

CONNECTING CULTURES

ISSUE 29 SUMMER 2018



*English for work
& everyday life*

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Productive businesses require staff who can communicate confidently in English.

Communication is the key to talking to customers and colleagues, understanding instructions, so mistakes costing time and money are reduced, and for workplace safety to be managed well.

Communication is more than just the right vocabulary or sentence structure though; knowing what's appropriate to say and the tone to use is equally important. This mix of language and culture can make it challenging for newcomers to 'fit in' at work.

Workplace English is an increasing focus for our organisation. In this issue of *Connecting Cultures* you will read about how we assist business and migrant staff with their language training needs.

Nicola Sutton

Chief Executive

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'Can do, will do': Edwin's two-year journey to the Kiwi workforce

Work Talk and volunteering key to finding work

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Company *energised* *to improve* employees' English

Business owner Paul Brockie has been impressed with the skills of his Burmese staff, but says their English needed a little work so that his customers could have the same confidence.

Joanna Davis | Photos Chris Wastney



Paul, who owns Absolute Energy, an insulation company in Nelson, helped his five Burmese workers enrol in English Language Partners' (ELPNZ) part-time English for Employees course. He's been delighted with the results.

Now when insulation installer Johnsy Johnsy knocks on the front door of a new customer's home, he confidently greets the homeowner in English.

Johnsy, a Burmese migrant whose first language is Hakha Chin, has his introduction all prepared: "I introduce myself with my name and my partner's name. I say: 'We're from Absolute Energy and we've come to install

your insulation,'" Johnsy says.

Paul says the course helped his staff improve in several aspects of the job. The most important thing, he says, is communication with customers who are having insulation installed into existing homes.

"They learn how to relate to people in a New Zealand culture; to not be shy when you go to meet someone new, to be able to identify yourself and to let them know what you're doing."

Paul says the course has also helped his staff deal with the paperwork that comes with the job, including

health and safety form-filling, understanding their employment paperwork, even filling in job cards.

Johnsy's partner on each installation job is also usually Myanmar Chin. On the way in the company van, they can often be heard with the music turned up loud, singing gospel songs in their language.

But once on site, Johnsy switches to English, a process he agrees was helped by the Tertiary Education Commission-funded course. He and four Myanmar Chin workmates attended the course for two hours a week over the past four months.



English for Employees is a 45-hour course for residents who are in work. The programme runs in ELPNZ centres around New Zealand.

Johnsy Johnsy

“
Even when
people talk
fast now, I can
understand.
”

“It’s good for me,” Johnsy says. “I’m better than before.”

Johnsy has been in New Zealand for six years and worked at a market garden before taking the job with Absolute Energy 18 months ago, after Paul approached him at a football game.

“We were growing cabbages, carrots and lettuce,” Johnsy says. “A lot of my Chin people were working there so then we didn’t really use English. It was difficult, but when I came to this job I’m getting better.

“Even when people talk fast now, I can understand.”

Johnsy, 28, is married with a two-year-old daughter, Esther. He says although he was sad to leave Myanmar, he is grateful to be settled in Nelson. “I like New Zealand because it’s safe for us, and it’s very quiet and has very nice people.”

The Myanmar Chin community in Nelson numbers about 500. Many of the men play football, and share a passion for fishing.

Paul says having the men attend the course was worthwhile for his company. He ensured they could finish their day’s work in time for the 3.30pm class and paid them for half the time they attended. ▶



Company owner Paul Brockie says the **English for Employees** course helped staff communicate confidently with customers.



Johnsy Johnsy (right) with workmates.

"They've definitely learnt, and they've had a little bit of fun as well. The teachers make it enjoyable."

Paul says the staff benefit from cultural aspects of the language teaching too.

"It's teaching them to be more forthcoming. They tend to be respectful and they don't want to say the wrong thing."

Tony Fitzwater, from ELPNZ Nelson, says his centre runs the courses throughout the year. The programme is suitable for residents who work part-time or full-time, and runs at most of the 23 centres around New Zealand.

Tony says the feedback he's had is "outstanding".

"They (the participants) treasure it. They note the improvement in their language and their ability to function better in the workplace. They can understand directions and instructions and are able to communicate back to their supervisors and their peers.

"The main thing, beyond language, is it gives them the confidence to participate."

Paul Brockie says employing the men has been great for his company and says the men took pride in their learning on the English for Employees course.

"They've had a really tough life so every opportunity they have to better themselves, they take." 🌸

Absolute Energy
www.absoluteenergy.co.nz

More about English for Employees:
www.englishlanguage.org.nz/english-employees



Joseph Lee

Laying foundations for *successful* apprenticeships

An apprenticeship is an excellent way for new migrants to enter the New Zealand workforce, earning while they learn on the way to a recognised trade qualification.

Amberleigh Jack | Photos Stevie Hight ▶



Some building and construction apprenticeship applicants struggle to get into or complete a qualification due to insufficient English skills.

BCITO (Building and Construction Training Organisation) North Auckland Area Manager James Langford says it happens enough to have prompted him to look into English courses.

"A lot of our training advisers identified existing apprentices who were struggling with English," James says.

The government-appointed organisation recently approached English Language Partners (ELPNZ) to design and deliver work-specific English classes for their apprentices. With office space provided by BCITO in Albany, and the freedom to tailor the classes to focus on building terminology, the classes quickly filled.

ELPNZ worked with BCITO to design the weekly classes to help their apprentices, and a list of building terminology was supplied by one of BCITO's training advisers. Five people

attended for the full sixteen-week duration, with another seven attending when they could manage to fit classes in around their busy working hours. The apprentices were mainly from China, Taiwan and Korea.

The design of the course was especially helpful, says Joseph Lee, a building apprentice for Sparta Construction.

The building site Joseph currently works on is noisy; there's a lot going on. "It's handover day today," he says. "New owners are getting the keys to one of the houses on site."

Joseph explains that the course gave him more confidence at work, specifically because it was tailored to his job. He says role playing in the class helped him pick up on building site terminology. The classes, he says, also helped his life outside work.

Joseph is originally from Korea. "I've just been in New Zealand for five years," he says, explaining that he arrived shortly after marrying.

"I couldn't speak English very well. I really wanted to learn, but I couldn't get much of a chance. I have to work and I have a family. I needed money."

As well as simply knowing the work-related terminology, James says conversing with those who've done the course is now easier for his field staff, largely due to more confidence when speaking English.

"The apprentices are more prepared to actually talk to the training advisers," he says.

"A lot of the time they were scared of making a mistake, or saying something wrong. But now they're prepared to stick their necks out and say what they think. I think just talking in English in the classroom has given them confidence."

Joseph agrees that his enthusiasm to talk to both his employers and his workmates has increased.

Feedback from the trial course has been positive, and James says they're looking into working with ELPNZ on future projects.

"Now some training advisers have seen the benefits of the classes on site, they'll be pushing it a bit more," he says.

"Hopefully, we can get the people who couldn't sign up the first time onto the next course. That's our aim."

The **tailor-made course** has been a win for BCITO. "Now some training advisers have seen the benefits of the classes on site, they'll be pushing it a bit more."

James Langford, BCITO area manager



Perseverance and a Work Talk course pay off for Janice

“

A lot of the time they were scared of making a mistake.

But now they're prepared to stick their necks out and say what they think.

– *James Langford,*
BCITO

”

It's something Joseph would definitely encourage others to do, too.

"I recommend the course, as long as they really want to speak English and to be a New Zealander. If they are eager to learn."

And Joseph's eagerness to learn has paid off at work, he says, smiling before heading back to the worksite.

"My boss is happy." ✂

BCITO www.bcito.org.nz

More about tailor-made courses:
www.englishlanguage.org.nz/employers

An internship at English Language Partners Porirua led to Janice LUaipouomalo Pritchard-Selu gaining vital skills. Patricia Thompson | Photos Jo Moore ▶





“
Work Talk
gave me really
practical tools.
”

Janice's new skills helped her win a permanent role with the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE).

Janice came to New Zealand from Samoa in the 1990s to study at Whitireia Polytechnic, in Porirua, graduating with an NZ Diploma in Business. She returned home to work as a finance officer but frequently came back for holidays, as all her siblings were living here.

Then, during a visit in 2015, she was diagnosed with cancer. Fortunately, surgery and radiotherapy in New Zealand proved successful but following her recovery, Janice decided to resign from her job in Samoa and remain in Porirua, close to her family.

“Once I was well again, I began looking for employment, and I went

to the Whitireia Learning Centre to use their computers to write up a CV,” recalls Janice.

“They suggested I start with volunteering, so I went to Volunteer Porirua who gave me details of four organisations. English Language Partners (ELPNZ) was the first one I contacted. I had a lovely chat with Jordi Cordwell, the administrator, and thought ‘This is for me!’”

It was the start of a productive internship which saw Janice doing great work as a resource assistant at the centre and also participating in ELPNZ's new Work Talk course.

“I volunteered for four hours for two days a week for more than a year,” says Janice. “I was applying for jobs all the time and every time I got a rejection, my colleagues at ELPNZ

Work Talk is an intensive four-week course.

“I learned to become more confident around networking and communicating with people socially and in interview situations.”

Janice LUaipouomalo Pritchard-Selu

Janice LUaipouomalo Pritchard-Selu

would encourage me to keep trying. They went out of their way to help me. It was Jacqueline Wilton, centre manager, who suggested I take their Work Talk course.”

“The course was really helpful,” says Janice. “It helped me understand more about New Zealand workplaces. They gave us practical tasks to do, such as answering the phone – with a tutor there to coach us through the process.

“It gave me really practical tools. I learned about the best ways to develop a CV and cover letter appropriate to specific job applications and to become more confident around networking and communicating with people socially and in interview situations.

“I found the visiting speakers very informative. We had different employers, and someone came in from the city council to talk about the opportunities Porirua could offer. We also had a recruitment agent come in. Overall, it gave me focus and confidence to continue to persevere with job-hunting.

“Following the Work Talk programme, we were asked if we would like to work with mentors, to help us with seeking employment. My mentor is a retired school principal. She would come to my home and help me with my application letter. That was really helpful too.”

Jacqueline says Janice quickly became a valued member of the Porirua team.

“Janice’s background is in accounting and business administration and she sorted our resources and library out beautifully. She’s someone who will always go the extra mile to help, including helping out at our stall at the local festival in freezing rain.”

In January 2017, Jacqueline was able to offer Janice five hours a week paid employment as an administrator, to help with the increasing workload. She took this position and continued to apply for full-time roles.

“I kept writing applications and talking to people because I’d learned on the course that word-of-mouth is very important here. Alongside my work with ELPNZ, I started casual administrative work for Immigration New Zealand (March to September 2017) and that was through a friend who worked there. They said they could offer me four hours a day but the second day I was there I was asked to do more hours.

“I did that for seven months, until October, when I was offered my permanent role at the Business Migration Branch of MBIE. The skills and confidence I’d gained through my internship helped me get this job, through meeting people outside of my family, talking with them and feeling part of a work community. It helped me to demonstrate that I had the skills suitable for this role.

“I am really enjoying it. I work with business applications and investors and do administration. My dream is to be an accounting or finance officer again one day. I spoke to people at a Pacific Island women’s leadership meeting recently and they were very encouraging about the opportunities to move within the Ministry.”

While the ELPNZ Porirua team was sorry to lose Janice as a colleague, Jacqueline says they were delighted to see her achieve her dream of a full-time permanent position.

“All Janice’s perseverance has paid off,” said Jacqueline. “She has achieved so much, and we know she will remain part of the Porirua family.” ✂

More about Work Talk:
[www.englishlanguage.org.nz/
work-talk](http://www.englishlanguage.org.nz/work-talk)



Justin Dado

Cultural understanding vital for a successful workplace

While on an ELPNZ course on Kiwi work culture, YMCA employees honed their customer relation skills. Stevie Hight | Photos Stevie Hight

Justin Dado has been working at the YMCA Hostel and Citylodge for four years, and now heads the housekeeping team comprised of five different nationalities, dealing with international visitors from all corners of the globe.

This melting pot of diversity makes for a colourful and dynamic team environment but raises its own set of unique challenges.

The YMCA senior team contacted English Language Partners (ELPNZ) after identifying some room for staff improvement in customer relations.

Eve Price, ELPNZ's Auckland Central manager, assessed that miscommunication often stemmed from cultural, rather than just simple language differences.

A course was tailored specifically for the YMCA staff; it took place onsite,

once a week, over eight weeks. Classes addressed the norms of Kiwi work and hospitality culture, and also identified the similar and differing values that the staff members have.

Justin gave an example: "In Filipino work culture, you are there to serve the customer, and you are not really expected to engage beyond that. However, here there is more of an expectation of friendly interaction."



Justin with a work colleague.

The **taylor-made course** provided the YMCA team with a greater understanding of being part of the New Zealand workforce.

"It has created better communication."

Cushla Howie, former YMCA training manager

Reflecting on the lessons, Eve recalled: "You could see that, for a lot of the staff, practising small talk was quite a daunting exercise, and that engaging with people didn't come quite as easily as it might for Kiwis".

Classes were fun, ensuring the staff could have a laugh while realising that everyone carries with them a certain amount of cultural 'baggage' that is not always best practice at work.

YMCA's former training manager Cushla Howie was pleased with the outcomes: "This course provided our team with a greater understanding of being part of the New Zealand workforce. It has created better communication through an increased level of confidence and understanding."

For Justin, the biggest revelation was a personal one.

"In the Philippines, the perception was that I had an American accent,

mainly from watching American TV. Coming over here, I eventually realised I have a Filipino accent, and the class confirmed that, which was strange for me! Eve said Filipinos tend to skip enunciating the last sound of a word, which is something I had never noticed, but she is right!"

This awareness has helped Justin evaluate his own speech, especially when speaking to international visitors for whom English is not their first language.

"Growing up in the Philippines, I only ever had to live, learn and grow with Filipino culture, without worrying too much about how other cultures operated."

Moving to multicultural Auckland was a big change for Justin, joining the roll at St Paul's College, Ponsonby.

"There was exactly one other Filipino student. Everyone else, as far as I

saw on the first day, was Pasifika. I knew Samoa; other names I learned later, like Tonga, Niue and the Cook Islands.

"Just the fact that so many different people coexisted in the same place completely boggled my mind."

We asked Justin what he would say to others who have recently migrated to New Zealand:

"Nobody bites... chill out! You've really just got to get in there. People are people, it doesn't matter where they are from. You just need to engage, and doing that will reveal just how much we are all alike." 🌱

Citylodge www.citylodge.co.nz
YMCA Hostel www.ymcauckland.org.nz/find-your-local/hostel

More about tailor-made courses:
www.englishlanguage.org.nz/employers

Sudhi's English gains pay off for Steelfort

'Motivated, enthusiastic and committed' are the words Sudhi's employers use to describe Sudhi Edamuttath Subramanyan. Leigh Dome | Photos Leigh Dome

“Sudhi strives to be the best in everything he does,” says David Phillips, Sudhi's supervisor at Steelfort Engineering in Palmerston North.

Sudhi, his wife Jiji and their daughter moved here from Kerala, India in 2014.

Jiji was doing her post-graduate business management studies at Palmerston North's IPU, and Sudhi was determined to find a job.

“I had four years' experience in India as a welder, but no qualifications to help me get a job here,” he says. So Sudhi travelled to Christchurch and spent two months completing a welding course.

“It was hard being away from my family, but I wanted to give them a better future,” says the 37-year-old.

David Phillips says Steelfort was impressed by Sudhi from the moment he knocked on the door and asked for a job. “As an employer, it takes extra time and effort to train staff members like Sudhi, who are new to the country.

“We want to give every opportunity to succeed, and encourage them to use English Language Partners' (ELPNZ) courses to improve their communication skills,” he says.

Sudhi is four months into a training course in preparation for IELTS exams.

Steelfort is sponsoring Sudhi by paying his tuition fee for the ten-week programme. “It is an investment because ultimately, we will benefit too,” says David.

The International English Language Testing System (IELTS) is an internationally recognised English language proficiency test.

Sudhi's trainer at ELPNZ says Sudhi is a natural 'Kiwi' speaker of English. Rob O'Connor says Sudhi makes the most of the two hours they spend in class each Saturday morning.

Sudhi hopes to pass the exam as the required skills will help with his future learning.

Rob says, “Sudhi has worked really hard to improve his listening and speaking skills, and is very helpful in class with the other students.”

Sudhi has been working at Steelfort since April 2016, and has thrived on the supportive environment of his workmates and management. “I was very shy when I started, but now I try to speak [English] as much as I can, and I am not afraid to ask questions. I am now a team leader,” he says proudly.



“

It is an investment because ultimately, we will benefit too.

– David Phillips,
Steelfort Engineering

”



Sudhi Edamuttath
Subramanyan (centre)
with Steelfort Engineering
colleagues

David Phillips says Sudhi's confidence has grown and he is a social guy, mingling with his workmates and talking with senior staff. "He seems to want to practise his English whenever he can."

They have also noticed how much Sudhi's grammar in emails has improved. So has his handwriting. "It was pretty bad at the beginning, but it's legible now!"

Sudhi says he is grateful to Steelfort for their support of him 'as a human being'. "I love it there." ✂

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Sudhi with Rob O'Connor, ELPNZ language trainer

“

We want to give every opportunity to succeed, and encourage them to use English Language Partners' courses to improve their communication skills.

– David Phillips, Steelfort Engineering

”

Steelfort www.steelfort.co.nz

More about tailor-made courses: www.englishlanguage.org.nz/employers

NETWORK NEWS

Big day out

Auckland West centre held a summer picnic at Cornwallis Beach for 100 refugees. For many, it was their first time at the beach.



Tauranga graduates

Our Bay of Plenty class celebrated completing their New Zealand Certificate in English Language.



Celebration of cultures

Friends caught up to celebrate another successful year at our Hutt centre's gathering.



Civic award for local hero

Congratulations to ELPNZ manager, Jo de Lisle (front, second from right), awarded a Hamilton City Council Civic Award for contribution to the Waikato refugee and migrant community.



Enjoying New Zealand's great outdoors

Northland centre visited Waipu Cove to share lunch and celebrate a fabulous year of English for everyday life.



International women's group brings community together

This special group in Whanganui has been running for over 30 years. Migrants from around the world meet regularly with local volunteers.



PHOTO: SETTLEMENT UNIT, IMMIGRATION NEW ZEALAND

‘Can do, will do’: Edwin’s two-year journey to the Kiwi workforce

Watching TV show Friends (dubbed into Spanish, with English subtitles) was just one of the ways Edwin Reverol Alvarado worked to improve his English. Patricia Thompson | Photos Jo Moore

It was undertaking English Language Partners’ (ELPNZ) Work Talk course, working with their mentors and volunteering which finally proved the key to employment in New Zealand.

Edwin confesses that, growing up in Venezuela, he didn’t pay much attention to school English classes. He studied art, graphic design and

library studies, and worked as a librarian at a contemporary art museum. Then, during a working OE in Madrid, he met his Kiwi partner Simon.

“We had to decide where to live. Simon doesn’t speak Spanish so, in 2014, I decided to take up the challenge of coming to live in New Zealand.

“My English was limited when I first arrived in Wellington. I missed out on my first job interview, with Victoria University Library, which was quite hard for me. I had a few more job interviews, but no success.”

An exhibition of Edwin’s paintings at a city cafe, helped grow his networks.



Edwin Reverol Alvarado



Edwin Reverol Alvarado (right) with Richard Benge, Executive Director, Arts Access Aotearoa

“It’s so important to do the **Work Talk** training. ELPNZ is about so much more than learning English; it’s a much wider learning experience. It has been a huge change in my life for the better.”
 – Edwin Reverol Alvarado

“But I still hadn’t had any luck during interviews, mainly due to lack of experience here. Then someone said: ‘Bro, you need to do some volunteer work’.”

“
Edwin epitomises the Venezuelan version of the Kiwi ‘can do’ attitude.

– Richard Benge, Executive Director, Arts Access Aotearoa

”

That led to Edwin volunteering for Arts Access Aotearoa which advocates for people who experience barriers to participation in the arts; and at the Theosophical Society, where he helped organise the book collection and learned to use a New Zealand database.

Richard Benge, Executive Director of Arts Access Aotearoa, said Edwin

grew in confidence during more than two years’ volunteering with them.

“Edwin epitomises the Venezuelan version of the Kiwi ‘can-do’ attitude,” said Richard. “He applied himself to any task we set him that used his varied skills, from office work to design. He really loved the experience of being in an office environment and we had the benefit of working with this incredibly positive, capable person.”

However, job hunting was still proving frustrating until Edwin heard about ELPNZ. He was connected with a job mentor and an ESOL home tutor and took up the opportunity to participate in the Work Talk programme.

“Work Talk training helped so much.” he said. “The experience was very very good. For instance, we learned about writing a cover letter to go with a job application. I discovered the cover letter is really important, because it’s the first thing people see, and you can’t just use a template, because you have to personalise it and have some feeling in it.

“Then a job came up as an administrator for ELPNZ and I applied. When I found I had got through to my

second interview, that was a great moment. Then I got the job!

“I’m working with database systems and I’m really happy with that. A lot of Colombian people come to ELPNZ and I can translate for them too.

“It’s so important to do the Work Talk training. ELPNZ is about so much more than learning English; it’s a much wider learning experience. It has been a huge change in my life for the better. I also learned so much from being a volunteer.

“You know what I like here in New Zealand? The small talk, in the supermarket. This doesn’t happen so much in Spain or Venezuela. When I was first getting started it was really good, because you can learn the slang.

“I have a few friends I speak Spanish with, but most days now, I try to speak just in English.” ✂

Arts Access Aotearoa
www.artsaccess.org.nz

More about Work Talk:
www.englishlanguage.org.nz/work-talk

DID YOU KNOW

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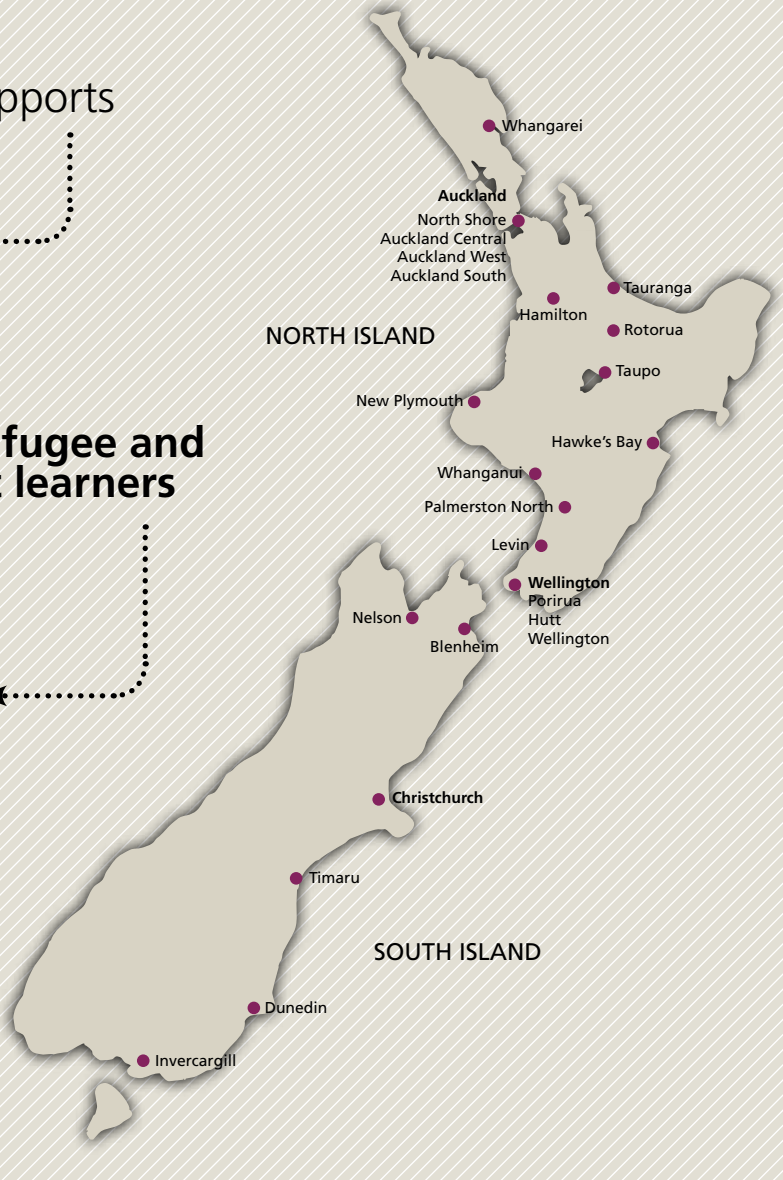


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