher professional development in the area of ESOL is a key finding in this study.

**Learning and teaching strategies**

The research outlined a number of strategies employed by schools to overcome learning and teaching issues. Through different approaches involving ESOL coordinator and teacher aide support, classroom teachers and school-wide attempts to engage with both NESB students and their parents, schools aimed to meet these challenges. These findings will be outlined under four sub-headings: ESOL versus learning difficulties, the pressure to meet National Standards, Ministry of Education resources available to support teaching and learning of ESOL learners, time and language issues.

**ESOL versus learning difficulties**

The issue of identifying ESOL children with learning needs beyond language development was a key issue that schools were still attempting to overcome. However,
two ESOL teachers in the study indicated that their role also involved Reading Recovery work. Both participants noted the way in which Reading Recovery dove-tailed nicely alongside their ESOL work. One of the interviewees suggested they find working with ESOL children on a one-to-one basis in reading recovery a way in which they are able to identify specific learning behaviours and challenges faced by the student, as opposed to what they are able to find when working in a group situation.

Having children one on one in reading recovery is a good way to identify faults speaking/grammar errors and other behaviours that have been learnt about in TESSOL papers which in a class setting or group may not be noticed. [EC1]

Pressure to meet the National Standards

In particular, a strategy found in the research that was used in both School A and C was the use of in-class teacher aide and ESOL teacher support for these children. The rationale presented in the research was that in-class support for NESB students was aimed at helping the children have better access to the curriculum in the classroom setting.

Using the teacher aides and ESOL teacher in the class allows us to provide support for children to better access the curriculum. [EC1]

As National Standards have only existed in schools over the last three years, this issue continues to grow. However, this evidence has suggested teachers are already feeling pressure regarding the teaching and learning of NESB students.

Where children should be is too high. [T9]

The number of students to the teacher and the amount of help NESB learners need to get to acceptable standard is very difficult as there is not enough time. [T7]

The introduction of the National Standards initiative is identified in the findings as providing implications for teachers of NESB students.
Specific teaching strategies using school resources

Participants also noted a large focus on oral language in the classroom with numerous visual displays around the classroom with the use of speaking frames, peer buddy reading, barrier games/activities, oral language and visual supports. Many participants highlighted the use of IT tools such as computers, ipods, ipads, YouTube and computer-based learning programs e.g. ‘Reading eggs’. Teachers involved in the research highlighted sharing ideas with colleagues as an effective strategy that they employed to support the teaching and learning of ESOL learners. Another school outlined a number of teachers being engaged in a TESSOL course. The sharing of this learning was clear as other staff mentioned the use of the same specific strategies throughout the findings e.g. writing/speaking frames, barrier games, visual aids and an emphasis on oral language. Many of these strategies were gained from staff members attending the TESSOL course mentioned earlier.

Ministry of Education resources to support teaching and learning of ESOL learners

The three study schools had received some form of professional development regarding the English Language Learning Progressions and its supporting booklets SELLIPS. These resources are aimed specifically at supporting teaching and learning of English second language learners in New Zealand schools. This varied from a brief introduction to the English Language Learning Progressions (ELLP) folders when they were released, to staff meeting discussions or through school professional development days.
Table 4.4 Teacher development and use of ELLP

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<table>
<thead>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teachers aware of ELLP</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELLP Professional development received by teachers</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher using ELLP to help to inform and guide teaching and learning of NESB students in their classroom programmes</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total teachers surveyed</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The previous table [Table 4.4] reflects the number of teacher participants who were aware of the English Language Learning Progressions (ELLP); had received ELLP focused development followed by the number of teachers who have then used ELLP as a guide to plan and inform practice. Teachers surveyed in Schools A and C had received day-long professional development and participated in a number of staff meetings focused around this document.

*We had someone come in and speak to the staff about the ELLP folders. [EC3]*

School B had received year-long professional development around the document years ago as noted by one of the participants.

*Our staff had a year-long development of the ELLP a few years ago now, when it initially came out. [EC2]*
Seventeen of the 21 teacher participants involved in the questionnaire were aware of the Ministry document The English Language Learning Progressions (ELLP). Twelve of the participants had received professional development regarding the document. These participants had further used the document to support the learning of English second language learners in their classroom programme.

However, seven of the teachers involved in the study noted that despite being aware of the document and undergoing previous professional development regarding the document, they had not used it. In contrast, two teachers had not experienced professional development but had used the document in the classroom to support teaching of ESOL. It is also interesting to note, four of the teachers involved in the study were unaware of the ELLP document. As previously mentioned a resource specifically aimed to assist teachers in supporting the teaching and learning of English as second language learners.

One teacher outlined that the books were not easily accessed as the school has limited copies and were kept in a senior team member’s office, meaning they weren’t readily available.

Our school has created a rubric from ELLP to assess learners, folders are held by DPs so are not always easily accessed. [T12]

Schools largely used their ESOL coordinators to lead staff development on Ministry of Education resources. All ESOL coordinators had taken staff meetings and PD days to discuss the document. In one school teachers who had undertaken self-directed TESSOL study also shared knowledge with staff in the same way. One school noted they had made a rubric adapted from the document for NESB students.

Time-tableing strategies used

The schools had taken different approaches to timetabling support for English as second language learners. All schools have qualified teachers running ESOL programmes with teacher aides who work alongside them. School C utilises the ESOL
teacher to work with ESOL children in the morning (45-minute sessions once a week) and then the teacher works in classrooms supporting teachers of these ESOL children. The ESOL teacher in this school does not have her own class but works in all classrooms throughout the school as a release teacher in the afternoons. School B only withdraws children from class as they felt, time-wise, this suited the children and they work with either the ESOL teacher or teacher aide 4-5 times per week for 45 minutes.

The rationale for only withdrawing children for support was noted by the school’s ESOL teacher:

*Children are withdrawn for ESOL work- have trialled in class support but found withdrawal groups more productive time wise as then the teacher aide or ESOL teacher is not sitting through admin and other classroom routines. The session is solely focused on learners needs in small groups or one-on-one.* [EC2]

School A provided largely in-class support to NESB students as outlined by their ESOL coordinator…

*The ESOL teacher or teacher-aide works mainly in classrooms helping NESB learners to better access the curriculum.*[EC1]

Both Schools A and B work individually with some ESOL children as part of the Reading Recovery programme. Both teachers in these two schools run reading recovery alongside their ESOL programmes as they work well together. These ESOL coordinators liked the blend of working with both ESOL programmes and reading recovery. Both mentioned as most of their ESOL-specific work was in group situations, working with children in a one-on-one situation in reading recovery allowed them to identify aspects they could miss in a group situation.

*Having children one-on-one in reading recovery is a good way to identify faults speaking/grammar errors and other behaviours that have been learnt about in TESSOL papers which in a class setting or group may not be noticed.* [EC1]
Findings regarding strategies to overcome funding, time and timetabling issues displayed the varied approaches used between schools.

Language issues

The use of the mother tongue in the classroom was a key finding regarding strategies used by teachers in the research. This was further developed through teachers noting encouraging children to share and talk about their background in the classroom and by engaging those children using prior experiences. Research participants discussed using readers in ESOL children's home language with these students. One in four teachers also reported using a buddy system if there is a child from the same background.

One teacher explained strategies used to cater to the learning needs of their NESB students:

Identifying languages spoken at home, encouraging families to speak their first languages at home… I have applied many of the theories/practical tasks introduced through the TESSOL diploma e.g. speaking/writing frames, barrier activities, lots of oral language and encouraging the use of first language. [T1]

Teachers themselves who had prior experiences with the cultural backgrounds these children came from were more confident in their teaching. One Te Reo speaking teacher discussed how when she encountered a child who spoke only Te Reo she was able to utilise her skills with great success. The participant noted:

Last year I had a student fluent in Te Reo, I was able to communicate in Te Reo most of the time. She learnt 20 basic sight words in English a month. [T11]

While it is apparent teachers have adopted a range of strategies to overcome language issues, there are a number of complexities that make overcoming these problems difficult.
Strategies employed to create stronger connections between home and school

All schools in the research had employed a variety of strategies to develop home and school relationships with children and parents from non-English speaking backgrounds with varying success. All three schools attempted to use homework tasks aimed at involving families, family nights, performances and Literacy and Numeracy nights where all families were invited. Schools A and B had attempted to gain community buy-in through home–school programmes but had been unsuccessful. These schools both reported trying to connect with the community through Pasifika and Maori consultation meetings, Numeracy and Literacy nights for parents with teachers interacting and demonstrating practical ways in which parents can help at home. At times, specific families are targeted and invited. Both schools reported poor numbers in parent attendance, often with the same few families in attendance.

Two ESOL coordinators commented:

*We have had meetings for example for maths and parents come and teachers are on stations showing parents a variety of ways to help with children’s maths at home.* [EC2]

*Despite many attempts have struggled to form strong home school partnerships across the school. Have trialled a full literacy (2008)/numeracy (2009) programme /meetings with parents. Numeracy was better attended with perhaps eight families in attendance.....The same two families were present at our Maori consultation evenings.* [EC1]

One of the ESOL coordinators further discussed that, despite trying, there was still a real disconnect between home and school with many parents:

*As a school we struggle to gain community buy-in. However, this is not through lack of trying as management are very proactive in attempting to provide opportunities to establish home–school relationships. I don’t think we have accessed the right families to drive these initiatives.* [EC1]
School C had experienced great success in establishing these relationships. School C had two established, well-attended Pasifika homework groups. One was run by a Pasifika teacher, the other by a non-Pasifika teacher who engaged ex-pupils of the school as experts to help. Parents were present at both groups assisting with morning tea, helping with homework, etc. These groups also translated into cultural groups for yearly festivals.

One teacher participant from School C commented:

*I follow the theory of Russell Bishop who writes about home-school partnership and find once I better know the families I am able to better support students learning.* [T20]

A teacher from School C also commented:

*Our school is very community focused so even if parents cannot communicate there is always a family member or parish member who will translate for us. Somebody always knows someone who can help.* [T15]

Although communicating with parents was a clear challenge, teachers were able to share successful ways in which they had been able to communicate with parents. Many teachers in both the questionnaire and interview component of the research discussed trying to create informal relationships with parents by catching them at school or by making phone calls. The informal approach appeared to be favoured among teachers.

Teachers commented on ways of establishing effective home–school links as:

*Meeting at teacher/parent BBQ and approaching them…..Functions where they can come to class and help or watch.* [T2]

*Talking with parents, building relationships…offering advice on what they can do at home.* [T10]
ESOL coordinators also noted the way in which they establish relationships with ESOL families:

Occasionally ESOL teacher will meet with parents and make contact with parents to establish relationships informally. [EC2]

NESB students’ parents have an interview with ESOL teacher at interviews as well as classroom teacher. [EC3]

Communication issues and ensuing strategies to overcome these issues were a significant finding in the research. Communication strategies were employed by teachers to better connect with students in their classrooms. On a wider scale it was evident schools had varying success at creating connections with their communities in order to break down communication barriers.

Summary

This chapter presented the key findings from this research study. These focus on a number of key issues relating to the teaching and learning of students from non-English speaking backgrounds in the primary context: lack of initial professional development in this area; learning and teaching issues and the importance of communication between both teachers and students and home and school. Many of these issues are addressed in school policies and procedures as outlined in document analysis with schools establishing strategies with variable success to meet these challenges. The following chapter will consider the significance of these findings in relation to the literature.
Chapter 5: Discussion of Findings

Introduction

The experiences of teacher participants in this study highlight challenges and strategies regarding the teaching and learning of their students from non-English speaking backgrounds (NESB). This chapter discusses the findings in relation to the literature themes established in Chapter 2 connecting this study with other research in the field.

Three main themes were identified in the literature with regard to ESOL (English as a second language) students. The first theme concerned the role of professional development on teaching practice. The other two themes related to learning and teaching issues, and the importance of communication. The findings from this study will be examined below in relation to the challenges and strategies inherent in these key areas.

Professional development issues and strategies

Initial professional development

The initial professional development of participants in the area of ESOL learners was either limited or non-existent (Cameron & Simpson, 2002; Da Silva Iddings & Katz, 2003; Franken & McComish, 2003; Harvey et al., 2007; Haworth, 2005a; Huang, Clarke, Milczarski and Raby, 2011). One third of the participants had received no initial training at university in the area of teaching ESOL learners. Of the 21 teacher participants, five stated they had completed only a single TESSOL paper as part of their teaching degree. Participants who had experienced some form of initial development, largely in the form of one paper as part of university degree, commented that their learning lacked relevance to the classroom context. These findings link to existing research by Harvey et al. (2007) who argue that mainstream teachers are being inadequately trained to use varying approaches, programmes and resources. Haworth's other study (2005b) also highlights the need for pre-service education courses to be established to increase the
current knowledge and confidence base in schools to help inform and ensure future effective praxis for NESB. By contrast, de Jong and Harper (2005) suggest that the good teaching of NESB students is more about good teaching practice *per se* and the ability to adapt to the needs of individual students than it is about pre-training opportunities. Although a number of the participants experienced some form of pre-service training, it appeared to have not been relevant to their practice. It was more common for the participants to engage in relevant on-the-job training and self-directed professional development.

**Self-directed professional development**

Teacher self-efficacy has been described as a teacher's self-confidence or beliefs in their ability to further student learning outcomes (Hivers, 2013). Teachers taking on self-directed study engage in a process that goes beyond initial teacher training and pre-service development in an attempt to develop self-efficacy in their teaching practice (Hivers, 2013; Reeve, 2010). This supports positive comments made by participants about their engagement in self-directed study, which they affirmed as valuable for their increased confidence in meeting the needs of ESOL learners in their classrooms.

Five of the participants had completed or were in the process of completing the Diploma in TESSOL through the University of Auckland. Others took part in school-based professional development. Participants commented that their involvement in such professional development had a number of benefits, including increased confidence in supporting NESB learners. It deepened their understanding of the teaching and learning needs of their NESB students, and by sharing their new knowledge with other colleagues, the effect of their learning spread beyond just their classroom.

**On-the-job development**

The majority of participants had experienced some form of on-the-job professional learning regarding their NESB students. On-the-job professional development was directed at staff formally through staff meetings and teacher-only days and informally, through collegial discussions between teachers. School C's ELLs (English Language
Learners) policy, for example, outlines that staff will be provided with support and guidance by the school through staff professional development. Participants also noted that they experienced informal development through discussion with the schools’ ESOL coordinators and sharing with colleagues (Fletcher et al., 2009; Franken, 2005; Gleeson, 2012; Haworth, 2005a; Verdugo & Flores, 2007). Gleeson (2012) emphasises the value of collaboration and the importance of the relationship between individual teachers and ESOL teaching colleagues. Although Gleeson’s research was in a secondary school context, the findings have relevance for this study as all the primary schools involved employ an ESOL teacher.

Participants noted the significant role played by the ESOL teacher in their own day-to-day professional learning. As Haworth (2005b) has observed, those with expertise in teaching NESB students were largely teacher aides and senior teachers, and were often not allocated time to support classroom teachers. This was not the case in this study, as in School A and C the ESOL coordinators were timetabled to support ESOL learners and teachers during class time. School B, on the other hand, withdrew children from class for ESOL support. However, participants at School B did comment on the ESOL coordinator as a source of development through ideas and support.

Teachers found that professional sharing enabled them to improve classroom practice to support ESOL learners. Research related to Pasifika student achievement states that, in order to close educational gaps, what is necessary is the “lifting of teacher capability particularly within the context of school based professional learning communities working together to create effective literacy instruction” (Fletcher et al., 2009, p. 24). Although a high proportion of the NESB students at all three participating schools were Pasifika, the importance of collaboration amongst educators to develop and improve practice through professional development is relevant to all NESB students (Sharkey, 2004).

**Learning and teaching Issues**

*ESOL vs learning difficulties*
A significant issue raised in the study was the difficulty of establishing whether or not ESOL children had further learning needs beyond the language barrier. Participants commented that some children could go many years into their schooling without other learning issues being picked up. Booth (2007) notes that it is common for teachers to misinterpret the abilities of NESB students. In contrast, the literature outlines teachers mistakenly interpreting students' behaviours and attitudes as learning issues before looking into their cultural backgrounds to gain a deeper understanding of the child as a learner (de Jong & Harper, 2005). However, this was largely referring to underestimating abilities as opposed to identifying learning difficulties. School C outlines in their procedure, that initial assessments and classroom observations are to be undertaken to establish needs and arrange support to be given by either ESOL teachers or teacher aides. Classroom teachers are expected to regularly assess ELLs and the ESOL teacher will track students. This was a strategy aimed at ensuring teachers are able to identify the learning needs of NESB students accurately.

Participants discussed ESOL children’s different experiences as a challenge to their teaching and learning. Starks (2005) discusses that, despite growing up in New Zealand, often members of ethnic minorities will commonly interact in some way with their own cultural community regularly. This in turn, often means the experiences of these children are different to those of their peers. However, participants noted attempting the strategy of establishing children’s prior knowledge and experiences and using them to guide learning (Da Silva Iddings & Katz, 2007; Dickie, 2008; Gregory, 2004; Lucas, Villegas, & Freedson-Gonzalez, 2008; McNaughton, 2002; Verdugo & Flores, 2007). As highlighted by de Jong and Harper (2005), good teaching involves teachers recognising children from diverse backgrounds as bringing their own previous knowledge and experiences that can be utilised by the classroom teacher.

Participants claimed they attempted to use the strategy of acknowledging childrens’ backgrounds and out-of-school experiences to help form relationships and plan programmes. However, study participants did not give details regarding their success employing the strategy in their classrooms. The importance of teachers developing a ‘culturally responsive’ pedagogy was a crucial element identified in the literature
regarding effective teaching of NESB students (Alton-Lee, 2003; Da Silva and Katz, 2007; Ell, 2011; Verdugo & Flores, 2007; Wendt Samu, 2006).

Research participants further highlighted difficulties catering for the diverse range of NESB students in their class. It was also noted, at times, ESOL groups of children could consist of children from the same background. However, it was common for children to be from a diverse range of backgrounds. This diversity in turn, made the incorporation of their home language more complex. Harvey et al. (2007) argue that in the primary context they observed, the mother tongue of the students was used and encouraged by the teacher or mono-lingual paraprofessional in this case, particularly to support peers who may have arrived more recently in New Zealand.

It was also noted that when children were working with paraprofessionals who spoke their home language, many gave long explanations in the mother tongue and this could lack relevance for all children in the group. However, some paraprofessionals were able to achieve a balance between both languages effectively to support learning (Harvey et al. 2007; Verdugo & Flores, 2007). In the study of Harvey et al., paraprofessionals and ESOL coordinators often did not speak the native language of their students; instead they were trained in teaching students from non-English speaking backgrounds.

*Pressure to meet National Standards*

Many participants expressed concerns regarding the assessment of NESB children, alongside the same standards as the rest of their cohort (Booth, 2007). With the introduction of the National Standards two years ago in schools by the New Zealand Government, a new dimension for teachers regarding ESOL learners has arisen. Despite the fact ESOL children are not expected to meet the same levels as their peers, teachers are still feeling pressure to help children to obtain these levels, as ultimately these children do need to succeed to further their academic study as they continue on to higher education (Allison, 2011; Bretag, 2007). However, as explained by Harper and de Jong (2004) English language development is varied between individuals so this may be an unrealistic benchmark.
The development of literacy through use of particular materials was discussed in-depth by Harvey et al. (2007) who outlined a wide range of support materials and texts that need to be used to support ESOL learners. Many schools have purchased commercial specialist materials and resources like games and cards to update programmes alongside teacher-made resources along with PM readers, Rainbow Readers and journals that are well leveled to suit different needs. This was outlined in School A’s Parent School Partnership document that highlighted specific materials that were to be used to support literacy. However, as one participant elaborated, despite having some of these resources, the school could benefit from the purchase of a wider range and in particular, more readers in children’s first languages (Au, 2003; Cummins, 2008; Franken and McComish, 2003; Vine, 2006).

**Proficiency in first language**

Teachers and ESOL coordinator participants in this research noted that ESOL children who were not proficient in their first language were most at-risk of poor academic achievement. Participants saw this as a common barrier to learning among ESOL children. Research suggests that if both languages are developed to a proficient level, this issue can be resolved (Crawford, 2004; Flockton & Crooks, 2003; Wylie et al., 2001). Many research participants made reference to NESB students who displayed a strong foundation in their first language as progressing at a faster rate (Garcia, 2003; Tabors & Snow, 2001).

Many research participants discussed attempting to incorporate opportunities for students to use their mother tongue alongside English in the classroom. The Ministry of Education English teaching curriculum document (1994) highlighted that children should initially use their first language and move between that language and English as they develop confidence (Bose & Choudhury, 2010; Parvanehnezhad & Clarkson, 2008). Students should use their first language as they develop confidence in the second.

An important consideration for language learners is to become bilingual - proficient in both languages, as opposed to losing proficiency in first language when learning a second. In many schools bilingual literacy development is not a direct focus and is
often not experienced unless there is a large number of students from a particular group (Franken & McComish, 2003). One participant discussed models of dual-language programmes (Amituanai-Toloa & McNaughton, 2008; May, 2002; Tuafuti & McCaffery, 2005) as a possible strategy for supporting NESB students’ learning. Children learn both English and the corresponding native tongue of a group of NESB students such as English and Samoan. Questions were raised by the participant about how attainable this would be, with most teachers being native English speakers. This is also difficult as the resources required are extensive. Also, would groups of English speakers be willing to learn another language in order to support other ESOL learners?

Participants highlighted the importance of teachers encouraging children and families to speak their first language at home. As previously mentioned, speaking another language at home can be a high risk factor for poor school achievement (Crawford, 2004; Flockton & Crooks, 2003; Wylie et al., 2001). However, if both languages are developed to a proficient level this can be resolved (Crawford, 2004; Starks, 2005; Tuafuti & McCaffery, 2005; Wylie et al., 2001). Participants noted those children who had a solid understanding of their first language found it easier to learn their second.

Starks (2005) made reference to younger generations of Pasifika people displaying a declining lack of self-confidence in speaking their own native languages. This supports an issue raised by participants concerning children having limited knowledge of their first language. As a consequence, children struggle to acquire the English language. Participants noted this often resulting in children having a mixture of both languages and struggling to differentiate between them. For Pasifika students this is particularly relevant as there are many students with parents from different Pacific backgrounds meaning these children can be exposed to multiple different languages and may struggle to separate them.

School C’s policy outlined, where possible, ELLs will be given opportunities to work with other children from the same ethnicity. This was also noted by teachers as an important consideration for them with NESB students. The policy outlines children will also be encouraged to use their first language where possible. The research outlines valuing of
the child’s first language at school is important (Dickie, 2008; Fletcher et al., 2009). This highlights efforts made by Schools A, B and C to celebrate the diversity of learners and to encourage families to continue speaking their first language.

School C’s overall procedure was aimed at allowing ELLs (English Language Learners) to function well in the mainstream school environment. It aimed to empower ELLs with confidence, to celebrate diversity, to provide students and families with access and advice on learning English with an emphasis on meeting learning needs of all diverse students regardless of ethnic background. A key factor also was to enable ELLs to use oral skills to develop and maintain their identity. In Schools B and C, these opportunities were present through having Tongan and Samoan homework groups and Pasifika-themed celebration nights.

**Ministry support resources for teachers**

This study found varied access and use of Ministry resources by participants to support ESOL learners to be significant. As Schools A, B and C all had high numbers of NESB students, the majority of teachers were familiar with the English Language Learning Progressions (ELLP) documents (Ministry of Education, 2008a; Ministry of Education, 2008b;). However, development around, and actual use of the document to inform teaching practice was varied. The ELLP can be used as a guide alongside the Literacy Learning Progressions (Ministry of Education, 2010) to help teachers understand and guide NESB students to meet the literacy standards. These documents acknowledge that ESOL learners will take longer to meet the standards than their cohort.

While there is no specific curriculum for ESOL learners, the English Language Learning Progressions (ELLP) is designed to act as a guideline for teachers. However, the number and diversity of NESB students is continually rising and expanding along with the demand for teachers to cater to these students in all aspects of the curriculum (Gleeson, 2012). Although Gleeson (2012) refers to secondary school subject specialist teachers, the above observation is just as relevant to teachers in the primary sector who need to consider ESOL learners in their delivery of a holistic curriculum covering all subjects.
The ELLP document is aimed at helping teachers improve their understanding of teaching NESB students and better meet the needs of these students. Therefore, the document is a valuable resource for teachers of NESB students – it provides teachers with a framework that they can use to supplement their teaching. However, despite participants being aware of the document and receiving some professional development, it was arguably under-utilised.

Interestingly, in the pilot study that was conducted in a school with fewer NESB students, teachers had little or no knowledge of the ELLP document. Not one teacher had used the document in teaching NESB students. Those who were aware of it had simply been shown it in passing at a staff meeting. So, despite schools in the actual study (who have high numbers of NESB students) being aware of the ELLP document, the document was also used inconsistently by participants.

Previous New Zealand research by Booth (2007) noted the presence, at the time, of another set of Ministry ESOL assessment guidelines that teachers also rarely referred to in the teaching of students. Suggested reasons for this were lack of training and inaccessibility. This study mirrors Booth’s in that the participants from Schools B and C commented that professional development around the ELLP document may not have been enough or ongoing; and they also noted that the document in their schools could be inaccessible, either tucked away in Deputy Principals’ offices or only a limited number of copies available. This situation could explain why the document is inaccessible and under-utilised.

Funding and time

All schools involved eluded to fact that with more funding they could provide more inclusive and effective programmes for NESB students (Franken & McComish, 2003, Huang et al., 2011; Rinaldi & Samson, 2008). The issue of ESOL funding and the way in which it was used differed significantly among Schools A, B and C. In School B, only children who qualified for ESOL funding as per Ministry of Education guidelines
received funding due to high numbers. The children in this school received all ESOL support on a withdrawal basis with the ESOL teacher and teacher aide weekly.

The other two schools involved varied their use of the ESOL teacher and teacher aides through in-class support (May, 2002), with some children being withdrawn in groups throughout the week as well. This approach allowed other children in classes with ESOL children, who qualified for support, to sometimes join teacher aides or the ESOL teachers’ group for extra assistance. The literature supports such a practice. Franken (2005) suggests teacher aide support in class using a shared and well-planned programme that provides differentiated learning to meet particular outcomes is critical. This highlights the importance of the relationship between teacher and ESOL teacher or teacher aide working together to plan and cater for these students in the classroom.

In contrast, participants in School B felt time working with NESB students was better spent out of the classroom. May (2002) notes withdrawing NESB students to work is less effective than integrating students in mainstream classrooms where a whole school language and literacy development approach can be used. However, the rationale here was that too much time was wasted in class listening to teacher instructions/directions and administration. This school also had 80 children qualifying for support, so those not qualifying were unable to be given extra support as the resources were unavailable. The other schools involved used the teacher aide working in the class alongside these students as a way to support unfunded students who might also require help. As these teacher aides and ESOL teachers were in classrooms, other children in the classes who also needed help could be placed near a teacher aide. One of the ESOL teachers explained the rationale behind having teacher aides and ESOL teachers in the classrooms as being there to help children better in turn, the classroom teacher is also provided with support and development regarding access the curriculum. This supports the notion of classroom teachers, not only ESOL teachers need to be able to effectively teach NESB learners (Franken, 2005; Gleeson, 2012).

However, teachers in School B where students were withdrawn also noted experiencing a range of development and support from their ESOL teacher, despite the different
approaches to the use of teacher aides and ESOL teachers time with students. This is an important consideration for primary schools as schools often may not employ a teacher as an ESOL teacher due to budget constraints. Rather they use a teacher aide with experience in the area. Classroom teachers therefore, need to be confident in their ability to support the learning of NESB learners, and not simply rely on their allocated teacher aide time.

Harvey et al. (2007) observed that, commonly in primary schools, trained teachers are not necessarily responsible for the support of these learners entirely but are supported by teacher aides as a way of providing specific worthwhile instruction to a group. Such an approach has often been utilised with specific immigrant groups in my own context, for example, Czech and Korean. Harvey et al. (2007) highlighted that often the paraprofessional knew more about the support of ESOL learners than the classroom teacher.

One participant noted the importance of classroom teachers being adequately equipped to meet the needs of NESB students. This was considered to be important as the teacher has the student the majority of the time, whereas the ESOL teacher or teacher aide only has specific time when working in class with a group of NESB students or during withdrawal sessions. Funding issues provide relevance for this research as all schools involved employed an ESOL teacher, along with teacher aides, due to the large numbers of ESOL children.

In one school due to the high numbers of NESB students who qualified for funding, those who did not qualify were unable to be given extra support as they did not have the resources. This finding is reiterated by research based in New Zealand schools (Haworth, 2005b). Haworth notes that, although some children may not be at the necessary stage to learn without assistance in class, as a result of limited funding and resources they need to be dropped from support programmes to make way for others. Alongside this issue ESOL coordinators in this study expressed concerns regarding teachers completing ESOL assessment forms correctly were reiterated in Kennedy and Dewar (1997). This research conducted for the Ministry of Education highlighted that
some teachers found the categories too general and experienced difficulty completing forms accurately for students.

Shortage of time was considered to be a major issue by many participants. Due to the range of NESB learners from different backgrounds, with limited time in the school day and other necessary classroom tasks, it could be a struggle to adequately meet the needs of these students (Haworth, 2005b). This finding highlights the classroom teacher’s constant struggle to not only meet whole-class needs, but particularly individual learning needs within their classrooms.

**Communication issues**

*Between teacher and pupil*

A key issue highlighted in the research was communication between teachers and pupils. Most participants involved in the research noted experiencing difficulties in both conveying instructions to ESOL children and, in turn, NESB students understanding these instructions (Booth, 2007; Chang, 2005; Chick, 2005; Huang, Dotterweich & Bowers, 2012). Furthermore, one interviewee from School C discussed the importance of teachers reading the newsletter/notifications and discussing the content in class. This strategy aimed to ensure ESOL children understood notices and were not relying on taking newsletters/notices home for their parents to read who more often than not have more limited English than their children. The newsletter in School C was also translated into three of the school’s most common non-English languages.

A significant issue raised in this research was teacher perceptions regarding the teaching and learning of NESB students. Teachers with personal experience of other cultures found it easier to support ESOL learners and felt they had a better understanding of the backgrounds of these children (Barker, 2003; Macaro, 2005). Teachers developing their self-efficacy, and in particular, cultural self-efficacy, is seen as an essential focus for teacher education. Teachers with a strong personal cultural efficacy, in turn, should have a positive effect on student engagement achievement (Allen, Tufalasi & Robertson, 2008; Gibbs, 2005).
McNaughton (2002) as cited in Dickie (2008, p. 248) discusses ‘incorporation’, when the class programme incorporates features in which the student has developed expertise in out-of-school settings. Students come to school with ‘funds-of-knowledge’ which include social and cultural resources from their home settings. Many participants stressed the importance of knowing the child. The literature highlights the importance of children having a learning environment that allows them “to bring their own knowledge and ways of being” (Allen, et al., 2008, p. 1).

ESOL coordinators involved in this research project commented that they felt, at times, some teachers were unable to relate to these students and could benefit from experiencing time with their families in order to develop more of an understanding (Allen, et al., 2008). It is evident in the literature that classroom contexts need to be a collaboration of children’s home and school identities (de Jong & Harper, 2005; Da Silva Iddings & Katz, 2007). Teachers as a result of professional development all discussed the importance for NESB students being able to make connections between their out-of-school experiences and their learning at school as an effective strategy to use with NESB students (Haworth, 2005a; Booth, 2007). Teachers involved in a study of an urban Auckland school (Haworth, 2005b) found it particularly difficult (due to cultural distance) to develop relationships with NESB students’ parents that could enhance their own knowledge and understanding of ways in which to support their children. Research discussed despite teachers valuing and celebrating children’s cultures, “one of the major reasons why minority students in general, and in immigrant communities in particular, perform poorly in schools is their home cultures are not sufficiently utilised as a resource for their own learning.” (Nykiel-Herbert, 2010, p. 2)

It was clear in this study teachers were attempting to foster interactions with ESOL children in classrooms by including their own cultures in classroom learning opportunities (de Jong & Harper, 2005; Dooley, 2009). Research further elaborates on teachers’ confidence with regard to the teaching of NESB students as being shaped largely on their past experiences, background and knowledge and also around whether their experiences had been positive or negative. Many expressed they had low confidence in their teaching abilities of NESB students but high levels of confidence in
their regular teaching (Kibler, 2010). However, those with positive prior experiences of teaching NESB students were more confident (Haworth, 2005b). This was reflected in the study as many teachers commented on how their pursuit of professional development in the area of ESOL had resulted in a greater understanding and boosted their confidence. Many less experienced teachers noted they had low confidence due to their lack of experience. This issue could often lead to further communication issues between teachers and students.

*Links between home and school*

Developing successful home–school relationships with ESOL families was a key issue outlined in the study findings. Biddulph, Biddulph & Biddulph (2003), Fletcher et al. (2009) and McNaughton (2002) outline effective development of home–school partnerships as a powerful way to establish relationships and meet the needs of children from diverse backgrounds. The schools involved in the research used a variety of strategies to overcome home–school communication issues with varying success. Schools A and B experienced many issues regarding developing strong home–school relationships. On the other hand, School C appeared to have established some strong links within their community.

School A’s ESOL procedure explained the ways in which the school established relationships with students, parents and caregivers. The procedure outlined initial steps taken for students when they began as new entrants. In particular, the school ran a five-afternoon initiation programme for new entrants, prior to starting school and run by the head of the junior school. A key aspect of the procedure was that, if the child from a non-English speaking background already had siblings at the school, they would be placed with a teacher known to the family. ESOL children are not put on the ESOL list for the first six months unless they are migrants. The child and parents meet with either principal or deputy principal and the child is placed in classes accordingly where they are introduced to the ESOL teacher who, in turn, organises paperwork and support.

All schools ran regular home–school partnerships for literacy and numeracy (these are the meetings as discussed by the interviewees). School A reported poor attendance,
with some events having greater numbers than others. It was also noted that the same families came each time. School B experienced some success, but numbers were not ideal. Participants noted the different perceptions and expectations of parents of different cultures may have as a possible barrier to effective home–school relationships.

Tuafuti (2004) raises a key consideration around respect. Some Pasifika parents will be hesitant to challenge those of high status (teachers and principals) and comment during education consultation meetings, not out of agreement, but from cultural belief. This is a cultural perception that would need to be addressed to improve the success of these meetings and could possibly be a reason for a lack of attendance in some schools. This could perhaps provide reasoning for why School A and B had encountered difficulties in gaining parent participation in Literacy and Numeracy consultation meetings. Both schools outlined management as being proactive in establishing these opportunities, but they had not yet connected with their community in the right way.

School B noted that they had experienced strong turn-outs at cultural nights. This suggests the possibility of the families finding these cultural nights less intimidating than specific education–based nights focusing on mathematics and literacy. School C was able, through the establishment of Tongan and Samoan homework groups, run by two staff members with support from older, ex-pupils and parents, to establish clear home–school links.

The establishment of the homework groups has empowered the Pasifika parents and students in the school to engage with their culture (Tuafuti & McCaffery, 2005). School C also translated their newsletter into a number of the dominant languages spoken in homes associated with their school. This also helped them to pass on information into the homes. The ESOL coordinator in School C also noted the diverse nature of their teaching staff as being helpful in establishing links with the range of cultural communities in schools. Often if families were from the same ethnic backgrounds, the school would try to introduce them to others at the school to allow them to develop support systems with other parents.
Socio-economic issues were also noted as a concern. Many teachers reported that creating home–school connections as challenging because parents were difficult to meet with as they were busy with work or children were cared for by grandparents with little English. ESOL coordinators also noted difficulty in communicating with families struggling financially. Fletcher et al. (2009) outlined parents having no time to be involved due to other commitments and also challenges in helping parents to understand their role in a home–school partnership. Schools in the research aimed to overcome these communication barriers through developing informal relationships with parents through phone calls, meet-the-teacher barbeques and other school events.

**Conclusion**

This section visited three main themes from the findings: professional development, learning and teaching issues and the importance of communication along with the research literature from Chapter 2. The next chapter will consider the implications that have arisen from this research project and some proposed recommendations for future research and practice are outlined.
Chapter 6: Conclusion

Introduction

This chapter will summarise the findings of this research project regarding teaching and learning issues facing primary school teachers of NESB students. Key findings regarding teacher professional development, teaching and learning issues and the importance of communication will be revisited. The implications of these key findings will be outlined, followed by suggested recommendations for future practice and research.

Research Aim

The purpose of this study was to examine teaching and learning issues facing the teachers of NESB students in a cluster of Auckland primary schools.

The research questions guiding this study were as follows:

• What initial training, professional development and other professional support have teachers received in relation to teaching NESB students?

• What teaching and learning issues do primary teachers of NESB students face in the following areas?
  
  i. Pedagogy and curriculum issues  
  ii. Student literacy and language  
  iii. Other (e.g., organisational and policy issues, communication with parents)

• What strategies do teachers adopt in response to teaching and learning challenges presented by NESB students?
• How effective do teachers believe their professional preparation and their current teaching strategies are for NESB learners?

These questions all provided great relevance for the study and provided a number of significant findings regarding the teaching and learning of NESB students.

Summary of findings

This section will summarise the key findings regarding professional development, learning and teaching issues and the importance of communication.

Professional development

This study highlighted a number of key findings regarding teacher professional development. The lack of initial training regarding the teaching and learning of NESB students was clear. Many teachers noted they had experienced limited initial training. Furthermore, many felt the initial training they had experienced was not relevant to practice. As the schools involved in the research had high numbers of NESB students, all teachers had experienced some form of on-the-job development. This was experienced through ESOL focused teacher-only days, staff meetings and informally, through discussion with other colleagues, in particular, the ESOL coordinators in the schools.

Classroom teachers taking on self-directed study was highlighted as a strong form of professional development. School A supported teachers taking on the Diploma of TESSOL at the University of Auckland and provided financial assistance towards teachers completing the study by paying the fees. Also, as teachers engaged in study had been used to develop the staff at staff meetings and teacher-only days, the knowledge had been shared among other staff members. This also resulted in a flow-on effect with other staff members in the school choosing to take on this course of study.
Learning and teaching issues

The research presented a wide range of findings regarding learning and teaching issues for NESB students. These were grouped in a number of categories: ESOL vs learning difficulties, ESOL support resources, time, funding, and proficiency in first language along with pressures to meet the National Standards in Reading, Writing and Mathematics.

ESOL issues vs learning difficulties

Both groups raised issues in identifying whether NESB students had other learning needs beyond second language. Concern was expressed regarding how long it took for learning difficulties to be identified for a second language student, particularly, when teachers had already identified the problem to be a language one.

Ministry support resources for teachers

The limited availability and variable use of Ministry resources to support NESB students was a key finding in the study. As the schools had a high number of NESB students the majority of teacher participants were aware of the English Language Learning Progressions (ELLP). Over half had experienced some form of development regarding the document. This ranged from being shown the document at a staff meeting, a focused training that occurred over a number of meetings or in the case of one school a year-long focus three years ago. High numbers of teachers had experienced development regarding the ELLP document. Just under half of the teachers surveyed used the document. It is important to note not all teachers who had experienced the professional development were the teachers who actually used the document in their classroom programmes. Limited copies were available of the ELLP (English Language Learning Progressions) document and at times they were stored away in offices and were not easy to access.

Time
One of the key challenges for participants was the management of teaching and learning time. Teacher participants and ESOL coordinators noted slightly different issues.

Teachers identified job size as a challenge, as English second language learners made up only a proportion of their classes. Teachers noted they needed extra time planning and creating resources for these learners. Many teachers found it challenging to meet these learners’ needs effectively while meeting other requirements of the job. Teachers commented that NESB students needed longer for both explanation and completion of tasks. Another challenge outlined by teachers was the diverse nature of ESOL learners and the need for different teaching approaches for these students.

The challenges for ESOL coordinators stemmed from their responsibility to create a timetable that allowed enough time to work effectively with NESB students. Among schools their approaches varied. Two schools had teachers who were fully dedicated to ESOL and reading recovery work every day. The third ESOL teacher was released for the first half of the day for ESOL work and then used to release teachers in the afternoon. School A and C provided NESB students with in-class and out-of-class group support. An ESOL teacher noted working in classes with students could result in wasted time. In turn NESB students in this school were withdrawn in groups to work with the ESOL teacher and teacher aide during the week.

Funding

Funding was outlined as a critical factor for teachers and schools in relation to their ability to meet the needs of their NESB students. This included issues with ESOL timetabling. The study schools used allocated funding to provide opportunities for learners to work with teacher aides and ESOL teachers. School B, noted with 80 funded NESB students, there were still a large number who were not eligible for funding and missed out, although they did need assistance. There was simply not the time or resources available to cater to all.
ESOL teachers commented on the difficulty teachers had completing the ESOL funding forms in relation to the specified criteria i.e., what the criteria look like and the ability of the particular child. One of the challenges was to appropriately rate children to ensure the continuance of funding.

*Proficiency in first language*

Participants highlighted concerns with those students who lacked proficiency in their first language as a concern. It was this group, teachers perceived, as experiencing the most difficulty meeting the National Standards in Reading, Writing and Mathematics. Participants noted experiences with NESB students who came from overseas with a sound knowledge of their first language often found it easier to develop English, as they were able to learn to separate the two languages.

*Pressure to meet the National Standards*

Many participants expressed concerns regarding NESB students meeting the National Standards. Teachers stated the levels expected by the Reading and Writing National Standards as being too high. They also commented that more time was needed in the school day to work with these students in order to help them obtain these levels. The limited vocabulary of some NESB students was mentioned by teachers as being a key hindrance for these students in obtaining the literacy standards.

*Communication challenges and strategies*

*Teacher/pupil*

The findings highlighted a range of communication challenges and strategies employed by teachers and schools to overcome these barriers. A key finding was the language barrier between teachers and students. Participants noted it was difficult to convey instructions to NESB students as they often either struggled to understand or misinterpreted the instructions. Other participants highlighted that it was critical for teachers to be explicit with instructions and support these students for example, reading and discussing newsletters prior to them going home. Participants noted that due to
limited vocabulary and different experiences there is a risk of ESOL children becoming isolated. Teachers commented on using a buddy system with other competent children who spoke the same language in the class to prevent this.

Participants noted limited experience or knowledge about ESOL children’s culture can act as a barrier in establishing effective relationships with these students. A further challenge expressed was the conflicting expectations for what is expected in their culture as against New Zealand culture, e.g., behaviour, learning styles, etc. Participants saw great benefit in having a multi-cultural staff. A multi-cultural staff enabled the school to have a greater access to NESB communities and teachers were able to seek advice from others when needing assistance in supporting the learning and teaching of NESB students. Despite only two participants coming from non-English speaking backgrounds, many had wider experiences or were able to engage with other teachers who expressed confidence regarding supporting NESB students in their classrooms.

*Home–school*

Schools involved in the research had experienced varied success in establishing home–school relationships. Participants largely noted themselves exuding an average confidence when establishing home–school relationships. School C enjoyed substantial community buy-in and support. The findings outlined the successful implementation of homework groups, Literacy and Numeracy evenings, translation of newsletters and the creating of support networks for ESOL parents.

Schools A and B noted using cultural evenings and Numeracy and Literacy consultation evenings to engage with parents. Numeracy and Literacy meetings often achieved low attendance or the same families repeatedly in attendance. However, cultural nights encouraged larger attendance. These schools commented that they, at times, were disconnected from the community and were still establishing effective ways to gain buy-in. All schools noted parent–teacher interviews and informal meet-the-teacher barbecues as great ways to engage with ESOL parents. Some schools even had
ESOL teachers meet with ESOL parents during interviews which enabled them to form relationships.

Implications of this research

This research is important as it adds to the existing body of literature available on this topic providing a number of implications regarding the teaching and learning challenges experienced by primary school teachers of NESB students.

The area of professional development presented a number of key implications. Lack of initial teacher preparation and development was clear in the findings of this project. This was reinforced by Harvey et al. (2007) and Haworth (2005b) who all noted the limited initial training in the area of supporting English language learners. The findings also implied that a successful strategy for teachers was to take on self-directed TESSOL study. Hivers (2013) noted teacher self-directed study in the area of TESSOL had a positive impact on teacher practice. Largely the research implied most teachers experienced some form of development on the job as their schools had high numbers of NESB students. However, the pilot questionnaire findings in this area showed teachers had received very limited or no professional development in this area. This was possibly as the needs were less, but however, were still present.

Implications presented regarding the use of Ministry resources, surrounded the varied development and use of the English Language Learning Progressions (ELLP) and the effective delivery of the New Zealand curriculum to ESOL learners. Schools had all received development in some explanation of the ELLP document. Although not a mandated curriculum, this is a document intended to be used to guide teachers regarding effective practice for teaching NESB students. However, it was noted in one school the development occurred three years ago, so new teachers had missed out. Also it was noted by one teacher (as she was a beginning teacher at the time) that she was preoccupied, and therefore, the development went over her head. It was also apparent that in some schools the document is kept in senior staff members’ offices and is inaccessible at times, also there were limited copies available.
This has led to questions regarding the availability and accessibility of these resources to teachers. Secondly, more copies should have been supplied in the first place. Interestingly, the pilot study conducted in a school with smaller numbers of ESOL children reflected limited knowledge regarding the ELLP document providing an area for further research. Gleeson (2012) reinforced these implications through raising the issue that there is no mandated curriculum for ESOL learners. This, in turn, made it difficult for teachers teaching ESOL learners as their delivery of the curriculum does not best suit these learners. Despite most teachers being familiar with the ELLP, as it is not a mandated curriculum for teachers, it is not always utilised.

A further implication arose regarding funding, and the importance of teachers understanding the rating scale used in the ESOL assessment in order to correctly rate students. An implication raised here by a participant was that teachers could actually re-apply for children’s ESOL funding if they felt they had been removed too early. This was highlighted as a common occurrence in the study by ESOL coordinators. Earlier Ministry research (Kennedy & Dewar, 1997) also made note of some teachers finding the rating of children against the set categories difficult. It was noted this is not widely known and is a key consideration regarding funding. The way in which allocated teacher aide time and ESOL coordinator support was used varied between schools. All schools had shaped their practice to suit the numbers and needs of NESB students in their school. Haworth (2005a) and Franken and McComish (2003) noted schools needed to use ESOL support in a way that best suits the schools’ and learners’ needs.

An implication surrounding the National Standards is teachers’ concern for helping ESOL children to meet the standards, is despite the ELLP highlighting these children meeting standards at a slower rate, they still need to meet the standards for future academic success. As children progress with their education they do need to gain New Zealand qualifications in order to be eligible for higher education and are only eligible for funding for a few years after arriving in the country. As reflected in the work of Palmer and Winktor Lynch (2008) children are expected to sit standardised tests to gain high school qualifications. Palmer and Winktor Lynch (2008) also outlined, that in many
cases, an implication of these students sitting standardised tests in English was teachers just ‘teaching to the test’.

As outlined in the ELLP (2008), NESB students will be able to meet the same standards as English speakers, but they will meet them at a slower rate. However, as this document is split for school years 1-4 and 5-8, there are further questions to be explored if ESOL children are past year 8 in their schooling, but still display a large gap in their English language skills compared to their peers. This raises issues particularly for those children who are ESOL but are New Zealand-born, as, in many cases, these children may not qualify for help and depending on numbers in schools may miss out on extra literacy support. So despite ESOL children’s learning being able to be guided using the ELLP, later in their education it is crucial they are able to meet standards. As discussed in the findings many teachers felt that the gap is just too wide to be met by all NESB students.

As discussed in the previous chapter, a key implication was teachers developing a positive cultural self-efficacy (Allen et al., 2008; Gibbs, 2005; Hivers, 2013). This enables them to form positive relationships with NESB students and their families. Through developing an understanding of the cultural background of their students and acknowledging their ways of knowing, teachers can create well supported learning environments (Da Silva Iddings & Katz, 2007; Dickie, 2008; Gregory, 2004; Lucas, Villegas & Freedson-Gonzalez, 2008; McNaughton, 2002; Verdugo & Flores, 2007;). The school community, particularly with socially disconnected families provided challenges for schools. School C was clearly successful in engaging their community. School A and B had experienced varied success. It was clear School C utilised the strengths of a diverse staff well to achieve successful community buy-in.

**Recommendations**

This study has outlined a number of points for future research and practice in the education field regarding the teaching and learning of English language learners.
These recommendations are based on professional development, learning and teaching issues and the importance of communication.

Recommendations for future research:

- Teacher professional development regarding the teaching and learning of English second language learners is variable and this is an area that could be further explored among teachers and primary schools.

- Future research could be conducted regarding the achievement of ESOL learners in relation to the National Standards at both primary and secondary levels.

- Further research regarding resource availability, in particular, the use of the English Language Learning Progressions (ELLP) and the use of this document and other Ministry documents in primary schools to support ESOL learners would be beneficial.

- As this study was conducted in three Auckland schools of similar size (approximately 350 students) and decile, further study could be conducted in larger schools in either higher or lower deciles.

- Further research regarding effective home–school partnerships that support ESOL learners present in primary schools would be valuable.

This study has outlined a number of points to consider for future practice to overcome challenges regarding the teaching and learning of English language learners. These recommendations are based on the findings relating to professional development, learning and teaching issues and the importance of communication.

Recommendations for future practice:
• Schools could improve teacher effectiveness regarding ESOL learners by supporting teachers undertaking self-directed study in the area of TESSOL.

• This study suggests that teachers and schools need to be continually revisiting professional development as its focus can often be of a varied nature. This will help to ensure professional development has a powerful and lasting effect on teacher practice. A focus on developing culturally responsive pedagogy would also be useful.

• Schools exploring the possibility of employing more bilingual staff as a way of support ESOL learners and other teachers.

• The use of Ministry documents regarding supporting the needs of ESOL learners could still be developed among all schools. Interestingly, in the school that was used to pilot the teacher questionnaire (a school with smaller numbers of NESB students) not one of the teachers involved was even aware of this document. Despite having smaller numbers of NESB students, these students were still present in the classroom. Schools could further develop teachers regarding ESOL support documents and encourage the use of these documents in classrooms.

• As the study showed varied success regarding establishment of effective home-school communication, schools should look at other schools in their communities with effective programmes and strategies in place and seek to establish them in their own schools. The sharing of these successful practices will empower other schools to employ similar strategies to develop their home and school relationships with students from non-English speaking backgrounds.

• Schools could investigate the use of dual language programmes, or ways in which ESOL children could be provided with more opportunities to use their first
language in their learning environment. Teachers being developed further in this area could also be useful.

- Schools sharing effective strategies regarding the formation of home-school relationships with other schools could provide a positive source of development among schools.

Conclusion

This study examined teaching and learning issues facing teachers in a group of Auckland schools. The researcher appreciated the positivity and openness of the schools involved. The research revealed a number of challenges experienced by the schools involved regarding the teaching and learning of NESB students; professional development; teaching and learning issues and the importance of communication. The schools involved had developed a number of strategies to meet these challenges, experiencing varied success. A number of implications and recommendations have been suggested for consideration and to improve future practice regarding the teaching and learning of NESB students.

Through undertaking this research I have been able to strengthen my own knowledge of issues relating to the teaching and learning of students from non-English speaking backgrounds and the surrounding literature. The work and level of care demonstrated to support these learners was evident in schools involved in this research. Although all schools experience largely the same issues regarding NESB students, it was interesting to examine the different ways in which schools meet these challenges.

The importance of teacher development in this area prior to beginning their teacher careers and ongoing was clear. However, as this was a widespread issue, schools did provide a number of opportunities for teacher development on the job. The findings regarding the use of Ministry documents (ELLP) provided a contrast to my own experiences in the workplace. Literacy issues, particularly those surrounding children being proficient in their first language and helping ESOL children eventually meet the
National Standards was a matter of great consideration for these teachers. Schools can create effective home–school relationships and, in doing so, can also eliminate some of the other challenges experienced with NESB students. I feel this experience has provided me with a deeper knowledge and valuable insights that I will be able to utilise as I continue my teaching career.
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International Reading Association.


“English only” System, 39 pp. 251-263.


Appendix A: Information Sheet

Title of Thesis: Challenges facing primary school teachers in supporting children from non-English speaking backgrounds (NESB) learning in primary school settings

My name is Courtney Yukich and I am currently enrolled in the Master of Education degree in the Department of Education at Unitec Institute of Technology. I am seeking your help in meeting the requirements of research for a Thesis course which forms a substantial part of this degree.

The aim of my project is to examine teaching and learning issues facing the teachers of NESB students in a cluster of primary schools.

I request your participation in the following way. I will be collecting data using an online questionnaire from your teaching staff. I will also be collecting data using an interview schedule and would appreciate being able to interview your ESOL co-ordinator at a time that is mutually suitable. I will also be asking you to sign a consent form regarding this event.

Neither you nor your organisation will be identified in the Thesis. I will be recording your contribution and will provide a transcript (or summary of findings if appropriate) for you to check before data analysis is undertaken. I do hope that you will agree to take part and that you will find this participation of interest. If you have any queries about the project, you may contact my supervisor at Unitec Institute of Technology.

My supervisor is Jenny Collins and may be contacted by email or phone. Phone: Tel +64 9 8154321 Ext 8369  Email: jcollins@unitec.ac.nz

Yours sincerely,

Courtney Yukich

This study has been approved by the Unitec Research Ethics Committee from 13/12/12 to 13/12/13. If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Committee through the UREC Secretary (ph: 09 815-4321 ext 6162). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.
Appendix B: Information Sheet for teachers

Title of Thesis: Challenges facing primary school teachers in supporting children from non-English speaking backgrounds (NESB) learning in primary school settings.

My name is Courtney Yukich and I am currently enrolled in the Master or Education degree in the Department of Education at Unitec Institute of Technology. I am seeking your help in meeting the requirements of research for a Thesis course which forms a substantial part of this degree.

The aim of my project is to examine teaching and learning issues facing the teachers of NESB students in a cluster of primary schools.

I request your participation in the following way. I will be collecting data using a questionnaire. I will also be asking you to sign a consent form regarding this event. All information you provide will be confidential, both internally within your organisation and in my research.

Neither you nor your organisation will be identified in the Thesis. I will be recording your contribution myself and will provide a transcript (or summary of findings if appropriate) for you to check before data analysis is undertaken. This transcript is not to be shared with others. If you have any queries about the project, you may contact my supervisor at Unitec Institute of Technology.

My supervisor is Jenny Collins and may be contacted by email or phone.

Phone: Tel +64 9 8154321 Ext 8369  Email: jcollins@unitec.ac.nz

Yours sincerely,

Courtney Yukich

This study has been approved by the Unitec Research Ethics Committee from 13/12/12 to 13/12/13. If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Committee through the UREC Secretary (ph: 09 815-4321 ext 6162). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.
Appendix C: Information Sheet for ESOL co-ordinators

Title of Thesis: Challenges facing primary school teachers in supporting children from non-English speaking backgrounds (NESB) learning in primary school settings

My name is Courtney Yukich and I am currently enrolled in the Master or Education degree in the Department of Education at Unitec Institute of Technology. I am seeking your help in meeting the requirements of research for a Thesis course which forms a substantial part of this degree.

The aim of my project is to examine teaching and learning issues facing the teachers of NESB students in a cluster of primary schools.

I request your participation in the following way. I will be collecting data through an interview with you, the ESOL co-ordinator, at a time that is mutually suitable. I will also be asking you to sign a consent form regarding this event. All information you provide will be confidential, both internally in your organisation and in my study. The interview can be held at your school or offsite if you prefer. The interview will be no more than 45 minutes in length.

Neither you nor your organisation will be identified in the Thesis. I will be transcribing your contribution and will provide a transcript (or summary of findings if appropriate) for you to check before data analysis is undertaken. This transcript is not to be shared with others. Again this will all be confidential. One of the goals of a transcript check will be to ensure that the participant would be happy for her or his colleagues to read the data provided in the transcript, knowing that it might be identifiable to them. If you have any queries about the project, you may contact my supervisor at Unitec Institute of Technology.

My supervisor is Jenny Collins and may be contacted by email or phone.

Phone: Tel +64 9 8154321 Ext 8369
Email: jcollins@unitec.ac.nz

Yours sincerely,

Courtney Yukich

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Appendix D: ESOL co-ordinators Consent Form

CONSENT FORM

Research event: Individual interview with school ESOL co-ordinators

Researcher: Courtney Yukich

Programme: Master of Education

**THESIS TITLE:** Challenges facing primary school teachers in supporting children from non-English speaking backgrounds (NESB) learning in primary school settings

I have been given and have understood an explanation of this research and I have had an opportunity to ask questions and have had them answered. I understand that neither my name nor the name of my organisation will be used in any public reports.

I also understand that I will be provided with a transcript / summary of findings for checking before data analysis is started. One of the main goals of the transcript check will be to ensure that are happy for your colleagues to read the data provided in the transcript, knowing that it might be identifiable to you.

I am aware that I may withdraw myself or any information that has been provided for this project up to 2 weeks after receipt of transcript.

I agree to take part in this project.

Signed: ________________________________

Name: ________________________________

Date: ________________________________

**UREC REGISTRATION NUMBER: 2012-1103**

This study has been approved by the Unitec Research Ethics Committee from 13/12/12 to 13/12/13. If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Committee through the UREC Secretary (ph: 09 815-4321 ext 6162). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.
CONSENT FORM

Research event: Teacher completion of online/paper survey

Researcher: Courtney Yukich

Programme: Master of Education

THESIS TITLE: Challenges facing primary school teachers in supporting children from non-English speaking backgrounds (NESB) learning in primary school settings.

I have been given and have understood an explanation of this research and I have had an opportunity to ask questions and have had them answered. I understand that neither my name nor the name of my organisation will be used in any public reports.

I am aware that I may withdraw myself or any information that has been provided for this project up to 2 weeks after receipt of transcript or following completion of survey.

I agree to take part in this project.

Signed: ________________________________

Name: ________________________________

Date: ________________________________

UREC REGISTRATION NUMBER: 2012-1103

This study has been approved by the Unitec Research Ethics Committee from 13/12/12 to 13/12/13. If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Committee through the UREC Secretary (ph: 09 815-4321 ext 6162). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.
Appendix F: ESOL co-ordinator Interview Outline

Outline for Interview with ESOL coordinators

1) Brief about yourself/education background etc

2) As ESOL co-ordinator in your school what are the aspects of your role?

3) Does your school have any specific policies regarding the teaching and learning of ESOL students?

4) What teaching and learning issues do you perceive your teacher’s in your context encounter regarding children from non-English speaking backgrounds?

5) How does your school professionally develop teachers in order to support them in teaching children from non-English speaking backgrounds?

6) What strategies does your school employ to support the teaching and learning of children from non-English speaking backgrounds?

7) How does your school foster home school relationships with students from non-English speaking backgrounds?

8) What barriers and/or challenges do you experience in developing home school partnerships with these students families?

9) Any other comments you wish to make…
Appendix G: Teacher Questionnaire

Teacher Online/Paper Questionnaire

Please Note: NESB = Non English speaking background

Please circle the appropriate answer:

How long have you been teaching?

• 0-2 years
• 3-7 years
• 8 years +

Gender:

• Male
• Female

Age:

• 20-30
• 30-40
• 40-50
• 50+
Qualifications:

- Diploma of Teaching
- Bachelor's Degree Subject:(i.e Education)_________________
- Postgraduate Qualification / Graduate diploma in Teaching
- Masters Qualification

1. Is English your first language? Yes/No

If No, What was your first language?

If you answered No to the above do you feel this has given you a different insight into the learning and teaching needs of NESB learners? If yes, How?

2. What initial training, professional development and other professional support have you received as a teacher in relation to teaching NESB students (university, school pd)?

3. Have you ever undergone any self-directed professional development in regards to ESOL learners? (i.e. TESSOL courses etc)

4. How effective do you feel your professional preparation has been for teaching NESB learners?

Unprepared 1_____2_____3_____4_____5 Well prepared
5. What effective current teaching strategies/resources do you use to engage NESB learners in your classroom programs? (Please specify)

6. What teaching and learning challenges regarding student literacy and language do you face in your classroom currently or have experienced in the past? (Please specify)

7. What other teaching and learning challenges have you previously/currently faced when teaching NESB learners the New Zealand Curriculum?

Are you familiar with the English Language learning progressions? (Please circle)
YES / NO

If Yes:

A) Have you received professional development or training in using the document? YES / NO
B) Have you used this document to aid your teaching of NESB learners? YES / NO

8. How well do you feel you are able as a teacher to establish supportive home school relationships with ESOL students and their families?
Poorly 1 2 3 4 5 Highly

Please comment on effective strategies used to support this and/or challenges/barriers you have faced in attempting to do this:

Any other comments: