

# CONNECTING CULTURES

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 **ENGLISH**  
LANGUAGE PARTNERS  
NEW ZEALAND  
Working with Refugees and Migrants

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# Kia ora

As New Zealanders, we are fortunate to live in a peaceful and secure country. Aotearoa has much to share. ELPNZ believes our nation can do more to help people who are less fortunate – refugees living in extremely unsafe situations.

We believe most Kiwis wish to welcome more people fleeing their war-torn homes and seeking a safer place for themselves and their families.

Our organisation is ready to meet the challenges of raising the refugee quota because we know that language is at the heart of successful settlement in New Zealand. Once people have the skills they need to thrive, they are willing and able to give back to the country that has extended such a warm welcome.

Among the people who have so generously shared their stories in this *Connecting Cultures* are two former refugees: Thupten Tsering and Senait Hailamariam.

Thupten was 21 when he escaped from Tibet. His dangerous journey took him to Nepal, then India and finally to Whangarei, where he was reunited with his brother.

Senait is from Eritrea and arrived in 2013. Her goal is to see her 84-year-old mother again. Senait is working hard to improve her English as she recognises the important role good language plays in reaching her goal. Senait sees the steps in her journey very clearly: “[Get] my English very nice, work as a care-giver, [earn] more money, come to Eritrea and [see] my mum.”

As always, I want to thank our amazing teachers and volunteer tutors who work so hard to ensure that our newer Kiwis have an opportunity to learn English, reach their aspirations and live successful lives in New Zealand.

Finally, I am delighted to let you know that our organisation was granted Category 1 provider status by NZQA following our latest External Evaluation and Review process.

**Nicola Sutton**

  
Chief Executive

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- 1 Mail us your donation slip (See inside back cover.)
- 2 Online at [englishlanguage.org.nz](http://englishlanguage.org.nz)
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**GUEST WORD**

Hon Peseta Sam  
Lotu-iga, Minister for  
Ethnic Communities



# Gaining confidence, *one word at a time*

Opening the door to Senait Hailamariam's home in west Auckland is like entering a slice of Eritrea in New Zealand. James Fyfe / Photos Andrew Lau

**B**efore Senait says a word, her warm smile reveals her hospitable nature, something that is confirmed in minutes, when she starts roasting coffee beans in her lounge, a traditional practice in her native country, and preparing the table for an inevitable serving of delicious rice, veggies and injera bread.

Senait, who arrived in New Zealand as a refugee in 2013, has been learn-

ing English with English Language Partners for a year now, first with her home tutor Silena Kirkconnell-Kawana and now through formal ESOL Literacy classes four days a week.

And though she still relies on help from her family to translate, her English is steadily improving, and word by word the pieces are beginning to fall into place in her adopted language.

"Senait has gone from being a woman who wouldn't talk to or look at me at our first meeting, to a friendly, vibrant, confident woman who has simple conversations in English with me on the phone, and who welcomes me into her home to chat about family," Silena says.

New to teaching English, Silena says the biggest challenge was "identifying what Senait wanted to learn and





Senait Hailamariam preparing coffee.



Silena Kirkconnell-Kawana and Senait Hailamariam.

then keeping her focused during each learning session.

“If the topic wasn’t relevant to Senait at the time, she would become bored and distracted very easily,” she recalls.

The best results, she soon found, came by teaching through activities.

“One of our learning sessions was making ANZAC biscuits. Earlier in the week, Senait had asked me what a biscuit was and I showed her a photo of an ANZAC biscuit. I then explained to her what ANZAC meant and she was able to relate this to the Eritrean Independence Day.

“The next session, I brought all the ingredients for ANZAC biscuits and had Senait make the biscuits by reading the recipe in English as I showed her how to measure out the ingredients and make the biscuits.

“In that one session, she read the recipe, heard the recipe being read

out, wrote the recipe, read the recipe aloud, made the recipe and ate delicious ANZAC biscuits. It was a huge learning experience.”

Part of the lessons’ success, says Silena, is because the pair clicked and had an “absolutely fantastic” relationship, much more than that of tutor and learner.

“Senait and I, and our families, have become family,” Silena says. “Senait and [her husband] Goitom Abraham, have been very happy to share their culture with us and have been open to living within our culture.

“There are some cultural differences between our families. However, our love and respect for each other, and our openness to these differences ensures that our relationship is not negatively affected.”

In between swapping baking tips and going on shared visits to the supermarket, the two covered the

house with Post-it notes, surrounding Senait with the new vocab she had learnt, which Silena says allowed her to “see her confidence increase in knowing what things are in English and use what she knows to have a simple conversation.”

Mastering the language is now just one of Senait’s goals – she is determined to become a caregiver when her language skills are up to scratch, something that would not only be a cultural change – women don’t traditionally work in her native country so it would be her first job outside of rearing the family’s four children – but it would also allow her to work and save the much-needed money to be able to visit her mum back home.

Senait, pointing to a photo of her 84-year-old mother hanging on the wall, says her goals are: “[Get] my English very nice, work as a caregiver, [earn] more money, come to Eritrea and [see] my mum.”



Silena with Senait, who is seated next to her daughter Rodas. David Alemu, Senait's nephew, is second from the left, together with other family members.

Senait's new lifestyle is not just geographically removed from that of her mother. There is also a cultural and generational shift going on in the family. While Senait dreams of one day working for the first time, her 20-year-old daughter Rodas, born after the country won its independence in 1991, is a product of a different Eritrea, one that encourages women to be more than just wives and mothers.

"Back in the [olden] days it was traditional that the woman stayed at home and the man worked. Now it's changing," explains Senait's nephew David Alemu.

"In Eritrea, there is [now] gender equality because when they liberated the country even women were fighting alongside men so a lot of women died as well during the 30-year civil war. So women are not seen as being inferior to men when it comes to having access to jobs, education and so on."

**"Part of the lessons' success is because the pair clicked and had an "absolutely fantastic" relationship."**

Now, as Senait continues to study hard, the family is acutely aware of the opportunities Rodas has, and Senait and her husband are encouraging her to study hard and dream big.

"When we were in Eritrea, if you are a girl you have to do a lot of [house] work, but when we came to New Zealand everything is different, you have to do your studies," Rodas says.

Although the family appears well settled and happy in their home, Senait says it wasn't always that way. One of the hardest things about the move down under, she says, was spending a year sleeping at a friend's place as the family waited to get a house.

"For one year [there was] no house. My children were crying, they wanted to go home," she remembers.

Now, however, the house is more than just a place to live. It's truly a home, with family photos on the wall, alongside traditional decorations and religious ornaments.

"We have forgotten about all those things because we have moved into a better situation," Senait says through David, who interprets.

Although Senait's plans to visit her mother are never far from her thoughts, for the meantime she is focused squarely on graduating from the beginners level in her language classes – something that, with her determination, she will no doubt achieve very soon. ✨

**Keep up with learner stories**  
[www.englishlanguage.org.nz/learners-stories](http://www.englishlanguage.org.nz/learners-stories)





# The art of learning, *while teaching*

Priyeshha Mendis' parents migrated to New Zealand more than a decade ago. James Fyfe / Photos Jane Ussher

**P**riyeshha's parents came in search of a better education for their daughters. Now, not only has their youngest child taken full advantage of her own learning opportunities, but she is also helping to teach others.

Sri Lankan-born Priyeshha is a volunteer ESOL home tutor with English Language

Partners. She is fully aware of how challenging it can be to arrive in a new country, and is determined to play her part in making it easier for other migrants.

For around a year, the third-year University of Auckland student has been sitting down for an hour a week with refugees who now call New Zealand

home, helping them not only learn grammar and vocab, but being there as a friend as well.

"When we moved here it was definitely hard," says Priyeshha, who arrived in New Zealand aged seven.

"It was difficult, but because we had English, our experiences were a lot easier."

Priyeshya says it was this appreciation for knowing the local language that inspired her to seek out English Language Partners and volunteer.

"Seeing how important English was, and just being able to know someone here, talk to someone, it was just so important when we first moved. I guess I was, like, 'you know what, just do it, I have time – I might as well'."

The 20-year-old has had two learners so far – the first from the Congo and the second a fellow Sri Lankan – and she says the lessons vary depending on the learner and their needs. One lesson involved going to the cinema and in another "we just walked around the city because that was something [the learner] had never done by herself; she didn't have a friend to do that with," she says, adding that often the non-class time is the most rewarding.

"You put in the time, and, at the end of the day, you're just being a friend."

Learning on the job has come with its challenges, but with plenty of support from English Language Partners and a willingness to persevere, Priyeshya says the experience has been a great learning curve.

"I feel like I'm always emailing them," she says. "If I ever needed help, especially with resources and lesson planning, these guys are really good for that."

"I've definitely learned from the experiences and – hopefully I'm getting better!"

Eve Price, manager of the Trust's Auckland Central centre, says she "can't speak highly enough of Priyeshya", one of the centre's youngest teachers.

"She is attentive to everyone and so thoughtful and thankful. It's very hard to put into words how valued and appreciated she is, beyond her role as a volunteer," says Eve.

"She captures the essence of an exceptional volunteer through her willingness and adaptability."

The opportunity to volunteer has also helped propel Priyeshya forward into a possible career path, giving her valuable work experience and allowing her to learn a lot herself while she teaches others.

"I was tossing up between teaching English at high school or teaching ESOL. I wanted this kind of experience to help me choose," she says, adding that she has definitely been swayed towards the ESOL path. "I really like that this is such a big part of someone's life."

"You're helping someone gain confidence to live in a society that they've moved to all of a sudden. It's a big shock, obviously, so it's nice being able to help."

Despite being on track to become a full-time teacher, Priyeshya, who also volunteers at the Auckland War Memorial Museum and tutors NCEA students part time, says she has "heaps of plans" for when she finishes her studies, and is enjoying the freedom to try new things before settling on a career path.

"I like that I have all these different options and experiences. When I get to the end of my bachelor's it's not just a bachelor's – I have all this work experience as well."

In the meantime, her advice to fellow students thinking about volunteering is to just do it.

"A lot of people, especially my age, would see it as a teacher-student relationship and go 'oh, I'm not ready for that' or 'I can't do that kind of thing', but it's not – they can do it."

"I've been telling all my friends to get involved because it's a really cool experience." ✨

**Want to volunteer to teach English?**  
[www.englishlanguage.org.nz/teach-english](http://www.englishlanguage.org.nz/teach-english)

Priyeshya Mendis





“I’ve been telling all my friends to get involved because it’s a really cool experience.”





# Volunteering – *from India to Aotearoa*

Civil engineer by profession, Ashok Bhat has always been passionate about giving back to the communities he lives in. Patricia Thompson / Photos Janie Walker

**W**hen Ashok first moved to New Zealand, he found it hard to find suitable volunteering that he could balance with his work.

However, training as an English Language Partners' certificated ESOL home tutor – and being matched with a learner from Afghanistan – proved the ideal solution.

Now, with support from his employers, who let him work flexible hours, Ashok has taken his tutoring a step further as volunteer helper at one of the Wellington centre's English Language Groups (ELG), where he also helps learners with online learning.

In his home city of Mumbai, Ashok had combined his engineering career with volunteer work: teaching basic computer skills to underprivileged

children and provided mentoring and counselling at a local school.

He, his wife and daughter came to New Zealand 10 years ago, initially for an "adventure" after he was invited to fill a skills gap for transmission line engineers.

"My wife and daughter fell in love with New Zealand instantly and wanted to stay," he said. "It took

me a little longer to make that decision, but now I love Wellington too, particularly the space and how easy it is to get around, without crowds and traffic jams everywhere.”

Ashok was already proficient in English when he moved to New Zealand – his degree studies in Mumbai had been conducted in English.

Keen to begin volunteering, he found it hard to find anything suited to his skills that he could do at weekends.

“Then, last year someone told me they were training as an ESOL home tutor in Porirua, so I rang the Wellington centre and applied for their training programme,” he said.

“I really enjoyed the course. It sets out clearly what you need to know and what is expected of you and I enjoyed meeting all different people from other professions and cultures.

“I began home tutoring last August. My training group had a one-day session after we’d started teaching, so we could catch up and talk about what it was like actually tutoring, and we had an end-of-year function as well, so it’s also been social.”

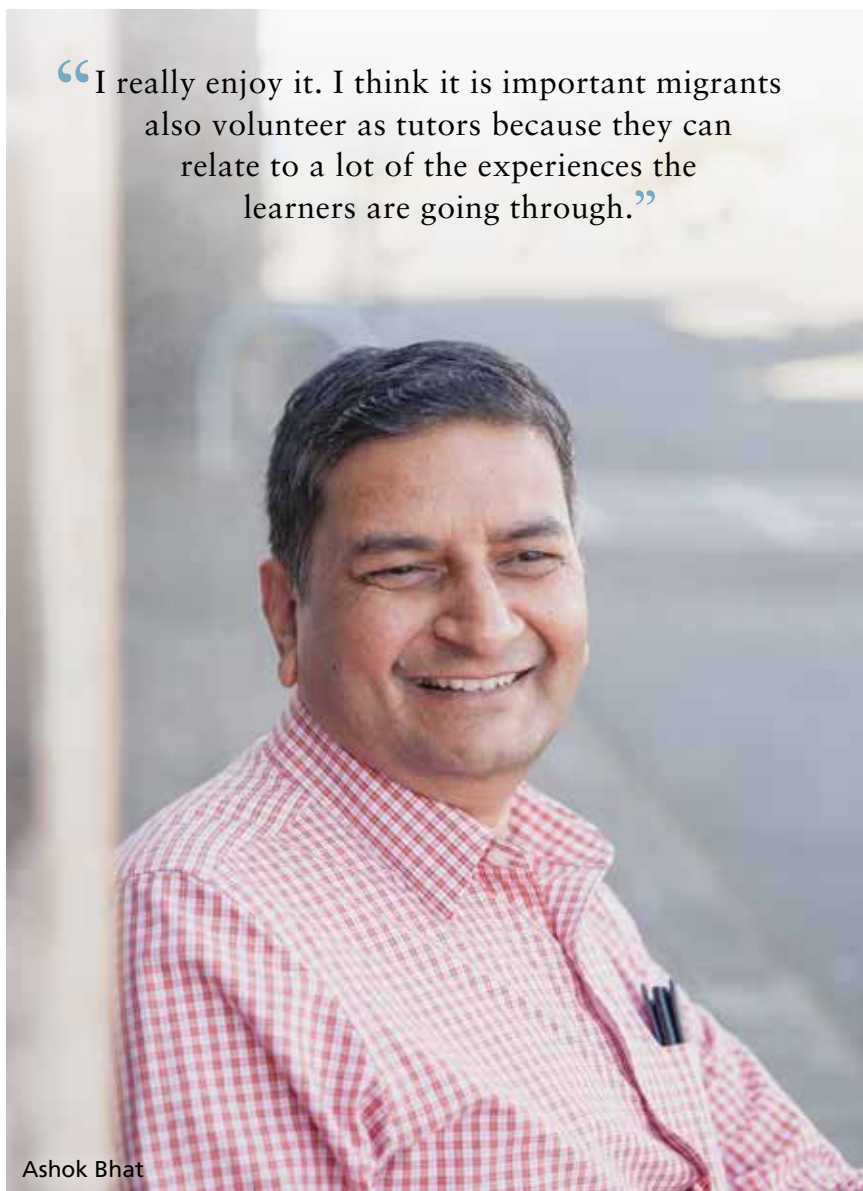
Ashok’s first learner came to New Zealand as a refugee and is particularly keen to improve his English skills to support his aim of finding employment. He is doing a private training course in English, which delivers NZQA qualifications, and Ashok supports him in that.

“I am also teaching him about computers and numeracy,” said Ashok. “He’s doing well and getting good marks in his studies. It’s very satisfying to see the improvements he’s making.”

Keen to help further, Ashok asked the English Language Partners’ team if there were any other ways he could contribute.

They suggested the ELG role which initially meant supporting the teacher with the learners in class. But given his

“I really enjoy it. I think it is important migrants also volunteer as tutors because they can relate to a lot of the experiences the learners are going through.”



Ashok Bhat

proficiency in computers, he took on the task of supplementing the class teaching with an online programme.

“I support the teacher’s work in the class, including helping learners work through a STEPS programme for English language on the computer. It’s one-to-one and helps them to identify sounds, pronunciation and spelling.

“I really enjoy it. I think it is important migrants also volunteer as tutors because they can relate to a lot of the experiences the learners are going through. I’ve put my name forward for a second learner too.”

Emma Stein, Training and Tutor Support Coordinator, said the support of Ashok and other volunteers was hugely valuable.

“Our volunteers are a huge asset to us, and Ashok’s commitment and enthusiasm is a prime example of that. Nothing is too much trouble for him. You give him a project and he just takes it on board and gets on with it.”

**STEPS programme:** [learningstaircase.co.nz/adults/english-learners/](http://learningstaircase.co.nz/adults/english-learners/)





Xing Mao

# Grow the language, *grow the business*

Xing Mao's life couldn't be more different now from when she came to New Zealand 12 years ago. Writer and photos Leigh Dome

**W**hen she arrived, Xing was not a confident English speaker. Now she converses and interacts with members of the public every day.

In March, Xing became the owner and operator of Palmside Café, located in the busy Palms Medical Centre in Palmerston North.

Xing has never had a problem with the 'language' of numbers. She gained a Bachelor of Economic Management back in Nanjing, China.

Her husband, Mingshu Cao, travelled from China to the United States to do his degree in 1996. Nine months later, Xing followed with their young daughter Maize, and they lived in Missouri for nearly seven years.

"All that time, I was a stay-at-home mum," says Xing. "I was not at all confident speaking English."

When Mingshu was offered a job at Palmerston North's AgResearch facility in 2004, they moved to New Zealand. By then, they had their second child, Kevin. "When Kevin went to day care at the age of two, I decided to do another degree," says Xing.



Joan Letts and Xing Mao.

“For me, English Language Partners is like a bridge. It’s a very friendly environment and it helped me to get involved in the community.”

She graduated with a Bachelor in Business Studies, majoring in Accountancy, from Massey University in 2009.

It wasn’t until after her studies that Xing became determined to improve her English. Encouraged by a friend, she joined English Language Partners as a learner. She tried to attend language classes but soon discovered having an ESOL home tutor better suited the demands of family life. Enter Joan Letts. “Joan and I became very close. She is not just a tutor about English; she is a tutor about life.”

Joan says when they first met, she and Xing would spend a lot of time just talking. “We had lots of conversations so Xing could practise less formal language and learn common colloquialisms.”

Xing says, “Joan came to my home every week. I was lazy and read the news in Chinese only, so she brought me some reading materials from the local newspaper, and then asked me

to answer questions. She pushed me to read and understand current events.

“For me, English Language Partners is like a bridge, says Xing. “It’s a very friendly environment and it helped me to get involved in the community.”

“It was wonderful to watch her confidence grow,” says Joan.

Xing’s financial skills were soon in demand and she volunteered as treasurer for the centre’s committee up until English Language Partners became a trust in 2014. Xing continued doing administration work until her recent elevation to business owner.

A couple of years ago, Joan recruited Xing as treasurer for the Hokowhitu Village Centre, a local community venue. “She has so much financial knowledge, we are very lucky to have her on our committee,” says Joan.

Xing bought the café business from her friend who was moving to Auckland. “I jokingly said to her that I liked her shop. She said ‘Well, buy it off me’ – so I did!”

The limited business hours and five-day week suit Xing. “The income is OK and the work is interesting and busy. And there is no stress.” Eleven-year-old Kevin goes to the café after school and does his homework until the pair shut up shop and head home.

The youthful 45-year-old business-woman is very excited about her new venture and is thriving on being her own boss.

“I am always thinking about how I can grow the business,” she says. “Perhaps I can become the caterer for future English Language Partners’ events!” ✨



# Escape from Tibet

Thupten Tsering arrived in Whangarei in April 2015, having escaped from Tibet to India.

Thupten's family reunification visa allowed him to join his brother Dhondup who had escaped 20 years ago, found his way to New Zealand and is now happily married with a young family in Whangarei. Both brothers work in a joinery factory.

English Language Partners has helped him to settle and improve his English skills; he maintains his culture at the Jam Tse Dhargyey Ling Tibetan Buddhist Centre in Whangarei.

"The task of telling his story was a milestone for Thupten. It involved learning a lot of vocabulary and grammar concepts, then carefully revising and correcting his language," says David Young, Thupten's volunteer ESOL home tutor. "It shows how much can be achieved when a learner is fully engaged with a task."

Recently, Thupten passed his practical driving test. In the not-too-distant future, he should be able to undertake study towards his next goal – qualifying as a mechanic.

Mark Sanders, Thupten's employer, says that he considers himself fortunate to have Thupten working for him in his small cabinetmaking business. "Thupten's brother Dhondup had been working for me for six months, and, as demand for our services grew early last year, a position became available for Thupten to work as a trainee when he arrived.

"As with his brother, I was impressed by his cheerful and conscientious disposition, and I soon found that he is a quick learner, lateral thinker, and pays great attention to detail in all he does.

"I have enjoyed listening to stories of his childhood, growing up in a

remote village in Tibet, with no roads, electricity, running water or even school, a truly self-sufficient community. This has resulted in a great 'can-do' attitude, and the ability to find solutions to any situation he is confronted with.

"Thupten has become an invaluable part of our growing business, despite the barriers of language and education, and I really cannot speak highly enough of him both as a trainee cabinetmaker, and as a person of great integrity, reliability and common sense. Our country can only be enhanced by the migration of a person of such all-round quality."

**Thupten tells an amazing escape story of danger and determination. His story has been slightly edited for this publication.**





## I left Tibet at the end of 2007, when I was 21 years old with two ambitions. Thupten Tsering / Photos Dawn Dutton

**M**y first ambition was to visit His Holiness the Dalai Lama, and my second was to go to school and learn something, as I never got a good chance to go to school in Tibet. But I knew how important education was.

First, I went with some of my village mates from the capital Lhasa to Shigatse, a city about 280 kilometres to the southwest.

There we met some Tibetan people in a hotel. They were from different parts of Tibet. Then one night we left from Shigatse for Nepal. There were 48 of us altogether, accompanied by some guides.

We spent the whole night in the bus, until about 5 or 6 am. After that, we walked for half-an-hour and then found a hiding place under some big rocks. We hid there from morning to evening until it became dark, and then we started to walk. Each person carried a big bag full of clothes and food. We made meals with tsampa, which is roasted barley flour mixed with cold water.

Two days later we arrived at the border of Nepal and Tibet. That night we needed to cross the border into

Nepal, so we hid the whole day, when there was lots of snow. Really, I was so afraid and felt so cold.

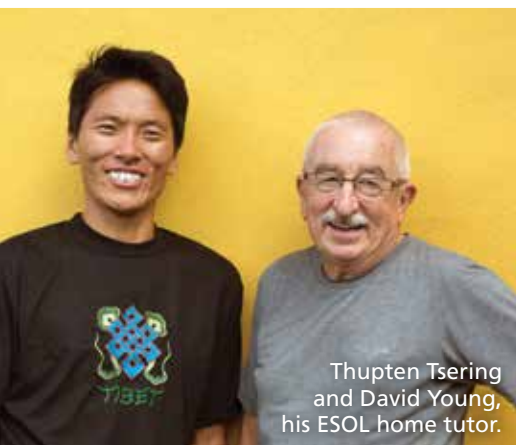
That night we began to walk. It was so difficult to walk in the snow as we couldn't see ahead because the snow covered our path. One child got lost. Maybe he was sleeping when we got up. Later that day, we were walking in the snow when some Chinese soldiers saw us and shot at us, so we ran in different directions. Some people ran up and some people ran down, but we couldn't run well in the snow while we carried our bags, so we threw our bags away.

Some of my village mates and I tried to cross the border and were able to cross into Nepal, but we didn't have any food to eat and not enough warm clothes. Everything had gone with our bags. So we walked and walked.

The next day our group met up again in a small restaurant in a Nepalese village. Some of our group came one day late because they had hidden for a whole day in the snow. They saw many Chinese soldiers there and some people got caught.

Thirty-eight people made it there. That means nine got caught and one child got lost. We stayed there for two days to rest. Then we began to walk by day, but one morning we met some Nepalese soldiers on the other side of a bridge. They said: "Go back to Tibet; we won't let you guys come to Nepal." So we went back half a kilometre, then we paid money for a guide to take us through a forest, over a mountain and across the border back into Nepal.

Two days later we arrived at a Tibetan reception centre at a town in Nepal. We stayed there for three



## Network news

### Northland celebrates their diversity

Maninder Singh and Manita Jain celebrate at our Whangarei centre's Race Relations Day event. The shared lunch highlighted the region's growing diversity.



### Getting the word out

Auckland West manager Jean Harding and her team promote our work at the Mt Roskill International Cultural Festival. Auckland Central and Auckland West centres combined forces for this event.



### Tauranga learners participate in External Evaluation and Review

A learner group assisted our review process. Two volunteers, also involved, were awarded their Certificate in ESOL Home Tutoring by the external reviewers.





Thupten Tsering and his brother Dhondup Tsering (left)



Thupten Tsering and Mark Sanders, Thupten's employer.



Dhondup and Thupten with monks at the Jam Tse Dhargyey Ling centre.

months. The first time I saw a Tibetan flag was in that reception centre. I had a very special feeling and I thought: "I am a free man", and I knew that the Tibetan Government would not die. At that time, lots of Tibetan people escaped from Tibet. Really, I was so happy to be one of them.

I made many new friends from different parts of Tibet. But one thing, it was very difficult to understand when we spoke to each other. That was the main problem between friends.

The food was very good at the reception centre, so I became fat, but not only me! After three months, the reception centre sent us to India by bus.

Two days later we arrived at the Tibetan Government Reception

“The first time I saw a Tibetan flag was in that reception centre. I had a very special feeling and I thought: “I am a free man”.”





## Network news

### New home for Palmerston North

Our Palmerston North centre recently held a housewarming party to welcome volunteers and learners to their new location.



### Tablet team

Earlier in the year, 300 tablets were delivered to our 23 centres. Learners can now use apps and internet resources to improve their English.



### We're a Category 1

Our organisation was recently granted Category 1 provider status by NZQA following our External Evaluation and Review process. We are now rated as highly confident in our educational performance.



Centre in Delhi. The weather was so hot and also the food was very bad. Fortunately, they sent us to Dharamsala that night.

The next morning we reached the Dharamsala Tibetan Reception Centre. Really, the weather was so beautiful. It was the same as Tibetan weather. I missed Tibet so much. The Dharamsala Tibetan Reception Centre fed us well. I ate eggs for the first time in the Dharamsala Reception Centre, because I was a pure vegetarian before this. But many people there said: "Eggs are not meat", so that was why I ate eggs. We stayed in Dharamsala for one week.

The Reception Centre sent me to a Tibetan school in the village of Vellige Suja. My friends and I went different ways from the Dharamsala

Reception Centre. Some went to different monasteries and some went to different schools, so we felt sad but today, we still keep in contact with each other.

In my eight years in India I learned some English and did some training as a mechanic in a Toyota workshop.

Sadly, during that time, His Holiness the Dalai Lama was not in India, so we couldn't visit him. Perhaps I will have the chance to meet him if he comes to New Zealand again. 🙏





## Farewell to *much-loved* volunteer

**With 26 years' volunteering, George Partridge was one of Auckland South's longest serving tutors.**

At George's funeral in Manukau, many of his former learners shared their grief. "I was overcome by how George touched peoples' lives and by how he became a surrogate father, uncle and grandfather to them all," said Julia Castles, centre manager.

During the service, former learner and close friend, Eng Khou, in near perfect English, shared how much George had meant to her family and how much he would be missed.

"Eng told people that George had been to all her family's birthdays, special celebrations, children's graduation ceremonies and weddings," said Julia.

"One couldn't help but be moved by the story of a bachelor who found a large adopted family of learners who genuinely cared for him right to the end of his life."

"I was reminded of the special relationship a learner and ESOL home tutor share, and how both lives can be enriched." ✨

# Celebrating New Zealand's linguistic diversity

Hon Peseta Sam Lotu-Iiga, Minister for Ethnic Communities

It is a privilege to contribute to *Connecting Cultures*. I would like to acknowledge the work English Language Partners does in providing opportunities for new migrants and refugees to learn English. Supporting our new New Zealanders to learn English helps them define their goals and aspirations for life in New Zealand and plays a key role in developing a sense of belonging.



The development of English language skills is vital so our ethnic communities can participate in New Zealand society. But those skills should not detract from the value of maintaining and supporting community and heritage languages. Understanding and retaining those languages is fundamental to individual and community identity.

Earlier this year we celebrated International Mother Language Day. At the time, I read an online article posted by English Language Partners' titled 'Children – use your language or lose it'. This is a sentiment I strongly support. Children are the future of all languages and cultures.

More than 160 languages are spoken in New Zealand. As I attend the many cultural and language celebrations, I am always thrilled by the willingness and enthusiasm of communities to share their language and culture with everyone who also attends these events.

Our cultural and linguistic diversity makes New Zealand a dynamic and vibrant place to live. Celebrating the unique languages, and the cultures they are part of, is an important part of helping the languages and their communities flourish here.

For any community wanting to celebrate their language, there are now guidelines available online at [ethniccommunities.govt.nz/language-guidelines](http://ethniccommunities.govt.nz/language-guidelines). The guidelines are a practical resource, providing straightforward advice on key questions around organising a language celebration.

New Zealand's linguistic diversity is a national taonga and I am proud to be able to help support, protect and celebrate this.

The importance of maintaining and sharing language is a sentiment shared by all communities and languages.

*Language is my identity.  
Language is my uniqueness.  
Language is life.* ✨

# DID YOU KNOW

We have **23** centres throughout New Zealand

English Language Partners supports

**600,000** hours of teaching



**6,500** refugee and migrant learners

from over **150** countries



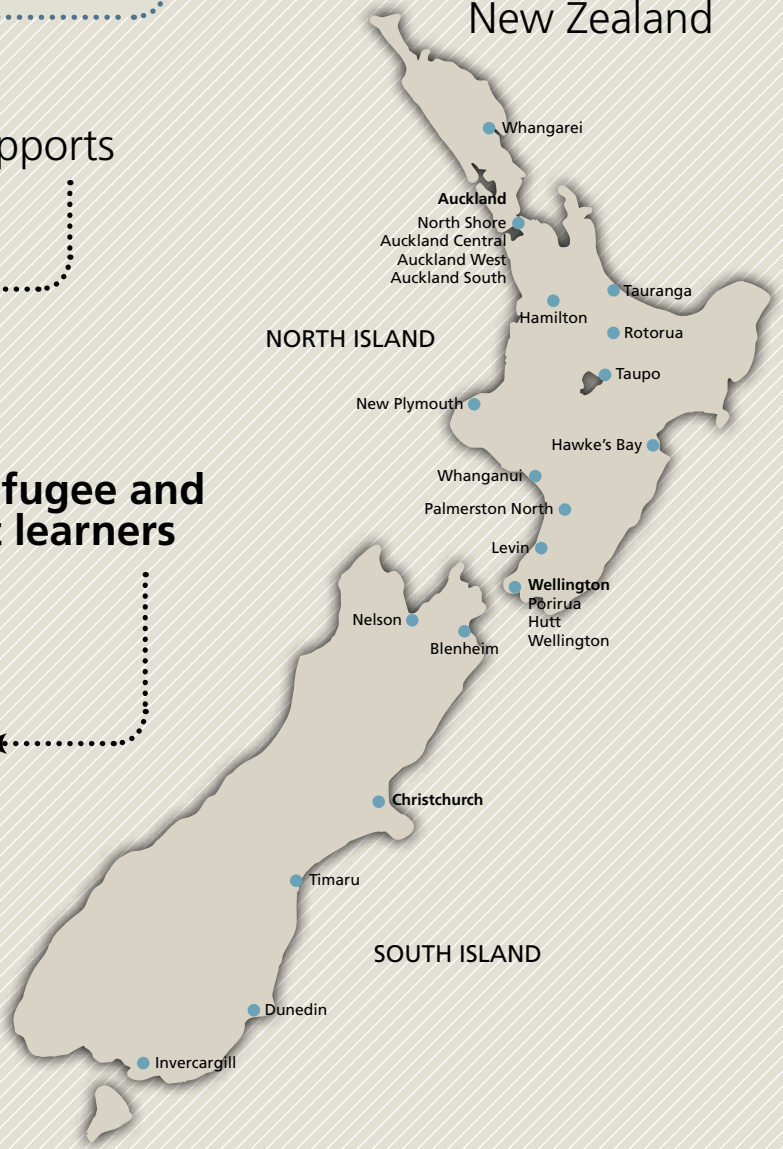
**2,300** volunteer tutors



**1,500**



refugees and migrants are waiting for a volunteer.



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trains volunteers to help new Kiwis start a fresh life in Aotearoa.

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- 2** Online at [englishlanguage.org.nz](http://englishlanguage.org.nz)
- 3** Call free on 0800 367 376

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Settling in is easier if you understand the Kiwi way of life.  
Join 2,300 volunteers helping adult refugees and migrants.

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