

# Review and Maintenance Programme (RAMP) Learning Languages

**An overview of themes in the research  
literature**

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# 1. Introduction

In the second half of 2014 the Ministry of Education (MOE) initiated a process to review all materials funded and managed by them to support learning in the senior secondary school years – that is, those years of schooling when achievement is predominantly assessed by achievement standards that build towards NCEA qualifications (National Certificate in Educational Achievement). The process was given the acronym RAMP (Review and Maintenance Programme). The intention was that each curriculum learning area would be reviewed over a rolling cycle of three years. The stated focus was to ensure *“that materials that support NCEA continue to be aligned with NZC<sup>1</sup> and support the development and use of quality teaching and learning programmes in the secondary school”* (Ministry of Education briefing materials). For the purposes of the review “support materials” were to include all those developed by MOE and associated with NCEA: the achievement standards themselves; the matrix of key outcomes that accompanies the suite of achievement standards at each of NCEA levels 1–3; student exemplars and other assessment resources; and any specified conditions of assessment. The on-line senior subject teaching and learning guides were also in scope.

The Ministry of Education has sought several types of external input into the review process. An advisory group with demonstrated curriculum leadership and pedagogical expertise in the relevant learning area has the role of providing “on the ground” expertise related to the challenges of teaching and learning. At the same time the Ministry has requested a literature search for recent research related to implementation of NCEA in the relevant learning area and/or the uptake and enactment of the NZC in the final three years of schooling, informed by wider research of achievement in New Zealand across the years of schooling, and by any associated policy debates. External input from teacher and student focus groups is also planned to contribute to the review process and the findings from these focus groups will be fed into a final report with any recommendations for further development and support of each curriculum learning area. Achievement data for at least three previous years, along with feedback from relevant groups in NZQA and the Ministry itself, constitute internal sources of feedback.

These processes were implemented concurrently for the Mathematics and Statistics and Science learning areas of the NZC. Following this, the Technology and Health and Physical Education and Learning Languages learning areas were included.

This report documents input to the RAMP process from the literature overview of Learning Languages (LL) practice in the New Zealand senior secondary school context. This review took

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<sup>1</sup> The *New Zealand Curriculum (NZC)* provides an overarching national curriculum structure for all the years of schooling (Years 1–13).

place across a relatively short time span in September–October 2015.<sup>2</sup> Three specific areas of importance to MOE were outlined for the advisory group and literature review team as:

- Identify relevant national and international research and data to gather evidence about current curriculum content, pedagogical and assessment practices and student achievement.
- Analysis of information from the review to identify trends and issues
- An annotated bibliography, with summary report containing appropriate recommendations to address issues identified.

With these priorities in mind, the NZCER reviewers searched for key relevant local literature. While there is a large body of work relating to second language acquisition, we found a limited number of papers directly related to the curriculum area Learning Languages, and many of these highlighted some inherent tensions in this new learning area. A small number of key international texts (mostly European) were also added to the New Zealand literature to check for emergent issues that might be of interest as the MOE determine their next steps in the provision of curriculum support. Search and selection processes are described in the Appendix 1. As a new learning area in the 2007 curriculum, the literature is somewhat limited. The 30 plus references added to the Endnote file nevertheless capture the main themes and issues for the Learning Languages learning area in New Zealand. These themes and issues appear to be common to many countries around the world.

The following sections summarise key findings, organised to reflect the areas of concern for the RAMP process, and informed where appropriate by our awareness of local and international concerns being debated by communities of language educators.

Note that this report is an overview of key themes in the literature. It is not a comprehensive literature review. However, the manner in which we have structured the results of the literature overview process inevitably represents our thinking about the significance of the papers we found. One of us (Liesje) has worked on other projects that explore the intersection between international competence and the learning languages learning area, and is currently involved with National Monitoring Study of Student Achievement (NMSSA) in Learning Languages. As a new learning area, the challenge for the National Monitoring team is to provide baseline data and a clear picture of this diverse learning area at years 6 and 8 (curriculum levels 4–5). The other member of the review team (Rose) was closely involved in the RAMP reviews for Science (Hipkins & Joyce, 2015), Mathematics and Statistics (Neill & Hipkins, 2015), and Technology (Joyce & Hipkins, in press). Rose has a broad general research background in exploring NCEA and generic issues of NZC implementation, with a specific focus on the role of key competencies in transforming learning. We have used our diverse backgrounds to reflect critically together on the structuring of the key themes in this review.

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<sup>2</sup> An annotated Endnote file constituted the second source of input from the literature search.

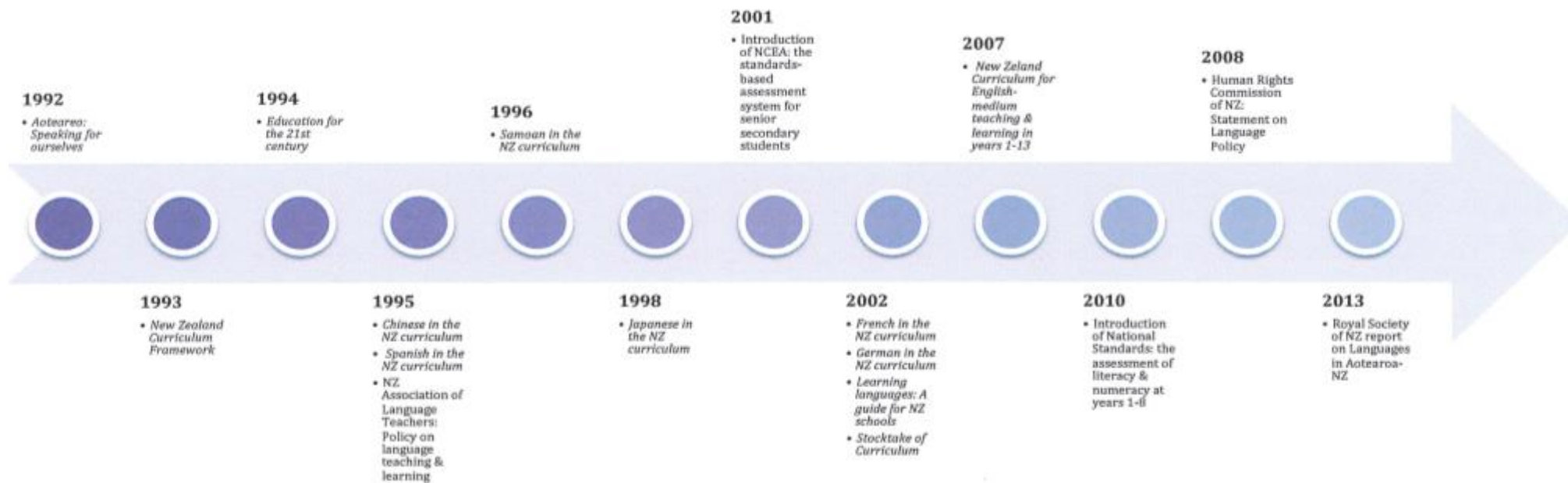
## 2. A brief discussion of learning languages in the NZ context

In response to world-wide acknowledgement of the growing importance of international and intercultural communication, Learning Languages was established as a new learning area in the 2007 New Zealand Curriculum to “encourage students to participate more actively in New Zealand’s diverse, multicultural society and in the global community” (NZC 2007, p.4).

The LL learning area is organised into three strands, with **Communication** as the core strand, supported by **Language knowledge** and **Cultural knowledge**. The focus on students’ ability to communicate has seen significant changes in approaches to both teaching languages and assessing student proficiency and progress. Like every other learning area, the LL learning area encompasses five key competencies: thinking; using language, symbols, and texts; managing self; relating to others; and participating and contributing. The progress towards a communicative approach to teaching and learning languages has provided a good opportunity to develop these key competencies.

The introduction of the new learning area in 2007 aimed to establish Learning Languages as a distinct learning area, that is, to distinguish it from languages in general where it was arguably overshadowed by English and literacy. A growing awareness and increased discussion about the importance of teaching and learning foreign languages in New Zealand is evident in a timeline of documents and policies provided by Adele Scott in her 2014 Doctoral Thesis.

Figure 1 Language-related curriculum documents and policies 1992–1993



(Scott 2014, p. 15)

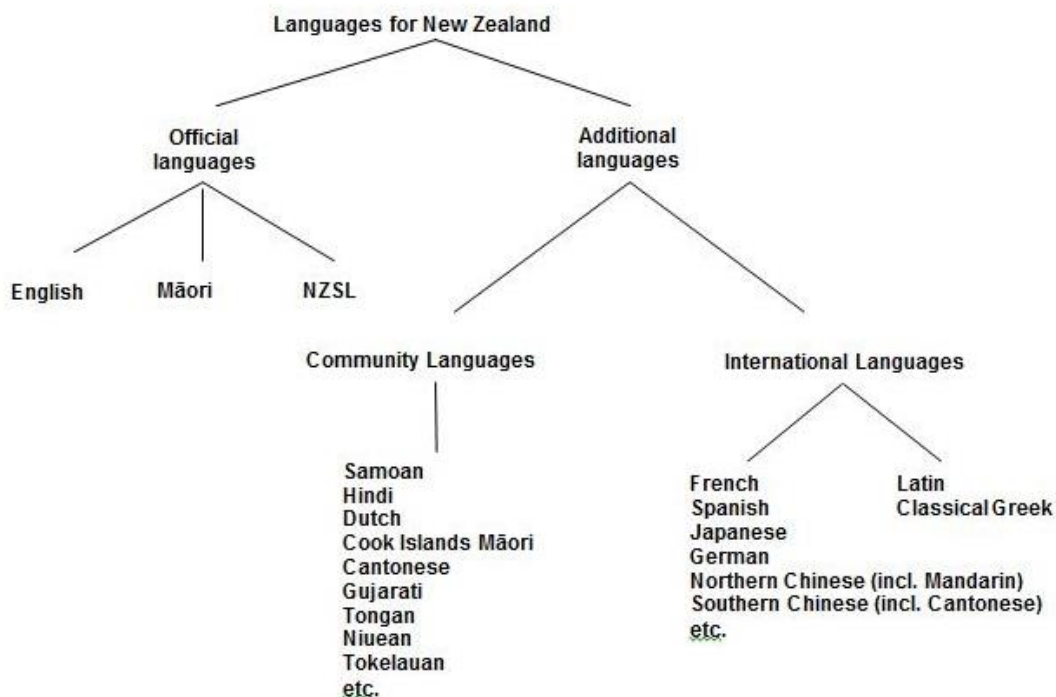


A strategy to raise the status of language learning in 1999 to 2003 saw the establishment of an additional funding pool to improve opportunities for learning additional languages (Nixon 2006). In practice however, this increased support for language learning did not realise greater numbers of students taking up or continuing with language courses in senior years at school or at tertiary level (McLauchlan 2006). Nor has it made an appreciable difference since (Jones 2014). This review looks at how language learning in New Zealand secondary schools has changed in the past decade and discusses factors that have contributed to the reported lack of engagement with language learning.

## The special place of New Zealand official languages

English is the most common medium for communication in New Zealand, but the Māori Language Act 1987 and New Zealand Sign Language Act 2006 gave these two languages official status and progressed greater acceptance and use of these languages in the wider community. This shift is evident in Waite’s 1992 categorisation of language in which Māori, already an official language at that time, was categorised alongside English, whereas NZSL was categorised as a ‘community language’<sup>3</sup>. In an updated version of Waite’s diagram, NZSL now belongs alongside English and Māori.

Figure 2 **Languages for New Zealand, adapted from Waite (1992)**



<sup>3</sup> Community languages are defined by Waite as those “associated with communities which have a primarily ethnic base” (1992: 56), and the list reflects some of the immigrants groups in New Zealand at that time. These languages were not commonly taught in NZ schools, though the growing awareness of the importance of trade with Asia saw the beginning of classes in languages such as Mandarin and Japanese about that time.

## Te Reo Māori

Te reo Māori holds a special and important place in New Zealand. As the indigenous language of this land, spoken nowhere else in the world, it was designated a cultural treasure or taonga in the Māori Language Act 1987. It expresses a particular world view that is uniquely Māori and underpins the identity of many New Zealanders. Its survival however, was and some argue remains, tenuous.

In a 1992 report commissioned by the Ministry of Education to inform the development of a possible national policy on languages, Jeffrey Waite stated that there were some 50,000 fluent speakers of Māori in NZ and commented that while this seemed a large number, he thought it unlikely that the number of children learning Māori at kōhanga reo at the time would be enough to replace an aging population of native Māori speakers. He argued that Māori language should “occupy a central place in any language policy framework”.

Since Waite’s report the status of te reo Māori seems to have been raised considerably in the public domain. Within education the raised status has seen the introduction of Māori language programmes in English medium schools and the development of full immersion Māori schools. Te Marautanga o Aotearoa for Māori medium education was also developed concurrently with the New Zealand Curriculum in 2007. However, according to the Statistics New Zealand,<sup>4</sup> the proportion of the Māori population able to hold an everyday conversation in Māori actually decreased between 1996 and 2013, from 25.0 percent to 21.3 percent. Between 2006 and 2013, the proportion of Māori able to converse in te reo Māori increased only among those aged 65 and over. In all other age groups, the proportion of Māori able to converse in te reo Māori declined (Statistics New Zealand).

Lourie (2014) points out that Māori has historically always been taught, at least in some schools, but with a variety of purposes. These have ranged from an early pragmatic need to have educated people able to communicate with the indigenous population, to more recent idealistic aims of building an integrated or bicultural society. In saying this Lourie seems to avoid any suggestion that the language and culture went through any stages which may be described as oppression, and she focuses more on the tension between offering Māori language as rightful part of the NZ culture, and Māori as an academic exercise. Scott on the other hand notes that by the “early part of the twentieth century te reo Māori was actively suppressed in schools” (2014, p.6) and points to the considerable work needed to re-establish and revitalise the language as an important part of the culture of not only Māori, but New Zealand as a whole. The passing of the Māori Language Act in 1987 can be seen to be partly in response to the growing acceptance and use of te reo

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<sup>4</sup> See report at:

[http://www.stats.govt.nz/browse\\_for\\_stats/snapshots-of-nz/nz-progress-indicators/home/social/speakers-of-te-reo-maori.aspx](http://www.stats.govt.nz/browse_for_stats/snapshots-of-nz/nz-progress-indicators/home/social/speakers-of-te-reo-maori.aspx)

Māori, but also indicates that legislative backing is important for further revitalisation of this taonga.

Revitalisation of the language, beginning in the 1970s and through the 1980s and 90s, was central to the movement to reclaim an indigenous identity, and saw the development of Kohanga reo in 1982 and passing of the Māori Language Act in 1987. Since then 115 kura or Māori immersion schools have been established where Māori is the medium of instruction, and a further 85 where instruction is in both Māori and English (data sourced from Education Counts).<sup>5</sup>

Lourie acknowledges the changing attitudes and beliefs about the role of Māori language, and cites Benton's (1981) finding that there was a significant increase in the number of students taking Māori language for School Certificate, which went from 331 in 1970 to 2089 in 1979, along with a similar increase in the number of schools offering Māori language. Scott (2014) also notes that surveys undertaken by Te Puni Kōkiri between 2000 and 2009 showed that attitudes to the Māori language by non-Māori had improved significantly. However, she noted the tension between the academic purpose and the socio-cultural purposes for learning te reo Māori remained, and it was not until the implementation of NCEA that it was recognised that there are two distinct groups of Māori language learners.

Rata and Tamati (2013) note similar tensions in kura and full immersion programmes, which are expected to fulfil two goals: language revitalisation and raising the achievement of Māori students. The founders of these schools thought that these goals would be complementary, but the reality has proved to be more problematic. Rata and Tamati perceive a conflict between these goals. An additional tension exists between the expectations of language revitalisation, which encourages use of the language by the wider community, and a pervasive attitude that te reo is a taonga which ought not to be shared by non-Māori. Rata and Tamati (2013) describe this as a difference between the perception of Māori as a civic language or as an ethnic language.

As Lourie (2014) suggests, given the numbers of students now learning Māori in English medium settings and ongoing concerns about revitalisation, the purpose of Māori as a subject may well continue to change.

## **New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL)**

New Zealand Sign Language was recognised as an official language of New Zealand 2006, having previously been considered a language specifically for the deaf community. As such it has often been misunderstood as a signed version of English, or somehow not a 'real language'. In describing NZSL as a language in its own right Ahlgren (1986) pointed to the many misconceptions commonly held at that time.

New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL) is a true and unique language. Like any human language it transmits information efficiently, using, in its case, great economy of movement

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<sup>5</sup> Directory obtained from: <http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/data-services/directories/maori-medium-schools>

rather than sounds. It is not English, but it does not interfere with the deaf person's knowledge and use of English. In fact there have been so many misconceptions about sign language in the past that it is perhaps best to pause here and describe what it is not. New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL) is not miming ideas; it is not 'ad hoc' gestures, nor do deaf people make it up as they go along; it is not a system invented by hearing people to help deaf people speak; it is not a natural or instinctive system; it is not finger spelling; it is not a universal sign language, and it is not the Australia/New Zealand teaching aide called Total Communication' (TC). (Ahlgren 1986, set)

The path of NZSL into mainstream schooling has been somewhat different from that of te reo Māori. The misconceptions pointed out by Ahlgren in 1986 suggest that most hearing New Zealanders were largely unaware of NZSL as a 'living' language, and greater public awareness of it did not necessarily spring from its recognition in 2006 as an official language. This was probably achieved by its use in broadcasting events such as the Christchurch earthquakes and awareness campaigns such as New Zealand Sign Language Week, which have kept it more visible in the public domain. The official language status did however mean it was beginning to be recognised as a subject in mainstream schooling, as indicated by the provision of a number of NZQA Unit Standards for NZSL.

A report by the Human Rights Commission titled 'A new era in the right to sign', which came out of a 2013 inquiry into the use and promotion of NZSL, refocused attention on its provision in schools, and the MOE subsequently announced the development of NCEA achievement standards for NZSL. An Education Gazette article (14 July 2014) followed the announcement and discussed the rationale for the introduction of these standards and pointed to a number of online resources, such as Ready to Read e-books and others becoming available through websites such as TKI and Deaf Aotearoa. While these standards were part of a move to be more inclusive of hearing impaired students, and to provide them opportunities to gain relevant qualifications for skills previously not recognised, the article foregrounded the opportunity for hearing students who may be motivated to "study NZSL at university or develop a career using sign language" (Education Gazette 14 July 2014).

### 3. Aligning the why and how of language learning

In this section we outline the various reasons advanced for learning additional languages. Internationally monolingualism is not the norm because groups with different languages live side by side and need to communicate with each other. That is not the experience of many New Zealanders, making it vitally important to build awareness of the many positive reasons for learning an additional language.

The second half of this section then investigates recommendations of effective pedagogies for language learning, and whether we can see alignment between these pedagogies and the benefits outlined in the first half of the section

#### Why learn an additional language?

The importance and value of learning languages is recognised in foundational education documents such as the New Zealand Curriculum, which emphasises the links between learning languages and identity, other cultures and ways of thinking. A Royal Society (2013) summary paper highlighted issues facing language practices in New Zealand. They used a published taxonomy of four broad areas to categorise the benefits of learning additional languages (Grin, 2004). We next cite these in full because they present insights into the complexity inherent in claims of benefits. Some of the described effects are indirect and in other cases there are both pros and cons to be made about the same point:

**Private monetary effects:** Some examples of these may include increased earnings from developing a skill in demand, or reaping cognitive benefits from language learning. One example of a direct cost is the salary of a language teacher.

**Private non-monetary effects:** These are impacts that are hard to monetarily value and may include: personal satisfaction derived from engaging in activities in two languages, or the decrease in stress accruing to members of the public when the minority language is legitimised through policy. Conversely, costs may include stress felt by members of the majority group who would rather see the minority language used in private settings.

**Social monetary effects:** These impacts include any effect for which a benefit or cost to society can be calculated. These may possibly include reduced healthcare costs of a lower prevalence of Alzheimer's disease amongst bilingual speakers (Craik et al. 2010). They also may include monetary benefits that flow from relationships between multilingualism and creativity, innovation or investment (Marsh et al. 2004) or reduced youth suicide rates (Hallett et al. 2007).

**Social non-monetary effects:** These are social impacts that are not amenable to monetary evaluation and can include effects that have a larger influence than all of the above. Examples may be more harmonious community relations or the positive value placed on diversity in its own right. Costs may be the unused skills of non-majority language speaking groups or Deaf groups. This final point touches on questions of fairness in the provision of language support as social impacts are rarely equal between speakers of two different languages. An understanding must be made, not just of the net effect of a policy to society but how much each group or individual gains, loses, and by how much.

(Royal Society of New Zealand 2013, pp. 3–4)

A number of the papers we reviewed discussed reasons that students should have rich and engaging opportunities to learn languages at school. These are summarised in the box below. Note that some of the envisaged benefits are located at the national level and others are personal to the individual doing the learning. The emphasis placed on these different types of benefits appears to have shifted over time. More recent literature cites economic purposes for learning languages with benefits coming from improved international communication and job opportunities. Earlier literature tended to highlight the cognitive and social benefits. This shift is evident across the stated purposes and benefits for national or individual advancement, and is in the changed approaches to teaching and assessing language proficiency, as discussed in later sections of this review.

#### **Evidence from the literature**

##### **Economic benefits and purposes for learning languages**

- Government initiatives such as ALLiS (Asian Language Learning in Schools programme) describe the value and motivation for improving foreign language capability in terms of *economic advantage*. Having more New Zealanders able to speak another language should increase New Zealand’s competitiveness in an increasingly globalised marketplace (Ashton 20013; McLauchlan 2007).
- At the individual level additional language capability contributes to opportunities in a *wider job market*. Jones (2014) notes economic values as an important factor in arguing for more support for language programmes in school, particularly the senior levels, and East (2008) cites a UK strategy document which notes language capability as an important job skill.

##### **Intellectual and social benefits and purposes for learning languages**

- One of the *social* benefits of learning about the culture associated with a language is that it promotes tolerance and acceptance of other cultures (Nuffield Languages Inquiry, 2000). This benefit is alluded to in NZC, which says that in responding to different languages students “are challenged to consider their own identities and assumptions” (NZC 2007, p. 24). Nationally, this is important for New Zealand as this addresses issues relating to identity which enable marginalised sections of the population, especially Māori, to be empowered. This in turn supports the revitalisation of te reo Māori and the normalisation of our indigenous language, and also to integrate the Māori culture into Pākehā thinking (see Section 1). Siteine (2014) notes that while the concept of identity has long been included in the goals, rationale and purposes of education, it is a relatively recent addition to the national

curriculum.

- The intellectual benefits of learning additional languages are mentioned by some researchers, but are less frequently highlighted. One specific claim is that learning an additional language contributes to *increased cognitive ability* of individual students. A review by Elizabeth Webb (n.d.) lists a number of studies which make such claims including Armstrong & Rogers, 1997; Garfinkel & Tabor, 1991; Cooper, 1987.
- The New Zealand Curriculum (2007) itself acknowledges the cognitive benefits of learning languages in that the process of learning a language develops students' learning strategies:  
*Learning a language provides students with the cognitive tools and strategies to learn further languages and to increase their understanding of their own language(s) and culture(s) (p. 24).*
- A different type of intellectual benefit is that learning another language offers *insight into one's own language* (Biggs, quoted in Harris 2008) and suggests benefits for literacy. One anomaly relating to language credits pointed out by Scott (2014) is that literacy credits are available in almost all subject areas except learning languages (p. 205) and that this "relates to a lack of acknowledgement of the positive influence of languages on English language literacy skills" (p. 129).
- From the students' perspective, Jacques (2009) found that the benefits of learning an additional language were mostly expressed in practical terms, such as for travel, as part of relationships and being 'connected' with family, or simply because learning a language was enjoyable.

## 4. The shift from grammar translation approaches to focusing on communicative language learning

### From grammar translation to communicative language

Before the development of *Learning languages* as the eighth learning area of NZC, the experience of learning another language was likely to be a largely academic exercise. There was a predominant focus on accuracy in grammar and translation, which is why traditional pedagogy is often described as the ‘grammar translation’ approach. By the time NZC was being developed, evidence was building to support a change in pedagogy. The new emphasis was on *communicative purposes* for language learning.

Ellis (2005) captured the origins of this shift in a review of research about effective pedagogy for the acquisition of a second language (L2) in the classroom context. He began by describing the three most commonly used approaches to language teaching in NZ at the time:

- *An oral-situational approach*, sometimes referred to as PPP or ‘presentation, practice, performance’, was based on behaviourist theories and the notion that a language could be learned through accurate repetition of structured segments of language so as to form ‘new habits’. It is a British adaptation of an American approach to language teaching referred to as the ‘audio-lingual’ method, in which students listened to segments of language and repeated them. Common in the 1960s, the British approach focused more on the meaning of the language structures being practiced and identifying the situational context for practising those structures.
- *A notional-functional approach*, common in the 1970s used the PPP method to deliver the target language and was accuracy based, but the content differed from the oral situational approach in that it focused more on the functional aspects of language and required students to practice and perfect routines like requesting and apologizing.
- *A task-based approach* does not begin from a syllabus of language structures to be learned verbatim, but instead sets tasks which require the communication of meaning. Ellis makes the distinction between tasks and exercises and gives the example of a common task in which learners listen to a set of instructions and carry them out.

Ellis then reviewed a range of empirical studies to discuss differences between focusing on the teaching of language forms (vocab and grammar) and language acquisition through a more ‘natural route’. This ‘natural route’ anticipated a pedagogy of communicative language teaching while the idea of ‘language forms’ reflected the more traditional functional grammar approach.



From analysis of the work he reviewed, Ellis identified ten principles to guide language teaching and learning. These principles provide the basis of communicative language teaching and include the need for students to: focus predominantly on meaning and form; have opportunities for extensive input; and interact and develop fluency in the target language. Instruction must take individual learner differences into account and assessment must include free as well as controlled language production. The ten principles are cited in full below.

#### GENERAL PRINCIPLES FOR SUCCESSFUL INSTRUCTED LEARNING

- Principle 1: Instruction needs to ensure that learners develop both a rich repertoire of formulaic expressions and a rule-based competence.
- Principle 2: Instruction needs to ensure that learners focus predominantly on meaning.
- Principle 3: Instruction needs to ensure that learners also focus on form.
- Principle 4: Instruction needs to be predominantly directed at developing implicit knowledge of the L2 while not neglecting explicit knowledge.
- Principle 5: Instruction needs to take into account learners' 'built-in syllabus'.
- Principle 6: Successful instructed language learning requires extensive L2 input.
- Principle 7: Successful instructed language learning also requires opportunities for output.
- Principle 8: The opportunity to interact in the L2 is central to developing L2 proficiency.
- Principle 9: Instruction needs to take account of individual differences in learners.
- Principle 10: In assessing learners' L2 proficiency it is important to examine free, as well as controlled production.

Ellis 2005, p. 33

Ellis did not intend these principles to be prescriptive. He said they should provide ideas and possibilities that teachers could try out in their classrooms. The need to cater for individual differences requires teachers to adapt their lessons and Ellis invited teachers be "insider researchers" into what is effective in their particular context. Our review found that the ten principles are continuing to support language teaching (Erlam 2010) and have provided a valuable reference point for individual inquiries carried out by teachers as well as in foundation documents such as the *Generic framework for teach and learning languages in English medium schools* (Ministry of Education, 2008).

## The 'fit' between why and how

The fledgling communicative approach developed out of, and contributed to, the overall sense of broadening students' capability to communicate across cultures, whether this was for economic, social or intellectual purposes. Its development and introduction into school programmes was not a steady progression however, because changes to teaching approaches were initially inhibited by incumbent assessment processes (see section 6). The value and purposes for learning languages articulated in the NZC (2007) set the direction for language teaching, but it was not until the introduction of NCEA and the possibility of internally assessed achievement standards, that communicative language teaching approaches could align with the purposes stated in the NZC.

Just after the NZC was released, a post-graduate student, Anne Jacques, explored the extent to which the communicative approach was being used in New Zealand language classrooms. Jacques reported that communicative approaches to language teaching, with the emphasis on transfer of meaning over accuracy, were now both the prescribed expectation and the most common practice in NZ schools (Jacques, 2009, pp. 14–15). She also made an interesting comment about the impact of the communicative approach on the way in which ideas about other cultures were now being developed:

[the communicative approach] has broadened in the last decade to include a cultural element. Whereas earlier approaches had tended to view the cultural aspect of SLA as fairly static, recent approaches have advocated the incorporation of dynamic cultural constructs as an integral part of acquiring another language. This approach, called intercultural communicative language teaching (iCLT) has become a focus of SLA (Jacques, 2009, p.15).

The optimistic picture painted here is one of strong alignment between the anticipated benefits of second language acquisition and the types of learning experiences that support students to be able to communicate in that language. In the next section we explore the extent to which the evidence we found supports the claim that communicative language teaching pedagogies are now the norm.

## 5. From curriculum to classroom

Section 4 outlined the rationale for the shift to communicative approaches for teaching and learning languages, and noted that this type of pedagogy potentially aligns very well with the intent of the Learning Languages area of the NZC. This in-principle coherence is clearly positive, but does it carry through to the actual learning that students experience? In this section we look at what is actually happening in the classroom.

### Insights from classroom studies

We found a small number of studies that specifically examined classroom practices across various languages or within particular language classes. Note that there is an important limitation to these studies. The focus is on the *ideal* of communicative language teaching rather than the *extent* to which it is already happening, i.e. we did not find corroborating evidence to support Jacques' thesis findings. While these are small-scale studies, they are located in the context of New Zealand language classes which makes them particularly relevant to this RAMP review. They add valuable insights into the challenges teachers face when they bring communicative language teaching approaches, including Intercultural Communicative language teaching (iCLT) and Task-Based language teaching (TBLT) to life in their classrooms.

#### Evidence from the literature

- Maria Chabera, an Auckland secondary school teacher, carried out a teaching inquiry that focused on something she referred to as positive, “life giving” aspects of language teaching practice (Chabera, 2008). In a conference paper she highlighted 5 core themes: learning foreign language through interactions and a communicative approach; use of target language in authentic, meaningful situation; experiencing success and praising achievement; education outside the classroom (class trips to environments where the target language was spoken) and a positive learning environment. Her study found that effective language teachers exhibited attributes such as patience, enthusiasm, and the ability to explain things clearly. They also had a vision of future teaching environments with increased opportunities for authentic communication with native speakers and through IT.
- Thomson and Insley (2012), two professional learning advisers, discussed the clear alignment between the NZC vision and principles and the communicative approach to learning languages. They drew on transcripts of classroom observations in year 7–10 classes to illustrate their claim that teachers can be supported to rethink their roles, giving students more agency in their learning. They noted this as a particular issue in junior classes where teachers often assumed that students need to be taught the language before being able to use it. As a consequence these classes were often still teacher-fronted, with students not taking ownership

of their language learning. They also noted the close fit between the type of pedagogy they described and the NZC model of teaching as inquiry. In contrast to teacher fronted classes, when students are more actively engaged in communicating with each other in the target language, they are not only getting more communicative experience of the language, but the teacher also has more opportunity to observe and assess students' interactive capability. This evidence is then able to be used to monitor student progress, and allow teachers to reflect on their teaching.

- One study explored interactions between students in Year 11 from the perspective of one teacher (East 2011). A new NCEA achievement standard required students to show evidence of their ability to interact in the language they were learning. This teacher noted that despite the emphasis on communicative language teaching and learning, and the subsequent shift to assessing the communicative aspect, genuine social interactions “have thus far, been something we don't do well”. He described the difficulties in shifting from “teaching a conversation” which often seemed contrived, to encouraging genuine interaction, and acknowledged that the new achievement standard had gone some way to enabling that shift.
- The teacher in East's 2011 study encouraged the use of IT to record, upload and store the interactions in the selected tasks. Students were much less intimidated in their interactions than they might otherwise have been because they were working with peers, and had control of what was selected. Such use of IT is one way of mitigating students' reluctance to take risks with second language, as noted by Fitzgerald (2008). While East notes that advances in digital technology have made this type of teaching possible, there is an assumption that schools are able to provide the equipment, and that teachers have the knowledge to use it effectively, as well as the savvy to manage the logistics of the whole process.
- A third interesting aspect of this same article (East 2011) was the teacher's struggle to come to terms with his students' mistakes in their efforts to attain some fluency. Here East comments on the tension between expectations of accuracy which come from earlier approaches to language learning and those which come with the communicative approach, and are now basis on which achievement is assessed. (We return to this theme in the next section.)
- While not specifically about teaching and learning an additional language, Susan Gray (2011) described a study in which teachers worked collaboratively to bring a language learning focus into planning lessons across the curriculum. This study showed that using second language learning principles such as Krashen's 'comprehensible input'<sup>6</sup>, enabled students to make better progress in areas such as maths and social studies, by more readily learning the language of that discipline.
- A group of writers from the New Zealand Association of Language Teachers (NZALT), Cooper, Kruger, Litwin, and Menard (2011) produced a detailed practical guide for teachers to facilitate the implementation of the achievement standards for Interaction through the use of a task-based approach, across a number of different languages. They based this guide on Ellis'

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<sup>6</sup> 'Comprehensible input' is one of a set of hypotheses formulated by Stephen Krashen in the 1970s and 1980s which states that language learners must be able to comprehend most of the language they hear or see (input) in order to grasp new levels of the language. In simpler terms; if you understand nothing of an utterance in a foreign language it is very difficult to even begin to learn what it is about. (See Krashen, 1982).

principle of focus on meaning, and offer a wide range of practical suggestions for developing tasks that engage students, offer a rich range of learning opportunities, and have a number of priming/step-up tasks to support students' communicative competence.

## Learning sign language: same and different challenges

Research with a focus on the pedagogy of sign language provides an interesting foil to literature on teaching additional languages more generally. Approaches for teaching New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL) reflect those for other languages, and its visual nature is well suited to the communicative language teaching, though assessment of the visual components is often thought to require more time and effort on the part of teachers. Ann Fitzgerald (2008), who teaches NZSL to hearing students at a NZ polytechnic, lists four main barriers to language learning that have emerged in this context. The one that relates specifically to NZSL is described as New Zealanders' reluctance to engage with the visual nature of NZSL and the need for direct eye contact and facial expressions. While the Education Gazette article (mentioned in section 2) presented this aspect of NZSL as 'fun and theatrical', this is clearly an issue for some learners. Fitzgerald suggested the issue needs to be addressed by raising awareness of the importance of facial expression as an integral part of signing, and ensuring a supportive and trusting learning environment. The three factors that are also relevant to other language programmes in schools are outlined in the box below.

### Evidence from the literature

- Ann Fitzgerald (2008) uses a full immersion approach to teach NZSL to hearing students at a New Zealand polytechnic. To simulate the deaf environment in which NZSL is used, students used almost no spoken language in class. Fitzgerald likened this type of learning to first language acquisition in children, in that students learn from observing, trying things out, and from feedback, though she acknowledged that this meant students were often out of their comfort zone, at least initially. Of the four main barriers to language learning that Fitzgerald identified in this context, three are relevant to other language programmes in schools. These are: a lack of opportunity for students to be part of the language community (in this case the deaf community); availability of suitable resources; and students' reluctance to take risks with second language. Specific steps taken to mitigate each of these barriers included: providing opportunities to join in gatherings for the deaf community; moderating the use of resources designed for L1 sign language users and using them in conjunction with deliberate modelling by the tutor; and ensuring a supportive and trusting environment. These interventions were shown to improve students' learning through improved course retention, analysis of student feedback, and improved academic achievement. A similar focus on mitigating such barriers could have a positive influence on learning other languages.
- Developers of assessment material for new NZSL achievement standards for NCEA, Sarah Cameron and Robyn Neil quoted in the Education Gazette article (2014) point out that

assessment of NZSL proficiency requires additional time and close observation of hand formations and facial expression. This extra effort was implied when they said that assessing sign language is “definitely not like marking a test paper”.

## Teachers’ confidence with communicative pedagogy

Several themes emerged when we looked for evidence concerning factors that support or hinder the uptake of communicative pedagogies.

### Teachers target language proficiency

We found two papers that discussed the relationships between the pedagogy teachers used in the classroom and their own proficiency in the language they were teaching. The first of these suggests that the majority of secondary language teachers are highly proficient in their target language, but this might not be the case for some primary teachers. The second paper identifies likely limitations to the range of pedagogies teachers can employ if they are not proficient in the language they are teaching.

#### Evidence from the literature

- A postgraduate study (Scott, 2014) surveyed language teachers to build profile that included their target language proficiency. Scott found that 75 percent of the teachers surveyed rated their language proficiency at “social competency” or “personal independence” levels, which were defined as levels 4 and 5 on a 5 point scale. However more of these teachers were in secondary rather than primary schools.
- Richards, Conway, Roskvist and Harvey (2013) described the relationship between teachers’ target language proficiency and their classroom practice. They assessed pedagogy against 7 key aspects of practice. They found that teachers with low levels of target language proficiency could effectively manage four key aspects: exploitation of target language resources; provision of appropriate language models; provision of corrective feedback; and use of the TL to manage the class. However only those teachers with high proficiency in the TL could effectively manage the other three aspects: provision of accurate explanations; provision of rich language input; and ability to improvise. These researchers note that the study was too small to offer conclusive quantitative data but say it nevertheless provides evidence of the need for making a greater commitment to ongoing professional development of their own language ability for teachers.

### Teachers’ access to and engagement with research

Teachers’ language proficiency was not the only reason that communicative approaches may not be fully embraced by teachers in their classrooms. In practical terms, schools may prioritise other subject areas and so minimise time allocated to languages. Alternatively teachers coping with

already full workloads may not have the time to reflect on making substantive changes to their practice. The study we outline next suggests that not being able to readily access relevant research might be preventing some teachers from moving forward in evolving their practice.

#### **Evidence from the literature**

Rosemary Erlam (2010) investigated whether the research on teaching and learning additional languages is accessible to practitioners in schools. She analysed 120 research articles related to language learning (mostly related to ESOL teaching). She found relatively few studies that used classroom observations and even fewer that were motivated or conducted by teachers themselves. Most were academic postgraduate studies. From this analysis she proposed three main reasons for the gap she had identified between research and practice. These were: accessibility, relevance, and teachers' confidence in their own practice.

- Accessibility is partly related to the different discourses or 'knowledges' of teachers and researchers, correlated to their different perspectives. The technical or analytical perspective of researchers' work might be inaccessible or even alienating to teachers whose practical, implicit knowledge comes from experience.
- Relevance is explained as the lack of research that is based on concerns identified by teachers, and is instead based on constructing and testing theories.
- Teachers' confidence refers to their confidence in *what they already do*. They have vast amounts of knowledge and already know how to teach languages, but this might actually be a barrier to making changes to new and different practices.

In her discussion about bridging this gap, Erlam suggests encouraging teachers to engage in their own, or collaborative research or inquiry, rather than expecting teachers to work through theories and figuring out how to apply these to their work. She also suggests more practical workshop approaches to disseminating new knowledge from research. As evidence of the success of this approach, she points to the now widely accepted and acclaimed "Ellis Principles" (see section 4). Erlam qualifies this endorsement with an explanation of the work that went into the dissemination of these principles, which included publication on the MOE website, distribution of hard copies to every school and a year of 'workshopping' case studies based on the 10 principles all around the country.

While encouraging teachers to engage in their own, or collaborative research or inquiry is clearly a positive step this must be supported by making provision for teachers to have the time and expertise for such work. In the next section we discuss the increasing focus on teacher-led inquiry.

## **The case for teaching as inquiry**

The usefulness of teaching as inquiry (TAI) approaches to communicative language teaching has already been noted (Thomson & Insley, 2012; Erlam 2010). The recent establishment of the

Teacher Led Innovation Fund (TLIF) gives a clear indication of the Ministry of Education’s commitment to this approach to ongoing pedagogical change. With this potentially strong alignment in mind, we turn now to a clear theme in the literature concerning the importance of supporting teachers to find improved ways to meet their students’ learning needs in languages classrooms, and specifically to investigate issues of motivation.

When the grammar-translation approach evolved into the communicative approach to language teaching, the need to respond to individual student’s actual communicative abilities and challenges became more pressing. Whereas the point of reference for the grammar-translation approach is external to students (i.e. correct use of rules etc.), a communicative approach relates more to the students’ *intrinsic* motivations to speak in the language they are learning. To support students to succeed in their language learning teachers need to understand what motivates students and what is likely to hinder their willingness to try and communicate. This presents an obvious target for individual teacher inquiries. We found some papers that discuss likely motivation challenges.

#### **Evidence from the literature**

- Madden (1997, 2014) discussed the effects of a range of language teaching ‘styles’, which in 1997 he described as “learning focused” and “acquisition focused” teaching and he offered four key guidelines for teaching languages which could move teachers along the continuum towards a communicative goal rather than a strictly academic one. These guidelines included: motivating students, making meaning accessible, challenging students to use what they learn, and spacing the learning.
- On the topic of motivation Madden noted that the success was the biggest motivator for students.
- East (2012) steps off from an earlier conclusion that changes are needed to raise the status language learning and to shift attitudes to L2 learning. He references Van Lier (1996) and Dornyei (2001) when he states that motivation is the most important factor in language learning. He points out that recent arguments around work opportunities for individuals and economic benefits nationally have not been effective motivators for school students and have not shifted the “English is all you need” myth. He argues that more intrinsic motivation, defined by Noels et al (2000) as activities which are “enjoyable and satisfying” have greater potential to affect uptake and retention in language classes. This study provides some evidence that learner-centred, task-based approaches have this potential.
- Jacques (2009) in her investigation of student voice in language learning, also notes the importance of motivation. She references Gardner (1979) who distinguishes between extrinsic and intrinsic motivation in students learning an additional language. Gardner notes that students are intrinsically motivated through the enjoyment of meeting and talking with speakers of other languages – but that this seems to differ between socio-educational motivation (or social context model) and classroom motivation (Gardner 2006 p. 2–3.) “Thus, a student who was intrinsically motivated to study another language would typically do so for reasons of “enjoyment”, “meeting people”, “world peace”, “interest” while an extrinsically



motivated student would typically choose to study another language for travel or job opportunities” Jacques (2009, p. 17).

## 6. The impact of NCEA on learning languages

The manner in which knowledge or proficiency is assessed impacts on classroom practice. This has been one theme in all the RAMP overviews to date. At issue here is the alignment—or lack of alignment—between NZC and NCEA. Across the series of overviews, we have found interesting differences between the learning areas when it comes to the relationship between NCEA and NZC:

- Achievement standards were seen as missing the essence of the science learning area of NZC and hence constituting something of a barrier to changes in traditional classroom practice (Hipkins & Joyce, 2014).
- The Mathematics & Statistics overview reported similar alignment tensions in traditional mathematics to those in the sciences. However there were indications that some recently developed achievement standards for Statistics were stimulating changes in pedagogy (Neill & Hipkins, 2014).
- In Technology subjects there were indications that teachers were still wrestling with academic/vocational tensions and many still preferred to use unit standards to assess practical achievements (Joyce & Hipkins, 2015).
- The Health & Physical Education overview was the most positive of the previous overviews in that it did find a clear line of sight between NZC and NCEA (Boyd & Hipkins, 2015). However only some of the achievement standards reflected the socio-critical emphasis that distinguishes this learning area from the others and there was evidence that fewer students enrolled to be assessed in these standards, compared to the more traditionally focused achievement standards.

Against the backdrop of this previous work, we found a small number of papers that discussed NCEA assessment in the context of learning an additional language. The ‘feel’ of this collection of papers is rather different from those discussed in the four earlier RAMP overviews. However, it would be unwise to read too much into the more positive commentary about the impact of the languages achievement standards because most of this work has been generated by the same team of two researchers who were clearly key players in this alignment space.

### **The (re)development of achievement standards for learning languages**

Scott and East (2009) described changes to assessment practices for second language teaching during the period between the introduction of the 1993 curriculum framework and the

implementation of Learning Languages as the eight learning area in the NZC (Ministry of Education, 2007). During this time of consolidation and growth for the learning area, the first set of NCEA standards was also introduced. Scott and East noted that the previous high stakes examinations at School Certificate and Bursary levels had fitted with the traditional grammar translation approach to teaching languages with its emphasis on reading and writing and retention of language knowledge. The key shift during the 1990s-2000s decade was to communicative approaches which emphasise meaningful communication in the target language.

According to Scott and East these assessment shifts variously hindered and enabled shifts in teaching practices. Although the communicative approach was initiated with the new curriculum framework and supported by subsequent language teaching guidelines, the powerful 'washback' effect of the examination system meant that classroom practices could not start to really change until the introduction—and later revisions—of NCEA standards. The key change was the allowance for internal assessment of *communicative proficiency*. However resistance to change was expressed by principals and teachers, who had concerns about the reliability of the new assessments and also about increased workload. Scott (2014) pointed out that in addition to the usual workload of teachers and the range of tasks they need to cover, “language teachers have the additional burden of frequently feeling the need to advocate for the configuration of language classes at particular levels and for specific languages” (p.205).

The revision of the curriculum in 2007 (and its subsequent full implementation in 2010) provided an opportunity to review the teaching and assessment of the learning languages learning area while also addressing the concerns that arose from implementation of the first set of achievement standards. The review that took place was titled Standards-Curriculum Alignment Languages Experts (SCALES), also known as the Standards Review for Learning Languages (NZALT, 2009). Scott & East said that this project enabled members of the New Zealand Association of Language Teachers (NZALT) to have a voice in proposed changes to assessment during the alignment of NZC with the second set of NCEA achievement standards. A second paper by East and Scott (2011) covers much the same ground and describes the system proposed in SCALES project for assessment in learning languages. This included a new matrix, which was progressively introduced between 2011 and 2013. This matrix shifted the balance more onto language production, whereas the previous matrix placed equal weight on the four traditional skills or listening, reading, writing and speaking. There was also a strong emphasis on collection of evidence of learning over time, as any assessment process needed to be able to be justified to stakeholders (Bachman and Palmer (2010) in East 2008, p. 187).

## **Impact of NCEA on pedagogy**

In their 2011 paper, East and Scott outlined their experiences of the process of revising the NCEA standards to align them with NZC. They took particular note of the potential for positive effects to ‘wash back’ into classrooms in terms of enhancing pedagogical “good practice”. Because they had been centrally involved in the standards-writing process from beginning to end their

perspective provided a unique and important opportunity to document the deliberations that went into the revised standards. In subsequent papers they elaborated on some of the pedagogical shifts they were seeing.

#### **Evidence from the literature**

- East (2011) discussed the relationship between assessment and practice, with a specific focus on how the various achievement standards that require students to 'interact' have influenced classroom practice. East noted that interacting was a new emphasis in the curriculum. He said it would be challenging for teachers to gather evidence of students' genuine spoken interactions over time. The article focused on one teacher's experience of the introduction of an achievement standard titled '*interact*', which had replaced a previous one titled '*converse*'. This teacher described the difficulties in shifting thinking from 'teaching a conversation' which often seemed contrived and which he argued was implied in the *converse* standard, to encouraging genuine interaction. He acknowledged that the new achievement standard '*interact*' had gone some way to enabling that shift.
- East (2014) added survey data to the single case study to compare the two achievement standards and to investigate what teachers saw as the advantages and disadvantages of each. He noted the challenge that the new achievement standards had moved measurement away from a summative test model towards the collection of ongoing evidence of authentic and unrehearsed spoken interactions. Initial findings from approximately 150 teachers' responses to a national survey, confirmed that teachers thought the main advantage of the new standard *interact* was the authenticity, while the main disadvantage was the impracticality. Other positive attributes or advantages that emerged from the survey data included the learner-centredness which encouraged peer-to-peer interactions, and more genuine reflection of what students know and can do. Another disadvantage included the technical challenges of recording interactions. Ironically one advantage noted by some teachers that the assessment was less 'test-like' and therefore less stressful for students. This view was countered by other teachers who said that the increased number of assessments were actually more stressful for students. The analysis showed that proportionally those teachers who used the *interact* standard were considerably more likely to comment on the positive attributes than those who didn't use this standard.

## **An area where NCEA practice could be strengthened**

Commentary from East and Scott emphasises the positive potential of NCEA to influence practice, while also noting that this has been a demanding shift for teachers to make. Their specific emphasis on spoken interactions meant that they have been particularly focused on the impact of internally assessed achievement standards. Another researcher with a specific interest in the impact of NCEA on languages learning and achievement has taken a somewhat different tack, focusing on the fairness and consistency of NCEA assessment tasks in externally assessed achievement standards in Japanese. This highlights an interesting comparison of the two strands

of the NCEA assessment system where both internally and externally assessed standards operate alongside each other. Ogino (2011) points out that the external examination is a high stakes assessment designed to promote positive washback, and that poor quality examinations not only threaten the reliability and validity of the qualification, but could potentially negatively influence students' motivation.

#### **Evidence from the literature**

- Masayoshi Ogino (2011) analysed NCEA level 3 papers from 2006–2010 that assessed the reading of Japanese text. He found a problematic lack of year in year consistency in three key features of each paper: the number of kana<sup>7</sup> introduced; the total number of senior-level grammatical structures in the texts; and the number of types of senior-level grammatical structures. The confusion caused by year-to-year changes in detailed assessment specifications was also noted. However the commentary at the end of the paper noted that specifications had been more helpful in 2011 and asked if this was an indication that the problem was being addressed. Given this ending, the findings probably need updating.
- Ogino (2012) compared passage length and linguistic errors in NCEA level 1 externally assessed examination papers in Japanese from 2010 and 2011. Again he found evidence of variation between years which could contribute to issues of inconsistency being reported anecdotally by teachers. He said there was enough variation to warrant deeper analysis, and that similar analysis should be undertaken for assessment of other languages. He argued that such analysis is necessary to support the development of reliable and valid examinations to assess reading, viewing and responding, to complement the internally assessed standards for speaking, as well as promote positive washback.

## **NCEA and NZSL (New Zealand Sign Language)**

We have already noted the potential of NZSL to provide a different and engaging context in which students might experience learning another language. Its status however, has meant that it has only relatively recently been treated as a 'real' language. Unlike other languages taught in NZ schools, there were no achievement standards available in NZSL, but there were a number of NZQA Unit Standards. This is currently changing since the MOE announcement of the development of new achievement standards to be introduced progressively over the three years from 2015 to 2017. The thirty five Unit Standards reviewed in 2010 by the National Qualifications services (NQS) were to be discontinued at the end of 2013 as there had been little demand for them between 2005 and 2009. The NQS review also found that these standards did not align with the learning languages objectives of The New Zealand Curriculum, nor did they align with teaching and learning guides for NZSL (NZQA).<sup>8</sup> By the end of 2013 however, with the development of the achievement standards already being discussed, it was decided to extend the expiry date for 28 of these unit standards until the new Achievement Standards were

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<sup>7</sup> Symbols in the Japanese language which represent syllables.

<sup>8</sup> Data sourced from: <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/nqfdocs/summaries/2010/nov10/revsumnov10-38.html>

implemented. The number of proposed standards is similar to other languages, with two standards currently in draft form for NCEA levels 1 and 2. There are three achievement standards at each NCEA level for most other languages (including te reo Māori) other than English.

## **A potential impact of University Entrance specifications**

The most recent revision of University Entrance regulations widened the provision for naturally occurring evidence of literacy to include standards from a range of learning areas, but were previously only available from credits generated by standards in English and Te Reo deemed to be at an appropriate level for study at university. It follows that achieving any of these standards, can also count towards the literacy requirement for UE.

Scott (2014) however, noted that literacy credits can be gained from naturally occurring evidence in almost all subject areas *except* learning languages. That is, credits for learning languages (other than Latin and Māori) do not count towards NCEA level one and two literacy credits. She states that this highlights “a lack of acknowledgement of the positive influence of languages on English language literacy skills” (p. 129). Similarly, Jones (2014) notes that no international language standards are recognised as counting towards the new Vocational Pathways, while standards in te reo Māori are. NZQA point out that the standards that count towards literacy credits all require direct evidence of learners’ reading and writing in English or Reo Māori, whereas learners of languages may submit material for credits in the target language.

Gray’s (2011) study, which revealed that using second language learning principles enabled students to make better progress in other subject areas, seems to support the argument for literacy credits in learning languages. It is possible that the current situation could influence motivation for choosing to study a language so a discussion of this seeming anomaly could be helpful.

## 7. Challenges for learning languages as a learning area

In this section we summarise challenges for the learning languages learning area that have become apparent in this review. While the focus of the review is on the current state of language learning at curriculum levels 6 to 8, the ideal of sustained learning over time to achieve fluency and communicative competence, in combination with factors relating to motivation, means it is important to also consider what is happening at junior levels. The challenges summarised here therefore include some factors which pertain to language learning at junior levels of secondary school.

One main theme that is clear from the literature included in this overview is the tenuous state of language learning at secondary levels. Despite an increased awareness of the value of language capability in some domains, and the inclusion of languages as a separate learning area in the NZC, the numbers of students studying languages, especially to a level of communicative proficiency, remains frustratingly low (Jones 2014, and Maclachlan 2006). If the goal is to increase participation and achievement in language learning, the main challenge therefore seems to lie in encouraging students to take up and continue studying languages. Further challenges that stem from this overall goal involve addressing a number of interrelated issues which became apparent in the literature we found, as described in the box below. We have summarised these themes as follows (note that each paper may cover several of these themes):

1. The low prioritisation of languages in a largely monolingual culture.
2. Mixed policy signals about the importance of languages in the overall curriculum.
3. Need for sustained learning over a number of years.
4. Low prioritisation in school timetables where subjects compete for space in a crowded curriculum.
5. Provision of teachers with appropriate expertise and their ongoing professional development and training.
6. Provision of classroom resources including IT equipment for accessing target language communities and opportunities, as well as for assessment purposes.

## Evidence from the literature

### *Low participation and retention*

- Crystelle Jones (2014) investigated participation rates of students studying additional languages at year 13 using NCEA results from 2009–2011. She found overall decreasing numbers of students studying languages at this level (though there is some variation between different languages) and increasing attrition rates as student progress from year 9 to year 13. Jones noted that fewer than 20% of schools are able to run a 'viable' year 13 language class, most often these are larger schools. Comparison between schools showed that girls' schools and private schools were over-represented in the group of schools that were able to run viable language classes.
- McLauchlan (2006) found similarly high attrition and early discontinuation rates in a study that followed a cohort of students through years 11–13 in Christchurch schools, and noted that his findings were similar to those in two other largely monolingual English countries, Australia and the UK. He notes a number of factors that inhibit participation in language learning including:
  - the enduring public opinion in NZ that learning a second language is not important.
  - a mismatch between a stated government emphasis on international competency and the lack of support at the micro level within schools.
  - the lack of a national policy on language learning as part of the disjuncture between government intention and action (see also the Royal Society Paper entitled Languages in Aotearoa New Zealand).
- Harris (2008) in a study of language learning opportunities at junior and senior levels found the numbers tended to drop off after year 10 because of constraints of an already crowded curriculum and timetable. She also found that teacher supply and knowledge were major barriers to increasing language learning opportunities in both primary and secondary schools. Harris (2008) also noted that the teachers and principals in her study thought the introduction of the new learning area in the curriculum would make a difference to the numbers of students studying languages and perhaps shift monolingual attitudes. More recent articles suggest this has not been realised.
- The Eurydice/Eurostat (2012) report offers a comparison with language learning in Europe. The report states that in the majority of European countries it is compulsory to learn two foreign languages for at least one year, one of which is most frequently reported to be English. It also states that between 2005 and 2010 the number of students learning languages increased, particularly in primary levels, but that despite starting earlier there was no actual increase in the overall amount of time dedicated to foreign languages.

### *Status of language learning*

- Scott (2014) states that Learning Languages is the only learning area that is not compulsory for students, despite a stated 'requirement' for schools to provide language learning options at years 11–13 and as an 'entitlement' at years 7–10.



- Jones (2014) argues that language learning is a “fundamental global literacy” and suggests that changing the status and up-take of language learning through to communicative competence requires strategic national policy.
- East 2008 compared the New Zealand and UK’s strategies to increase language learning. In the UK teaching learning languages was made compulsory at primary level, but simultaneously downgraded in status at years 10 and 11 from 'mandatory' to 'an entitlement'. This conflicting message did not increase the status or uptake of language learning. NZ similarly implemented a ‘requirement to offer a languages’ at primary levels and 'an entitlement' at years 7–10, but the strategy<sup>9</sup> to encourage participation did nothing for retention. Inadequate funding and staffing for the new initiative was seen a barrier to its potential to make a difference. East argues that neither country has 'done enough' to shift attitudes and that some levels of compulsion along with government funding would be necessary to make a real difference. This includes not only compulsion to teach languages, but also for teachers to receive training and a minimum level of language competence as part of their training.
- East (2012) reiterates the need to raise the status language learning and to shift attitudes to learning additional languages. He references Van Lier (1996) and Dornyei (2001) when he states that motivation is the most important factor in language learning, and points out that recent arguments around work opportunities for individuals and economic benefits nationally have not been effective motivators for school students and have not shifted the “English is all you need” myth. He argues that more intrinsic motivation, defined by Noels et al (2000) as activities which are “enjoyable and satisfying” have greater potential to affect uptake and retention in language classes. This study provides some evidence that learner-centred, task-based approaches have this potential.
- Madden (2014) also cites motivation as one of the most important factors in engaging students in language learning, and that success is the greatest motivator.
- In the foreword to Ashton’s 2013 report, Brigid Heywood the Chair of the Sasakawa Foundation in NZ points the lack of a national policy for languages and lack of compulsion at any level to learn a second language, as demotivating factors when she stated, “sends a negative message about the importance of language learning” (p.ii).

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<sup>9</sup> The Second Language Learning Funding Pool was set up in 1998, implemented in 1999 and reviewed in 2004.

## 8. Ways forward



Much of the literature in this review highlights the low numbers of students taking up and continuing to learn languages and argues that increased uptake would benefit not only individual students, but also the economy and society in general.<sup>10</sup> This imperative is reflected in the NZC which states the purpose for creating the separate learning is to “encourage students to participate more actively in New Zealand’s diverse, multicultural society and in the global community” (NZC 2007, p.4). The discussion also includes ways to improve the levels of communicative competence, and this too is reflected in the NZC core strand, as well as in practice with the shift to communicative teaching approaches.

One assumption in the arguments for learning another language is that increasing participation will also raise achievement levels more generally. The literature we found in this area also suggests a lack of alignment between this potential benefit and policy signals more generally. This suggests that the goals and priorities for the Learning Languages learning areas are not clear, and that current policy statements are sending mixed messages. Any overall curriculum policy would need to clearly signal priorities. It would also need careful consideration of how those priorities were linked, so that any changes were well planned and justified. For example, the need for sustained language learning over time to achieve communicative competence, as indicated in the literature, means that any strategic changes or policy decisions must take a long term view. Any policy that aims to increase participation must be consistent with long term achievement goals across the curriculum levels.

We found that the lack of compulsion was a recurring theme throughout the literature as a major factor that inhibits greater engagement with language learning. However we do not see implementation of compulsion as a simple solution to either goal of increasing participation or achievement. It is likely that attitudes to learning foreign languages must shift before compulsion could be considered, and any move to compulsion would need to include provision of appropriate support to schools and teachers.

We suggested therefore that considering the issues listed in the previous section could contribute to both increased participation and improved language proficiency. Two examples from the literature, in the box below, offer ways to think differently about the tension between competing demands of the curriculum.

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<sup>10</sup> Refer to page 9 ‘Why learn an additional language’.

### Evidence from the literature

- Martin East (2014a), along with another language teacher educator, compared the shifting hierarchies of subjects and relative status of foreign language learning and teaching in NZ and UK secondary schools. They argued that reconciling the competing requirements of the curriculum is necessary to avoid undervaluing the studying languages. They cite an example in Wales which showed that linking foreign languages to other subject areas actually enhanced achievement in other subjects and future opportunities for students<sup>11</sup>. The NZ researchers offered Linwood College in Christchurch, which has established a cross curricular focus on STEM subjects without precluding non-STEM subjects in junior year levels, as an example of how foreign languages could be integrated with STEM subjects in senior years. Though this is so far only indicative of the potential, they reiterate a successful Welsh initiative as a way forward.
- Gray (2001) similarly noted that learning languages had a positive effect on students' achievement in other learning areas. This suggests that rather than competing for space in a crowded curriculum and in school timetables, there may be ways in which the value of language learning can be recognised in other curriculum areas through more cross curricular cooperation.

In this review we found that some of the challenges for New Zealand were similar to those in the Europe and the UK. While the context in Europe is slightly different in that there is more compulsion, the challenges are similar (see comment on Eurydice/Eurostat reports page 28). The purposes for learning languages and the associated challenges in the UK are outlined in the Nuffield report (2000), which is much larger than any in NZ study, and correspond to those identified in the NZ studies.

The UK based Nuffield report states that current capability in languages is inadequate for the modern world and discussed a range of economic and social reasons for encouraging a multilingual society. It proposed a framework for languages, based on the Common European Framework, and developing a national strategy for languages. The strategy would draw on policies for indigenous languages to help change attitudes to multilingualism and set out how change can be managed and implemented, within the education sector as well as generally.

Since the Nuffield Report (2000), and in the context of an increasingly diverse population, the need for an increased emphasis on language learning, continues to be discussed in the UK. A national curriculum review (Department of Education, 2011) which recommends that the provision of modern foreign languages be made statutory (p. 26), shows that there has been little progress in formally increasing the teaching and learning of additional languages, despite widespread agreement of their importance in a broad curriculum. Similarly, an introduction to a British study on language policy, which highlights the economic importance of language

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<sup>11</sup> Yates & Grumet (2011) and CILT Cymru (2013) cited in East (2014a)

capability, further confirms a lack of progress and states “despite a number of policy initiatives over the last 25 years made by successive governments, languages capability remains in crisis” (British Academy 2013, p. 3). Quantitative data from this latter study presented in a booklet shows that despite some increases in the number of students studying foreign languages, a widespread lack of competency continues to be an issue for an increasingly globalised world (British Academy 2015).

Given the lack of substantial change in the intervening years, the main findings from the Nuffield Report (2000) are still relevant today, and reflect many of the findings and issues identified in NZ studies discussed in this review. These findings and the actions required to address the challenges identified in the report, are set out below as summarised in the executive summary.

#### **Evidence from the literature**

***The main findings from the Nuffield Report (2000)*** These are taken directly from the report executive summary

- English is not enough
- People are looking for leadership to improve the nation’s capability in languages
- Young people from the UK are at a growing disadvantage in the recruitment market
- The UK needs competence in many languages – not just French – but the education system is not geared to achieve this
- The government has no coherent approach to languages
- In spite of parental demand, there is still no UK-wide agenda for children to start languages early
- Secondary school pupils lack motivation or direction [to learn additional languages]
- Nine out of ten children stop learning languages at 16
- University language departments are closing, leaving the sector in deep crisis
- Adults are keen to learn languages but are badly served by an impoverished system
- The UK desperately needs more language teachers

***To address these challenges the inquiry proposes that:***

- The status of languages is raised by designating competency in languages as a key skill.
- The government establish and support a national strategy for languages
- Appoint a languages ‘supremo’ to work at the highest level with government departments
- Raise the profile of languages
- Give young children a flying start by declaring a firm commitment to early language learning for all children
- Improve arrangements in secondary schools by: providing a wider range of languages, a more flexible menu to cater better for different needs, abilities and interests and more use of information technology.
- Break out of the vicious circle of inadequate teacher supply
- Make languages a specified component of the 16–19 curriculum
- Reform the organisation and funding of languages in higher education
- Develop the huge potential of language learning in adult life

- Establish a national standards framework for describing and accrediting language competence
- Coordinate initiatives linking technology and languages

With translation as necessary to the New Zealand context (for example, “key skills’ would become “key competencies”, and compulsion being out of step with our framework curriculum structure) these recommendations could well provide a useful starting point for ongoing policy conversations in New Zealand. Any such policies would need to clearly identify key goals and priorities, take a long term view, and plan implementation accordingly. The challenge will be to identify changes which could be made within the pragmatic reality of the current NZ education system, and which align with and encourage multicultural values while acknowledging the unique position of te reo Māori.

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# Appendix 1: Methodology for searching and constructing the Endnote file

In this section, the method for the literature review to support the Review and Maintenance Programme (RAMP) for the Learning Languages learning area is described.

An Endnote file has been created to provide summaries of research and commentaries of national research and data, to gather evidence about current curriculum content, pedagogical and assessment practices, and student achievement, in the context of the Learning Languages learning area in the New Zealand Curriculum (NZC) at Levels 6–8. While there is a wealth of literature about second language acquisition, there is little specifically about this new learning area in the New Zealand Curriculum. A small amount of international literature has been included, where this work is considered important to the topic. Some commentary about younger students learning languages as the introduction of a requirement to teach languages at years 7–10 was intended to impact levels 6–8 is also included when it signals a theme that is of continuing relevance as students go through their schooling.

## Search parameters

Resources were initially limited to those published from 2010 or later, but several substantive and relevant pieces of work were completed before then and have been included to provide a good background to the current situation. Sources included The New Zealand Educational Theses Database, ResearchGate, Teaching and Learning Research Initiative reports, Ministry of Education research reports (TKI and Education Counts), relevant conference proceedings and various journals that language teachers and researchers contribute to or read (e.g., *NZALT*; *The Modern Language Journal*; *Language Teaching Journal*; *Language Magazine*; *Assessment Matters*; *Curriculum Matters*; *SET*; *New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies*; *Language Education and Diversity Conference*)

The focus was specifically on the Learning Languages learning area in NZ secondary schools at NZ Curriculum levels 6–8 and learning foreign or additional languages such as French, Mandarin, Japanese and so. We also searched for documents that discussed Te Reo Māori as an additional language, rather than as a learning medium.

We looked for anything that discussed current language programmes and their alignment with the NZC and key competencies, as well as language related concepts such as identity and cultural understanding using the following key words:



## Search terms and keywords

First tier search terms were derived from the description of the review of NCEA that this work informs. Second tier search terms were derived from the core concepts and focuses of the Learning Languages learning area of NZC.

### Secondary school education

#### Languages AND the keywords of:

##### 1. NZC alignment

- Teachers' professional learning/teacher inquiry
- Body of knowledge/perspectives on LL
- LL processes (e.g., critical thinking, health promotion)
- Curriculum integration
- Dispositions (motivation, engagement, agency)

##### 2. Innovative programmes

- Non-traditional outcomes (well-being, citizenship, identity, key competencies, community partnerships, and so on)
- Future focused

##### 3. Assessment

- NCEA
- Digital assessment

##### 4. Priority learners

- Equity (Māori, Pasifika, students with special education needs)
- Diversity

##### 5. Pathways

- Vocational

Three other keywords (labels) further categorise collected sources as:

- Research
- Evaluation or
- Commentary.