



Whitireia
NEW ZEALAND



Build & Rebuild:

The English as an Additional Language (EAL) Student Experience

Presented to the 2016 ATLAANZ Conference by Susan Ridley

ADJUSTING TO THE NEW WAYS OF LEARNING -

- » To be a successful New Zealand tertiary student, EAL Bachelor of Nursing students must function well as **self-directed, independent, active, even proactive learners**. This relates directly to student success on clinical placements (Eyre, 2010).
- » This BN programme uses **context-based curriculum** to best prepare nursing students for clinical placements (McGrath, 2015). Activities simulate real workplace practice, communication and critical thinking, and students learn by scenarios, lab experiences, group work and discussion.

2015 EAL Research Project

Understanding the Specific Communication and Learning Strategies English as an Additional Language (EAL) Students Need to Acquire in Order to Succeed in the Bachelor of Nursing (BN) Programme

Susan Ridley, Liz Day, & Leanne Pool

Student demographic summary (1)

» VERY DIVERSE
GROUP OF 13
STUDENTS AT
THE END OF
THE STUDY
YEAR

» 13 STUDENT
PARTICIPANTS:
○ 5 FROM YR 1
○ 7 FROM YR 2
○ 1 FROM YR 3

Student demographic summary (2)

» 9 First
languages

» Ages

- 2 Under 25

- 11 mature
students

» May or may not
have attended
the partnership
groups



Whitireia
NEW ZEALAND

Six tutor participants

» Worked across all three year groups

- 4 Worked in the EAL three-way partnership groups

- 2 Did not

» Tutor participants were all involved in supporting EAL students outside of class.

Transition theme findings on initial stress, significant barriers:

» LISTENING/SPEAKING

A focus group student participant (Y1, P2) named LISTENING as a real barrier to small group learning; the next participant responded:

“Yea, also me too you know, ... I already also prepared, but in the group can't really talk because they are so fast I can't find the space to talk or I feel like I'm speaking too slowly...” (Y1, P 1).

» WRITING

“For me...when you speak it's really really easy when you speak, but when you're writing that's the big thing that I found very difficult (Y1, P4).”

Findings on the theme of initial transitioning stress: Year One Participants reported significant barriers...

- » Speed of native speakers in class
- » Accents
- » Vocabulary
- » Paraphrasing is the hardest skill
- » Humor (feeling social isolation)
- » Asking questions
- » Limited grammar help & no proofreading at Learning Services
- » Disadvantage in placements compared to native speakers

Some student participants (Year One & Year Three) reported being very frustrated in year one, first term or first weeks particularly with lecture listening comprehension. This matches findings of a study of Chinese international students developing learner autonomy at an English-medium-instruction university in Hong Kong (Ding & Stapleton, 2016), as did strategies used to cope.

Findings: Positive indicators of the transition process reported by some Year One *and* Year Two participants...

- » Gaining ability to look at oneself objectively
- » Recognition that the BN programme aims to encourage independent learning *and participants are adjusting*
- » Adapting language and learning strategies over time
- » Proactive use of the English world outside polytech for improving fluency
- » Perseverance and resilience over time has brought academic and language gains

DISCUSS: The first weeks of study for EAL students

- » How do you, your team or institution support EAL students at the beginning of study?
- » Do you have some good ideas to reduce EAL student stress and promote learning and well being in the first weeks?

Year Three Student Participant case study of success: (1)

“...what I didn't expect was the amount of discussion and group work...that was a kind of cultural difference and culture shock...for me it's just being more confident and being more assertive. That's the thing I've learned here like being assertive cos in Chinese culture you don't tend to say no and you don't think to express your own thoughts or your real feelings...”

Year Three Student Participant case study of success: (2)

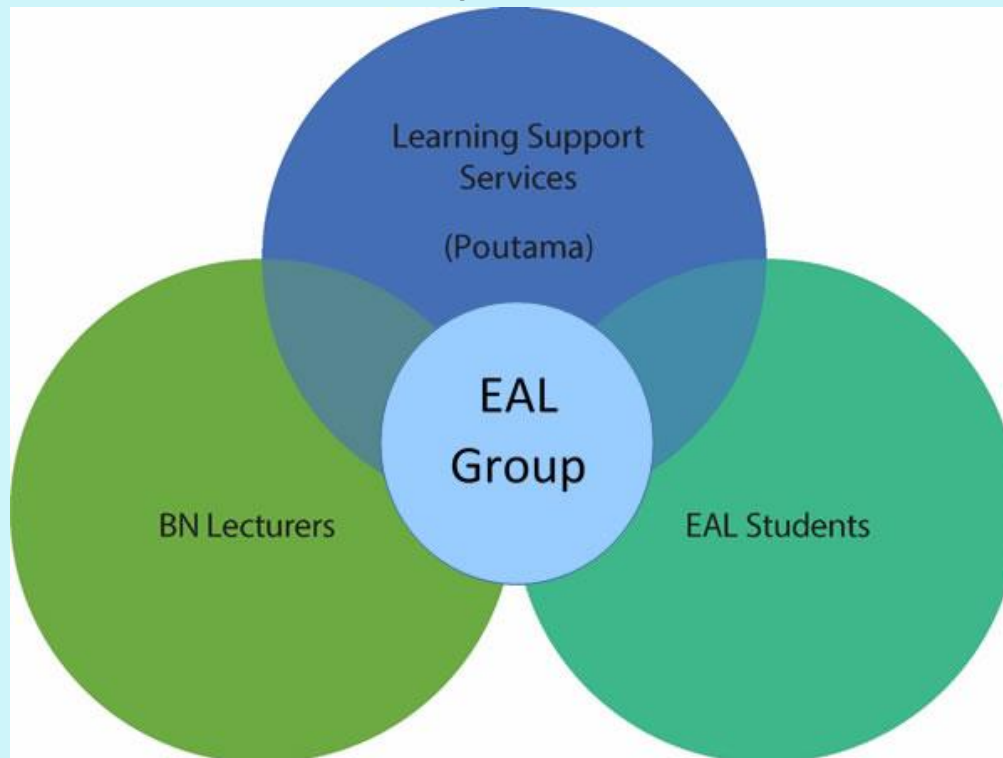
» **Initial experiences**

- All energy & focus on oral comprehension of tutors in class
- Barrier of accents & speed of processing
- Initial strategy of using electronic dictionary for virtually every word
- Prior class strategies for power point/listening didn't work; unexpected content addition by lecturers in classes; adapted old notetaking methods by trial and error (did not discard)
- Feeling shy to speak
- Noticed improvement in understanding after a few months

Year Three Student Participant's strengths-based approach: (3)

- ✓ Comparing learning in China (memorization & absorbing) to BN, the participant noted their IELTS test result showed listening/reading as stronger than speaking/writing, related to the way of learning in Chinese culture; responded by using small group kiwi peers for grammar correction and learning
- ✓ Built upon prior study skills such as good time management
- ✓ Praised on clinicals for adapting to kiwi small talk and aiming for comprehensible English (not technical perfection)
- ✓ Strength in listening to varied accents
- ✓ Cantonese translation skills valued by colleagues
- ✓ Developed good stress management skills

A Three-way Partnership (Day, Ridley & Pool, 2016)



A collaborative approach between adult EAL learners, nursing tutors (Te Kura Hauora Bachelor of Nursing) and a language learning advisor (Poutama Academic Learning Support)

Scaffolding skills through the years of the degree

➤ An informal framework:

- Year 1 – Language support, extension of course academic scholarship, introduction to clinical communication
- Year 2 – Clinical communication with some assignment support
- Year 3 – Developing the understanding of the third year academic standard

Working together toward becoming independent learners

Developing the academic & clinical communication skills of EAL students

Our programme combines

- Assignment support
- Academic skills
- Language skills
- Metacognitive skills
- Clinical communication

Lu and Maithus (2012) caution on negative stereotyping of needs of EAL nursing students as does Eyre (2010), pointing out success stories.

These New Zealand researchers still recommend clinical communication practice, before and in debriefing after placements.

What we found...on the three-way partnership

- Student participants identified the small groups as useful as a safe space
- “...during our EAL class we can ask particular questions we cannot really ask in class” (Y1, P3).
- The partnership groups were valued, especially for:
 - Assignment support
 - Interpreting frameworks (assignment descriptors, marking rubrics & nursing models)

What we found...on the three-way partnership

Tutor participants reported that students who attended the groups showed more confidence and participated more in class. (Similar results found by in a study of Australian EAL architecture students by Baik & Greig (2009); like the Whitireia study, also using adjunct tutorials and both tutor & learning advisor).

A British university international student study of social/ psychological adjustment of 18 participants (Newsome & Cooper, 2016):

Three Transition Stages

1. ARRIVAL WITH HIGH EXPECTATIONS



2. CULTURE SHOCK



3. ACCOMMODATION

Study was over 6 months, but no time frames identified

An English-medium Hong Kong university international one year student study of development of learner autonomy of 9 participants (Ding & Stapleton, 2016): **Three Part Transition**

1. INITIAL SHOCK (arrival to 3 or 4 weeks)



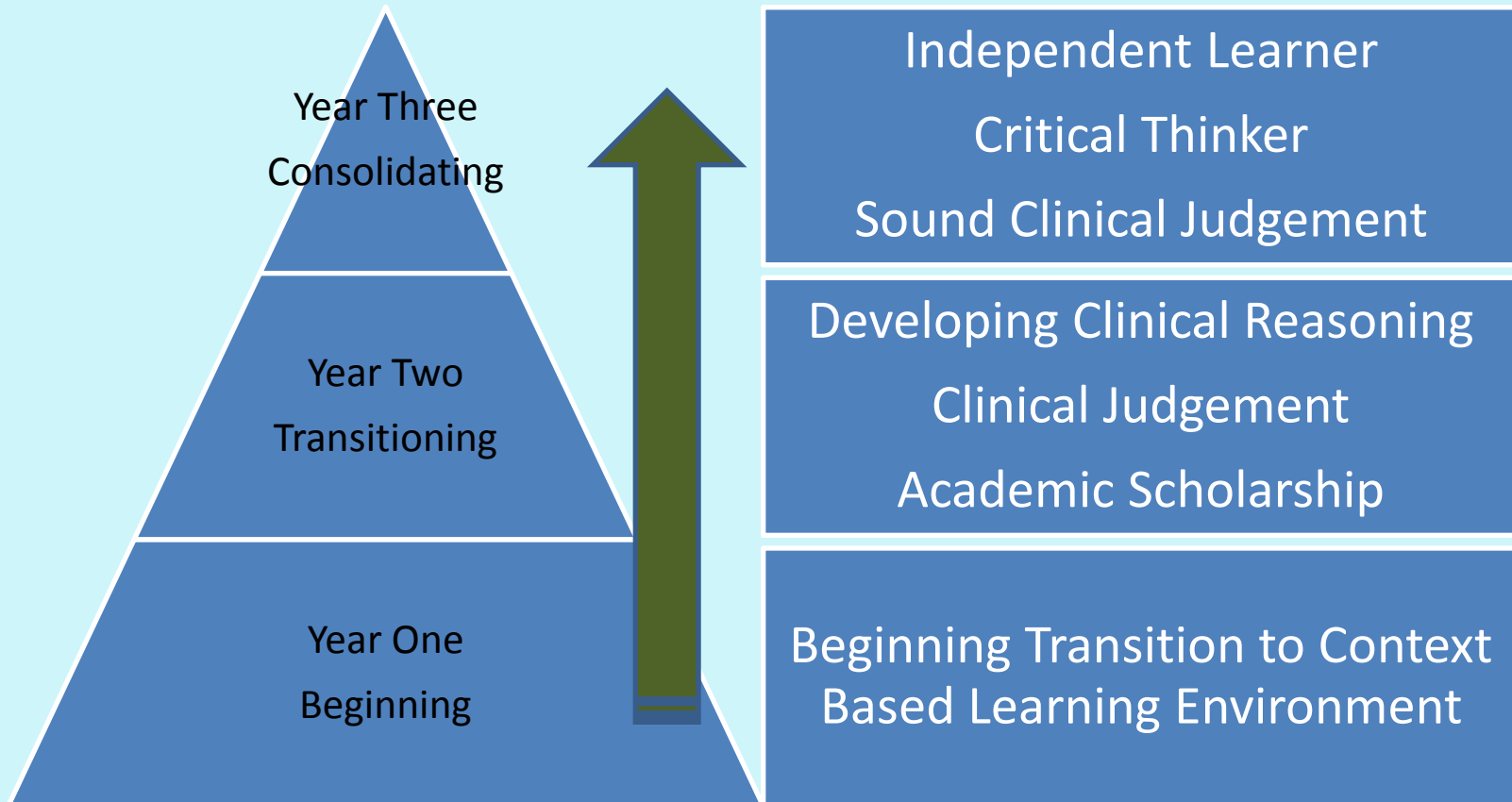
2. BEGIN TO BE ACCUSTOMED TO STUDY (second month to end of semester one)



3. STABLE DEVELOPMENT (from second semester on)

“participants developed autonomy by changing their strategies for both learning and using their English” (Ding & Stapleton, 2016, p. 12).

Journey to Becoming an RN (Day, Ridley & Pool, 2016)



DISCUSS:

- » In your experience, can we generalize the transition experience of EAL students into stages or predictable time frames?
- » What are the implications for provision of support?



Whitireia
NEW ZEALAND

What we found...as Year Two participants evaluated the partnership groups...

“Different levels, so you’ve got different needs” (Y2, P4).

“...maybe we should try to have like an exam just trying to know what what’s your level of understanding...ok we’re going to divide the group this will be a group for these people who need this or that...” (Y2, P5).

POST ENTRY EAL STUDENT ASSESSMENT

According to New Zealand Researchers Read and von Randow (2013) one tool, the Diagnostic English Language Needs Assessment (DELNA) initial assessment is required for all new University of Auckland students. Though individual faculties may interpret further requirements differently, all students may access a range of follow-up support.

DISCUSS:

- » Do you support domestic and international students the same way? Together? Why or why not?
- » Are their needs the same?
- » How can we ensure that both groups feel a sense of equitable support?

References

- Baik, C., & Greig, J. (2009). Improving the academic outcomes of undergraduate ESL Students: The case for discipline-based academic skills programs. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 28(4), 401-416. doi: org/10.1080/0729430903067005
- Day, L., Ridley, S., & Pool, L. (2016). *Supporting EAL Students to develop independent learning within a context based curriculum*. Poster presented at the Improving University Teaching Conference, Durham, UK.
- Ding, F, & Stapleton, P. (2016). Walking like a toddler: Students' autonomy development in English during cross-border transitions. *System* 59, 12-28. doi:10.1016/j.system.2016.04.003
- Eyre, J. (2010). *Finding a voice: Supporting ESL nursing students' communication in clinical placement*. A report for Ako Aotearoa, The National Centre for Tertiary Teaching Excellence, New Zealand. Retrieved from <https://ako.aotearoa.ac.nz/download/ng/file/group-6/finding-a-voice-supporting-esl-nursing-students-communication-in-clinical-placement.pdf>
- Lu, H., & Maithus, C. (2012). Experiences of clinical tutors with English as an Additional Language (EAL) Students. *Nursing Praxis in New Zealand*, 28(3), 4-12. Retrieved from <http://unitec.researchbank.ac.nz/bitstream/handle/10652/2065/Nursing%20Praxis%202012%20Lu%20and%20Malthus.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>
- McGrath, B. (2015). The development of a Concept-Based Learning approach as part of an integrative nursing curriculum. *Whitireia Nursing and Health Journal* 22/15, 11-17.
- Newsome, L.K., & Cooper, P. (2016). International students' Cultural and Social Experiences in a British University: "Such a hard life [it] is here." *Journal of International Students*, 6(1), 195-215. Retrieved from <https://jistudents.files.wordpress.com/2015/11/11.pdf>
- Read, J., & von Randow, J. (2013). A university post-entry English language assessment: Charting the changes. *International Journal of English Studies*, 13(2), 89-110. Retrieved from <http://revistas.um.es/ijes/article/view/ijes.13.2.185931>