

# CONNECTING CULTURES

ISSUE 32 SUMMER 2019



*English for work  
& everyday life*

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

[www.englishlanguage.org.nz](http://www.englishlanguage.org.nz)

Volunteer | Donate



# Kia ora

New Zealand's largest organisation working with former refugees and migrants.

*Our programmes support diverse needs*

### In class

English Language Groups  
ESOL Literacy  
ESOL Intensive  
New Zealand Certificate in English Language  
ESOL Road Code for Refugees  
Local programmes

### For work

English for Employees  
Work Talk  
Police Recruit Literacy  
Job Mentoring

### At home

ESOL Home Tutoring  
English for Migrants



More employers are realising that improving workplace English skills can make a huge difference to business productivity. They also understand that these language skills can be taught alongside other work-specific skills that migrants need to acquire in order to work successfully in New Zealand.

Shaun Chait runs Wellington-based *Pure Painting*, and features in this *Connecting Cultures*. Shaun knows newcomers make great employees, and that investing in them is a sensible business decision. He says of his employee Thang Shalom Innkuan: "English is a skill like the others Thang has gradually picked up over the course of his apprenticeship." Shaun also advises others to approach employing speakers of other languages with this in mind, and to not see it as a barrier.

We're proud to share this *Connecting Culture's* exceptional stories of newer Kiwis whose goal is to live and work self-sufficiently. In doing so, they understand the need to meet the challenge of improving their English to create a better life for themselves and their families.

I trust you'll find their stories as inspiring as I do.

**Nicola Sutton**

Chief Executive

## Donate

**Help former refugees and migrants start new lives in Aotearoa.**

### 3 easy ways

- 1 Mail us your donation slip (See inside back cover.)
- 2 Online at [englishlanguage.org.nz](http://englishlanguage.org.nz)
- 3 Call free on 0800 367 376



# This issue



**Working for nature's good**  
Mario Heredero de Pablos finds his niche in the employment ecosystem



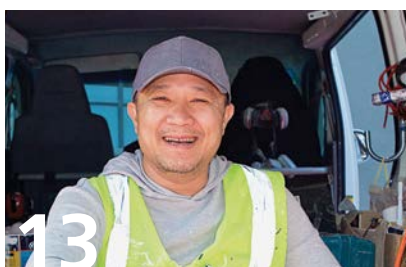
**Engineering an outstanding career**  
Elena Nenasheva meets the challenge of rebuilding her career



**High-performing employee helps business shine**  
Aung Myo's hard work helps company's reputation



**Love what you do**  
Natalia Hrybko finds confidence to pursue her passion



**English for better business**  
Viet Doan Do boosts his English to develop his company



**The richer for it**  
Mary Maxwell feels privileged to volunteer

---

© English Language Partners New Zealand 2019  
PO Box 10119, The Terrace, Wellington 6143  
Phone 04 471 2382 Email [natoffice@englishlanguage.org.nz](mailto:natoffice@englishlanguage.org.nz)  
Web [www.englishlanguage.org.nz](http://www.englishlanguage.org.nz)  
Facebook [www.facebook.com/EnglishLanguagePartnersNewZealand](http://www.facebook.com/EnglishLanguagePartnersNewZealand)  
Charities Registration Number CC51013  
Editor Grace Bassett | [grace.bassett@englishlanguage.org.nz](mailto:grace.bassett@englishlanguage.org.nz)  
Design and production Paradigm  
Cover Viet Doan Do Photo Stevie Hight  
ISSN 1175-8945

 **Follow us on facebook**

*Please recycle Connecting Cultures with family and friends before you recycle for the environment.*







# Working *for* nature's good

After crossing the globe, Mario Heredero de Pablos has found his niche in Wellington's employment ecosystem.  
Jack Montgomerie | Photos Stevie Hight

**A**n industrial engineer from Catalonia, Spain, Mario never planned to come to New Zealand.

With English Language Partners' help, he's now proud to be a production operations engineer at automatic trap company Goodnature.

Hearing Mario describe how Goodnature's App tracks the number of rats, stoats and mice each trap racks up, you wouldn't guess Mario used to specialise in renewable energy.

These days, Mario is on a new environmental mission: reducing the number of pest animals damaging the ecosystems New Zealand's native wildlife depends on.

When his wife Laura received a postdoctoral job offer from medical researchers at the Mallaghan Institute in Wellington in May 2017, Mario wasn't so sure.

"The plan was actually Europe, somewhere with mountains.

"We had to decide in one week. I said 'No, no, Laura, it's too far.'"

When they looked more closely, the outdoorsy couple realised New Zealand ticked all the boxes.

"We had to get rid of everything, just take the minimum, and in the end the minimum was a bike and skis.

"There were seven kilos remaining, we put in clothes to top it up."

Mario quickly set about looking for jobs. It was the first time he'd been a job seeker and he found it difficult and a little dispiriting.

"You start asking yourself a lot of questions. There are a lot of ups and downs."

Fortunately, Mario found a notice about English Language Partners in an Immigration New Zealand newsletter for newcomers.

"My English was probably okay, but I wasn't that confident with it."

Mario was eligible for English Language Partners' Job Mentoring service, which meant he could take part in weekly meetings with other newcomers who were looking for jobs. Along with exchanging tips ▶



Craig Bond, co-founder, Goodnature, and Mario Heredero de Pablos.

▶ about applying for jobs, Mario said the group raised each other's morale.

He also met a mentor, Sophie Low. As an engineer, Sophie understood the kinds of jobs Mario might be looking for. She also helped Mario find the precise vocabulary needed for formal job applications.

"With languages, when you reach a certain level, people will get the message so [they] just say 'carry on'. My job mentor was the only one correcting me in that way.

"She was checking all my applications before I sent them."

Sophie introduced Mario to networking, which can be a key job hunting method in a small country like New Zealand.

"That was really enlightening."

While volunteering for the Sustainability Trust, Mario attended a waste minimisation workshop which was a chance to test his new networking skills.

"They asked everyone to introduce themselves, and everyone was saying

“

**Mario brought the technical and people skills we were looking for.”**

*Craig Bond, Goodnature*

”

'I'm in this role, I work there'. I was like 'What should I say?'

"I said, 'I'm a job seeker, I'm trying to find a job'. Then there was the networking space afterwards. Everyone came up to me, saying, 'What are you doing? What do you want to do?'

"So it was very embarrassing, but then it was really useful."

Sophie then introduced Mario to another friend who suggested Mario talk to Goodnature co-founder Craig Bond.

Craig was looking for an engineer to help the team grow its production capability.

While waiting for board approval to create the new position, Mario continued his job hunt and learnt about Goodnature's products by working on the production line in the Wellington suburb of Newtown.

By the time he got a job in the engineering team in May 2018, Mario understood the business from the ground up.

"I knew the people, it's a good place to work. I really believe in the mission of providing technology to balance the ecosystem."

Mario had the chance to write his own job description, with a little help from Sophie.

"Mario brought the technical and people skills we were looking for," says Craig. "His strong analytical and engineering background combined with his unflappable demeanor are a huge contribution to our business.

"I can't imagine our team without Mario. When Mario is involved, everything runs smoothly."

Mario says his background as a scout leader in Catalonia has helped him adapt to Goodnature's lean management approach.

"It's all about developing our own people. The guys on the floor they know everything, you just have to allow them to extract all this [knowledge]."

As Goodnature prepares to go global, Mario is giving back. He has become a job mentor himself.

"Becoming a mentor has forced me out of my comfort zone again and that brings the biggest learning you can get!" ✨

**Goodnature**  
[www.goodnature.co.nz](http://www.goodnature.co.nz)

**For more about job mentoring**  
contact our Wellington centre  
[www.englishlanguage.org.nz/wellington](http://www.englishlanguage.org.nz/wellington)



# Engineering an *outstanding career*

English Language Partners' course helped Elena Nenasheva find the confidence to believe in her own abilities. James Fyfe | Photos Julie Zhu

**W**hen Elena Nenasheva moved to Auckland last year to find work as an engineer, she faced the challenge of rebuilding her career from scratch in a foreign country.

Not only that, the self-described introvert also faced the daunting prospect of sitting through job interviews in a second language.

But by overcoming her natural shyness and tackling these challenges head on, she is now on the road to success.

From the time Elena arrived in New Zealand with her partner five years ago, she knew she would need to improve her English skills.

Although she had studied a little of the language in Russia, she was far from fluent and quickly got to work self-studying.

Despite her efforts, she soon realised that learning another language was harder than she expected.

"Before you start learning, you never realise how hard it can be," she says. "You think, 'I'll just come to that country and I'll be surrounded by people who speak English and I'll improve very quickly'. But it's not the case."

Determined to continue her career as an engineer, Elena eventually enrolled in a postgraduate course at the University of Canterbury, where she hoped to get up to speed with local engineering practices and have a chance to hone her language skills. ▶





**Work Talk** is an intensive four-week course.

**"It was definitely a boost to my confidence."**

*– Elena Nenasheva, Ramsetreid*

▶ Although her English did improve, she found she still wasn't as confident at speaking as she would have liked.

"At university, especially in engineering, you don't have the chance to speak to people much, because mostly it's math language."

“

**She has quickly become a highly-regarded engineer in our business.**

*– Adam Dawson, Ramsetreid*

”

After graduating and spending a few months at an internship in Christchurch, Elena and her partner decided to make the move to Auckland. It was there she was faced with the reality of having to find work in an unfamiliar city.

"When I came to Auckland, I didn't really have any connections."

Knowing that gaining confidence in job-hunting skills was crucial for getting work, Elena decided to enrol in English Language Partners' Work Talk course.

"I knew I had to go through interviews, and I was not really confident at that time, so I decided to attend this course."

Elena says she didn't just learn practical tips about job hunting and Kiwi work culture, the course also taught key skills for when it came time to interviews.

"By practising, knowing what questions would be asked and how to answer, it was definitely a boost on my confidence."

And practice certainly paid off. When she saw a promising job advertised at Ramsetreid, she decided to go for it.

"I thought, 'Oh, I'll use this opportunity anyway just to practise my skills in an interview, to use something that I learned'."

But the interview turned out to be more than just practice. After a process of three interviews, two via Skype and one face-to-face, she found she'd got the job.

"I was over the moon when they decided to hire me."

Elena's manager at Ramsetreid, Adam Dawson, is over the moon too, saying that since joining the company, she's become a much-valued member of his team.

Remembering their first encounter, he says that although Elena was nervous, "she came to the interview very well prepared" and there was never any doubt about her language ability.

"She has a natural tendency to seek clarity and asks questions when she is unsure, which has helped avoid miscommunication."

Adam says Elena also holds herself to a very high standard, a quality that shines through both in her work as an engineer and in her communication skills.

"As her career has progressed, Elena has been challenged with some complex projects involving technical conversations with very experienced stakeholders in the construction industry, and she has performed outstandingly.

"She has quickly become a highly-regarded engineer in our business, and her measured, thoughtful communication style is a contributor to this success."

Elena remains determined to develop her skills. She's not just focused on growing as an engineer, but is intent on perfecting her already near flawless English.

"I'm still improving, my level is not as good as I wish," she says.

"I probably need to start another course soon." 🌱

**Contact your closest centre about Work Talk**  
[www.englishlanguage.org.nz/our-centres](http://www.englishlanguage.org.nz/our-centres)





# High-performing employee *helps* *business shine*

Aung Myo

With almost 60 years' experience, Palmerston North Panel and Paint have earned an excellent name in the panelbeater and autopainter industry, and with good reason. Story & photos Stevie Hight

Co-owner Wayne Page says it's difficult finding the right employees to ensure their reputation is upheld.

"We've searched long and hard, and had many a guy here on a trial period that's only lasted two or three days."

Their high standards make former refugee Aung Myo's story all the more special.

The workshop is a hive of activity, with Aung in the midst of it all. He's hard at work smoothing down a panel on a collision repair job.

Originally from Myanmar, Aung and his family fled to Thailand to escape the political turmoil that had embroiled the Southeast Asian country. After ten long years in a refugee camp, they were finally granted sanctuary in New Zealand.

Aung had experience in automotive painting back in Myanmar, but in the camp, the only work available was helping part-time at a fruit and vegetable stand. Starting a new life in Palmerston North was his chance to rejoin the workforce.

On arrival, Aung spoke no English and began the challenging journey of learning a new language. Once he had the basics, a work experience placement was arranged. ►



Aung Myo with Wayne Page (third from right) and colleagues at Palmerston North Panel and Paint.

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

“He works bloody hard,” says Wayne. “With Aung, you know he’s trustworthy. He’ll listen, take the information on board and do it. You won’t hear from him again until the job’s done.”

Wayne sees a long-term future for Aung.

“Aung approached me to say he was interested in starting an apprenticeship. We knew there was going to be some issues as far as the language goes, but he assured me that he could overcome that, and I believe he will.”

Aung continues to upskill his English outside work hours with the assistance of an English Language Partners’ volunteer. “My home tutor is very, very good,” says Aung. “I’m learning words for my job.”

Wayne points to a wall in the office covered with certificates, and explains that Aung will gain all of that certification on the way through his Automotive Refinishing apprenticeship.

“Then he can go to some higher-level training, which could lead him to a foreman position. It will take him probably five or six years to grow to that position, but I have faith that he will do it.

“The job is so important to him.” 🌱

**More about English for Employees**  
[www.englishlanguage.org.nz/english-for-your-employees/](http://www.englishlanguage.org.nz/english-for-your-employees/)

“  
**The benefits of Aung’s hard work and dedication far outweigh the challenges of a language barrier.**

– *Wayne Page, Palmerston North Panel and Paint*

While Aung continues to improve his English, Wayne has found inventive ways to communicate.

“You’ll see me in the workplace waving my arms around and miming to show what I need him to do. Together we have found ways to communicate.”

To further Aung’s language skills, Wayne contacted English Language Partners and helped Aung enrol in their English for Employees course.

Vanessa Curtis, Aung’s teacher, says it’s been a joy to hear about his success in the workplace.

“Aung has built good relationships with his workmates and management, despite his English limitations,” says Vanessa. “He negotiated a new contract and expressed a desire for more professional development. He asked to study hazardous substances, and then went on to pass his health and safety test.”

Being offered the opportunity to live an independent life, with a good job in a new country means the world to Aung.

“I’m so lucky, my workmates help when I don’t understand. I really love my job, and seeing the end result.”

▶ “We were approached from Work and Income with the idea of taking on Aung for few days,” says Wayne. “He was with us for around two weeks. After that, he left and carried on his English studies.”

It wasn’t long afterwards that a position came up at Palmerston North Panel and Paint.

“Based on Aung’s performance, we were happy to have him on board.”

Wayne says the benefits of Aung’s hard work and dedication far outweigh the challenges of a language barrier.



# Love what you do



After moving to New Zealand from Ukraine, personal trainer Natalia Hrybko found the confidence to pursue her passion. James Fyfe | Photos Julie Zhu

**F**rom the moment you first meet Natalia, her confidence and energy are obvious.

What's also obvious is that the personal trainer loves what she does.

But it wasn't always that way. In fact, if Natalia hadn't joined English Language Partners' Work Talk programme her life might have taken a very different turn.

Having first arrived in New Zealand as a tourist, Natalia later returned to our shores a number of times on

short-term visits before ultimately deciding to settle down in Auckland with her Kiwi partner.

Now, despite missing family and friends, she says the country is firmly where her heart is, and she is proud to call New Zealand home.

Having worked as a successful lawyer back in Ukraine, Natalia knew that the challenges of a different language and legal system meant continuing with her former career here would be difficult. Fortunately, she was also ready for a lifestyle change.

"I love law," she says. "But at the same time, there's also a lot of stress."

Initially planning on finding work as a travel agent, Natalia enrolled in Work Talk to learn more about how to find a job in New Zealand.

The course teaches vital skills such as how to prepare for job interviews, while also providing information about practical matters such as taxes and KiwiSaver.

In class, Natalia wrote a CV and cover letter based on finding work as a ▶



Natalia Hrybko  
with a client.

► travel agent. But teacher Jan Scott, aware that Natalia was giving the occasional lesson as a personal trainer, noticed the enthusiasm she had for that work and encouraged her to consider pursuing her passion.

“She didn’t tell me ‘Okay, you have to do this’,” says Natalia. “She just said ‘Okay, listen, these are the pluses, these are the minuses, so what, for you, is the best option?’”

After thinking deeply, Natalia decided to take the plunge and become a personal trainer, and she hasn’t looked back.

She describes joining the course as “destiny”.

“I never stop thanking my teacher,” says Natalia. “This course changed my life. I’m happy I’m not a travel agent.”

Now, she can’t imagine doing anything different.

“If I was in a travel agency, I would never be a trainer. I would be sitting in an office and doing this work and feeling pain in my back, like when I was a lawyer, and not be happy. I’d come home late and be in traffic because it was in the city. These are all things I don’t like.”

“  
This course  
changed my life.

– Natalia Hrybko

”

Her new life offers more flexibility and feels less like work and more like fun. “It’s my hobby, so if you see me I’m happy.”

And clients and those in the industry have responded to her passion and positive energy. As well as continuing to teach her private clients, Natalia recently signed on to work at a leading Auckland gym.

Her new position involves working at a state-of-the-art ‘virtual fitness facility’ at BlueFit gym in Orewa.

And it’s not just a love for working out that drives Natalia. For her, being a personal trainer is just as much about the people as it is about the weights.

“There’s much more between us. They share stories, and I share stories. It’s a friendship. I’ve made friends there.”

But it’s not all chat and laughs, she says.

“I’m strict, but people like that. I push them. I’m sort of a killer,” she jokes.

Natalia says the best part of her job is seeing the positive effect getting fit can have. “I like when I change people’s lives, when I see that people are very motivated, inspired by me.”

Although Natalia loves spending time in the gym, she also loves spending time outdoors, playing volleyball and hiking with friends.

Living in Orewa, close to both the beach and her workplace, she says the balance is just right.

Her long-term dream is to own her own gym, one that reflects her style of work: where relationships with people are just as important as the training.

“I have my clients, I have my job and I have my family. I’m very happy.” 🙌

**Contact your closest centre  
about Work Talk**

[www.englishlanguage.org.nz/  
our-centres](http://www.englishlanguage.org.nz/our-centres)



From a priming in the basics of English to the finer points of grammar and pronunciation, English Language Partners' English for Employees course helps workers gain the skills they need to communicate effectively at work.

Two Hutt Valley painters share how English for Employees has helped them achieve their professional goals and has enriched their lives.

# English for *better* *business*



Viet Doan Do says boosting his English skills helped him master the language and his trade. Jack Montgomerie | Photos Stevie Hight

**F**or Viet, coming to New Zealand from his home in Vietnam nearly ten years ago was about family.

"In 2009, I visited my sister. I stayed here for one month, and I found this country really nice, and good for families. I thought about living here."

With two parents and another sister already in Australia, Viet started looking into joining his trans-Tasman family.

"I found a job with a Kiwi boss, and he applied for a work visa for me. When I started working, I didn't speak English."

Viet began working as a painter in the Hutt Valley, learning on the job. Although he had "a very good boss" who was happy to teach him painting skills, they soon found that practical skills alone weren't enough.

"I can't explain to him," Viet says. "Sometimes he just talked with body language. He told me to paint half the doorframe, and I painted the whole doorframe. ►"



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

“I’m not very good, but good enough to talk on the phone with some clients.”

That’s meant a big change for Viet’s working life. “I own my business now, I’m self-employed, and I got citizenship. I’m happy, I’m a very lucky man,” he says.

“I found companies that supply the jobs for me. Some big companies do subcontracts, and they like me. And some of my friends are builders, and they’ll pass customers to me.”

He’s pleased with the benefits that learning with English Language Partners has brought to his personal life.

“It’s not only painting. English is for my [whole] life.”

Viet’s wife and two children have also been learning English, but he says learning English himself has helped support their health and education.

“Sometimes I have to speak with their teacher, and sometimes I have to speak with the doctor, for myself and for my kids, too.

“Before, when my kids were sick, I had to take my sister for translation. Now, I can speak on my own,” Viet says. “It’s like, 100 per cent different. That’s why I think English is so important.”

Viet is full of encouragement and advice for anyone thinking of improving their English. He believes confidence is important.

“Don’t be shy to ask questions. In class, sometimes we’ve got a three minute talk. Even though sometimes my grammar is not good, sometimes my pronunciation is not good, I keep going.”

As his business develops, Viet’s English skills must rise to the challenge, so Viet doesn’t see himself ending his study efforts anytime soon.

“I have to keep this going.” ✨

“

I own my business now, I’m self-employed and I got citizenship. I’m happy, I’m a very lucky man.

– Viet Doan Do

”

► “After that, I think I have to learn English.”

Fortunately, Viet’s sister had heard about English Language Partners.

“My sister said they’ve got a free class, and looked it up on the website, and we got the address, and my sister rang.”

Since then, Viet has been studying with four or five classmates and a “very nice teacher.”

“She teaches me the things I don’t understand,” he says. “And explains very well.”

Viet says what he learns in English for Employees is linked to the language skills he needs every day.

“Sometimes, outside the class, we’ve got new words, and I’ll take it back to class to show the teacher. People like me, we don’t know how English sounds.”

From his early difficulties, Viet has reached the point of being able to write emails and arrange painting jobs.

**More about English for Employees**

[www.englishlanguage.org.nz/english-for-your-employees](http://www.englishlanguage.org.nz/english-for-your-employees)



# Former refugee painting a *brighter future*

For Thang Shalom Innkuan, brushing up his English has brought benefits at work and home. Jack Montgomerie | Photos Stevie Hight

**T**hang, who grew up speaking Zomi and Burmese, might be the busiest man in the Hutt Valley.

Between days working as an apprentice for Pure Painting and three night classes at English Language Partners Hutt every week, fitting in dinner can sometimes be a challenge.

But Thang says life is getting easier. Things were more difficult when he arrived with his wife and children in New Zealand as refugees from Myanmar in 2012.

Back then, "I didn't know how to do anything. No friends, just my family, I didn't have a car, anything."

Still, Thang is happy his family followed a friend's recommendation to come to New Zealand.

"It's a good country. People are kind and friendly."

Thang had some experience painting in Myanmar, but found a lot of differences between the industry there and in New Zealand. ▶





Shaun Chait and Thang Shalom Innkuan.

“ English is a skill like the others Thang has gradually picked up over the course of his apprenticeship.

– Shaun Chait, Pure Painting

”

- ▶ After studying at Weltec, Thang could've chosen to work for a Burmese company, but his employer Shaun Chait says Thang wanted to choose a Kiwi company where English is the language spoken.

“Thang is someone with commitment, who wants to make a go of it,” Shaun says.

At first, Thang found working in English difficult. He didn't always know the name for his tools, or some parts of the houses he was painting.

But Thang says working and studying have helped him pick up new words. “Maybe tonight I learn [new vocabulary] in our class, and tomorrow, I use some with the Kiwi guys.”

“Every day I work, I write in my work plan. I'm writing every day, but the spelling is sometimes not correct.”

Cultural differences in the ways Kiwis communicate at work have also been a hurdle. Thang has overcome these with English Language Partners' help.

He learnt New Zealanders sometimes offer criticism in a less direct way than people in Myanmar.

“For example, if I paint here, but it doesn't look too good, someone will say, ‘This is okay’.

“My feeling is, ‘It's okay’, but it's not [really] okay.”

Thang says his classes have explained these subtle differences in meaning, as well as everyday vocabulary he needs on the job.

Shaun says he and other workmates have witnessed Thang's progress.

“He was very quiet at the start, but it wasn't because of his personality, it was because of a bit of an English barrier.”

As his English has improved, Thang has been able to contribute more at meetings where work is planned.

“He's a very popular member of the team,” Shaun says. “He gets jokes and he makes jokes.”

Shaun says employers can often raise voices or talk in pidgin English with workers who have English as a second or third language, but treating Thang like any other workmate has been their approach.

“We speak to him in New Zealand English,” Shaun says.

“English is a skill like the others Thang has gradually picked up over the course of his apprenticeship.

Employers could approach employing speakers of other languages with that mindset.

“Don't let it be a barrier.”

English Language Partners' classes have also had benefits outside of work. With three of Thang's four children at primary and secondary school, both generations' growing English skills reinforce each other.

“We're reading together, doing homework, or times tables.”

Now, Thang looks forward to completing his apprenticeship and continuing his English learning journey.

“Yeah, I'm determined. I want to plan for my future.” ✨



# The richer for it

Volunteer Mary Maxwell reckons she gets more from the people she works with than they get from her. Alison Robertson | Photos Michael Jeans



**M**ary Maxwell, winner of the 2019 Volunteering Waikato Excellence Awards, has volunteered at Morrinsville's community English class for more than a decade, and she also tutors two married couples in their homes.

Mary's a Kiwi who spent 30 years living and raising a family in the UK. She and husband Peter returned to take care of Mary's elderly parents, but coming home wasn't easy.

"I felt disconnected, like a stranger in my own land. I saw an ad for English Language Partners' volunteer training course and thought 'I can do that'."

And she did. She also did an organic gardening course and met some new migrants. Hearing their stories encouraged her to become more involved with English Language Partners.

In 2008, Mary met Souen Kong from Cambodia. They've become good

friends. Souen came to New Zealand with her father, brother and cousin. They'd been living in a refugee camp in Thailand, having fled Cambodia. "It was so hard at first. I didn't even know how to use an electric oven," Souen says. "The classes were good for me."

There's quite a group of Cambodians living in Morrinsville, and Mary says Souen has become an "amazing translator". Over the years, Souen has done sewing jobs, worked in a



Mary Maxwell with learners Souen Kong (right) and Lunn Duong Koem.

► market garden, raised a daughter and is now a grandmother.

Many students in the English class are grandparents who have joined their families in New Zealand. "Some of them are so shy," Mary says. "But ours is a small class, usually between eight and ten people. You can make mistakes in small groups. It's a safe space."

Some of the children get embarrassed by their grandparents' lack of English, Mary says. "So we get them reading children's books that they can share, and that encourages the children to teach their grandparents. They learn together."

Teacher Trudy Stockley has worked with Mary for six years. "Mary really helps people connect," says Trudy. "She's busy with other volunteer work, so her community knowledge is invaluable."

They both encourage learners to volunteer and join in with community activities. Mary says it's fortunate that

“

Mary really helps people connect.

– Trudy Stockley,  
*English Language Partners*

”

Morrinsville, being a country town, has a lot of clubs for people to join. It's all about getting people confident to manage their new lives in New Zealand.

"If a young mother comes to class, Mary invites her to join a local music and movement group for babies and toddlers," says Trudy. "That way, the new mum gets to practise more English and make Kiwi friends too."

Classes run for two hours on a Monday and are semi-structured in that there are nine subjects they

cover over ten weeks, but there's also time for the specific needs of students.

"We ask them what they want to learn. It may be how to make a doctor's appointment, or fill out a form. We're flexible. Nothing is set in stone."

Trudy says Mary is a vital part of English Language Partners in Morrinsville and she'll be sorely missed when she and Peter return to England at the end of next year to be with their children and grandchildren. Until then, she'll keep on volunteering.

Mary says she gets more from the class than she gives. "Our learners have so much; they have two cultures. As teachers, we give from one dimension as deeply as we can, but equally, we are learning too."

"It's a privilege to be part of this class." ✨

**Find out about volunteering**  
[www.englishlanguage.org.nz/teach-english](http://www.englishlanguage.org.nz/teach-english)



# DID YOU KNOW

We have **22** centres throughout New Zealand

English Language Partners supports

**400,000** hours of teaching



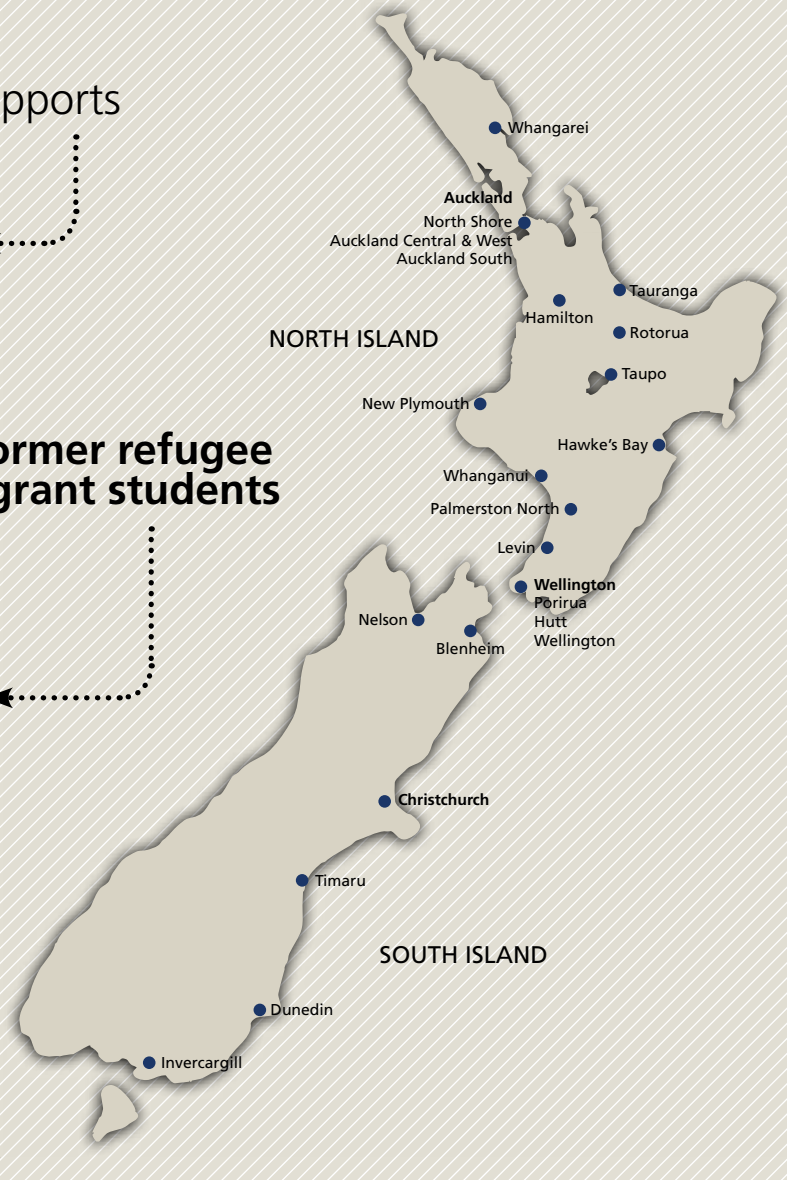
**7,000** former refugee and migrant students



from over **150** countries



**1,700** volunteer tutors



**Volunteer and help new Kiwis settle in.**

## YOUR DONATION TODAY

helps new Kiwis make a fresh start in Aotearoa.

### 3 EASY WAYS TO DONATE

- 1** Mail the coupon to Freepost 244665 ELPNZ, PO Box 10119, The Terrace, Wellington 6143
- 2** Online at [englishlanguage.org.nz](http://englishlanguage.org.nz)
- 3** Call free on 0800 367 376

# Work with former REFUGEES & MIGRANTS



## Volunteer | Donate

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

[www.englishlanguage.org.nz](http://www.englishlanguage.org.nz)

Settling in is easier if you understand the Kiwi way of life.  
Join over 1,700 volunteers helping adult former refugees and migrants.



## I'D LIKE TO HELP!

Please send me information on

- making a regular donation  
 payroll giving  
 volunteering

Please sign me up

- I would like to receive *Connecting Cultures* journal. (Put your name and address overleaf.)

## ✓ YES, I'LL HELP A LEARNER TODAY.

Name .....

Address .....

.....

.....

.....

### My gift

\$35    \$50    \$100    \$200   Other \$

### My payment

Please find enclosed my cheque made payable to "ELPNZ"

Please mail to Freepost 244665, ELPNZ, PO Box 12114,  
Thorndon, Wellington 6141

#### ▶ Internet banking

ELPNZ account number: 06 0507 0017792 12  
Particulars: Your initials and surname  
Reference: CC31

▶ To donate by credit card please visit us online:

[www.englishlanguage.org.nz/donate](http://www.englishlanguage.org.nz/donate)

## Thank you!

Your contribution is greatly appreciated.  
A receipt will be sent to you.