



# **Paraprofessional practice in ESOL programmes**

## **Part II: Evaluation of paraprofessional English Language Assistants' professional development programme**

**Prepared for:**  
**Ministry of Education**

**Prepared by:**  
**Dr Sharon Harvey**  
**Heather Richards**  
**Karen Stacey**

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Dr Sharon Harvey

Heather Richards

Karen Stacey

## ACRONYMS

AUT	Auckland University of Technology
CCS	Crippled Children Society – now Disability Action
CLTA	Certificate in Language Teaching to Adults
CT	Coordinating Teacher
Dip TESSOL	Diploma in Teaching English in Schools to Speakers of Other Languages
EAL	English as an Additional Language
ELA	English Language Assistant
ELL	English Language Learner
ERO	Education Review Office
ESOL	English for Speakers of Other Languages
ESOL/AF	ESOL Assessment Form
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
JOST	Junior Oral Screening Test
L1	First language
MOE	Ministry of Education
NESB/NLOE	Non-English Speaking Background/ New Learners of English
SENCO	Special Education Needs Coordinator
SLA	Second Language Acquisition
TA	Teacher Aide
TEFL	Teaching English as a Foreign Language
TESOL	Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages
TOPs	Training Opportunity Programmes

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>List of Tables .....</b>	<b>vi</b>
<b>List of Figures.....</b>	<b>vi</b>
<b>Chapter One Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Paraprofessionals and the literature .....	2
1.2 Part one of the research: Description and evaluation of paraprofessional practices in supporting initial reading programmes .....	4
1.3 The ELA programme .....	6
1.4 Organisation of the report .....	8
<b>Chapter Two Approach to research .....</b>	<b>10</b>
2.1 Background.....	10
2.2 Design of part two of the research .....	10
2.3 Data gathering.....	11
2.4 Participant characteristics .....	12
2.5 Risk factors .....	13
2.6 Research tools .....	13
2.7 Limitations of the study .....	14
<b>Chapter Three The working contexts of paraprofessionals.....</b>	<b>17</b>
3.1 Paraprofessionals' backgrounds.....	17
3.2 CTs' backgrounds and ESOL knowledge.....	19
3.3 Paraprofessionals and their roles .....	21
3.4 Paraprofessional attitudes to their roles .....	23
3.5 Support for paraprofessionals .....	25
3.6 Time for planning .....	27
3.7 Quality of planning .....	28
3.8 Communication with classroom teachers .....	29
3.9 Profiles in schools .....	30
3.10 Conclusion .....	31
<b>Chapter Four Pedagogical practices.....</b>	<b>33</b>
4.1 What paraprofessionals did well.....	33
4.2 Areas for improvement .....	36
4.3 Learner progress with English language acquisition .....	38
4.4 Interactions with students .....	40
4.5 Optimal student group size .....	41
4.6 Diagnosing learner strengths and weaknesses .....	42
4.7 Expanding oral language.....	45

4.8	Supporting writing .....	47
4.9	Questioning and prompting.....	49
4.10	Effective feedback .....	53
4.11	Attitude to learners' home languages and cultures .....	55
4.12	Conclusion .....	61
<b>Chapter Five Working with English.....</b>		<b>64</b>
5.1	Confidence in own English literacy and language skills .....	64
5.2	Understanding of English .....	65
5.3	Explaining language points.....	67
5.4	Promoting language learning .....	67
5.5	Further needs in relation to knowledge about English.....	70
5.6	Conclusion .....	70
<b>Chapter Six Using resources.....</b>		<b>73</b>
6.1	Choosing resources at an appropriate level for the students.....	73
6.2	Making and using resources.....	76
6.3	Using new technologies .....	80
6.4	Conclusion .....	81
<b>Chapter Seven Learning after the ELA course.....</b>		<b>83</b>
7.1	Further development in ESOL .....	83
7.2	Continuing in education to be a teacher or related professional.....	84
7.3	Changes as a result of the ELA course .....	85
<b>Chapter Eight Conclusion .....</b>		<b>86</b>
8.1	Gains .....	86
8.2	Issues to consider .....	88
<b>References.....</b>		<b>91</b>
<b>Appendix One.....</b>		<b>93</b>
	Letter to principals .....	93
	Participant Information Sheet for teachers .....	95
	Participant Information Sheet for paraprofessionals.....	98
	Consent Form.....	101
<b>Appendix Two .....</b>		<b>102</b>
	Initial interview questions with paraprofessionals.....	102
	Initial interview questions with teachers.....	104
	Final interview questions with paraprofessionals .....	106
	Final interview questions with teachers .....	109
<b>Appendix Three.....</b>		<b>114</b>
	Ethics Approval 08/04 (January, 2008) .....	114

Ethics Approval 08/04 (February, 2008) .....	116
Ethics Approval 08/04 (March, 2008) .....	118
Ethics Approval 08/04 (September, 2008).....	120

## List of Tables

Table 1: Background of the paraprofessionals.....	18
Table 2: Backgrounds of the CTs .....	20
Table 3: The nature of paraprofessional work at the beginning of the ELA course.....	22
Table 4: Paraprofessionals' comments on their roles .....	24
Table 5: The amount of time available for the paraprofessional's planning .....	28
Table 6: Paraprofessionals' preparation following ELA course (CTs' perspectives) .....	29
Table 7: What paraprofessionals do well with learners .....	35
Table 8: Number of students in sessions with paraprofessionals .....	42
Table 9: CTs' comments on paraprofessionals' skill in expanding oral language after the ELA course .....	46
Table 10: CTs' comments on paraprofessionals' skills in supporting writing after the ELA course .....	48
Table 11: CTs' perceptions of paraprofessionals' ability to ask questions .....	52
Table 12: Paraprofessionals' reports of their feedback to students .....	54
Table 13: CTs' teachers' perceptions of paraprofessionals' feedback to students.....	55
Table 14: Paraprofessionals' comments on learners' home languages and cultures.....	57
Table 15: CTs' understanding of paraprofessionals' attitude to learners' home languages and cultures.....	59
Table 16: Paraprofessionals' ability to promote language learning.....	69
Table 17: Choosing resources.....	74
Table 18: Confidence in making resources at the start of the ELA course.....	77
Table 19: Confidence in making resources after the ELA course .....	78
Table 20: Resources used in observed lessons .....	79
Table 21: Paraprofessional proficiency with new technologies after the ELA course.....	81

## List of Figures

Figure 1: Dialogue between paraprofessional and students: questioning and prompting .....	51
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## Chapter One Introduction

Paraprofessionals have become a significant feature of the school landscape in New Zealand as they have in other parts of the Western world. In New Zealand, numbers of paraprofessionals (usually designated as teacher aides) in schools have risen from 10,046 in 1998 to 14,231 in 2008. These numbers do not include kaiāwhina who are paraprofessionals assisting students with Māori language in schools. The rise in numbers of paraprofessionals can be set against a rise in teacher numbers from 42,605 in 1998 to 50,950 in 2008. This represents an increase in the deployment of paraprofessionals from 24% to 28% over the ten year period<sup>1</sup>.

Numbers of English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) paraprofessionals, specifically, cannot be firmly ascertained for several reasons. Firstly, there is often overlap between paraprofessional roles in schools, i.e. some paraprofessionals provide in-class support and at other times withdraw students, some paraprofessionals are employed to work with ESOL students as well as other kinds of students such as those with special needs. Consequently many paraprofessionals are funded from a mix of ESOL and other funding. Secondly, schools self report on the use of funding, and whether they report and what they report on, can vary. Nonetheless, in 2008, 627 schools (representing 50% of the 1,217 schools funded for ESOL support) reported that there were 189 schools that utilised Ministry of Education (MOE) funded paraprofessionals to provide in-class ESOL support and 255 schools that employed MOE funded paraprofessionals to provide small group withdrawal ESOL support. These figures no doubt overlap considerably because in our experience many paraprofessionals are employed for both purposes in the same school, depending on student need. Further, these schools identified that they also provided ESOL support from their own funding of paraprofessionals. One hundred and ten schools self-funded paraprofessionals for in-class ESOL support. One hundred and eight schools self-funded paraprofessionals for small group withdrawal ESOL support. Some schools used their own funds to employ more paraprofessionals and others used their own funds to extend the hours of MOE funded paraprofessionals. From this data, tentative though it is, it is obvious that paraprofessionals

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<sup>1</sup> This information has been obtained through personal enquiries to the Demographic and Statistical Analysis Unit, Education Information and Analysis Group, Ministry of Education, Wellington, January 2009.



are a prominent feature in the educational lives of many English Language Learner (ELL) students<sup>2</sup>.

This report forms the second part of a two year study on the practices of ESOL paraprofessionals working with ELL migrant students. The first part of the study (Harvey, Stacey & Richards, 2008) was carried out in 2007 and described the practices of ESOL paraprofessionals working in initial reading programmes. This large regional study bridged all levels of the New Zealand school system and was carried out across the Auckland isthmus. The research resulted in a number of findings, the most predominant of which was the need for ongoing specialised ESOL training for paraprofessionals as well as professional development for the teachers who direct their work.

This second part of the research describes and evaluates the efficacy of the Ministry sponsored English Language Assistant (ELA) professional development programme through an analysis of the changing practices of ten ESOL paraprofessionals who participated in the programme. Each of the paraprofessionals and their Coordinating Teachers (CTs) were interviewed at the beginning of the course and at the end of the year. The paraprofessionals were observed teaching ELL students three times over the course of the year.

In this chapter, we present a short overview of the general paraprofessional literature, focusing on that which we found relevant to the general topic of ESOL paraprofessional practices. Following that is a summary of the key areas of development for paraprofessionals identified in our 2007 study (Harvey et al., 2008) and then a brief overview of the history of the ELA professional development programme and its goals. The chapter ends with an outline of the organisation of the report.

## **1.1 Paraprofessionals and the literature**

Much of the current literature on paraprofessionals has arisen from paraprofessional work with special needs children. However, many of the issues are salient for paraprofessionals working with ELL students. The majority of paraprofessionals are women who tend to be re-entering the workforce after a period of absence and generally live near the schools they work

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<sup>2</sup> Researcher correspondence with Ministry of Education, January, 2009.

in (Pickett, Likins & Wallace, 2003). Significantly, paraprofessionals predominantly teach and support in areas of high specialisation, for example, students with learning disabilities, students from very diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds and students with high physical needs. Giangreco (1999) notes that one of the biggest concerns with paraprofessionals is their lack of training coupled with the considerable time they spend with high, or at least, extra needs students.

Consequently the issue of ongoing training and education for paraprofessionals has been an area of considerable interest in the literature. This ranges from sharing ideas for school-based inductions and focussed training sessions with teachers (for example, Cobb, 2007; Hauge & Babkie, 2006) to the analysis of comprehensive career advancement programmes (Pickett et al., 2003). In the United States, these latter programmes began in the 1960s as a way of moving paraprofessionals and other non-traditional students into teacher education (Pickett et al., 2003; Kaplan, 1977) at a time of low teacher numbers and in recognition of the need to train teachers more able to relate to the communities in which they were teaching.

Professional development for paraprofessionals remaining in the role, however, seems to be patchy (Giangreco, 2003). This is a concern because many paraprofessionals have an inadequate repertoire of strategies and educational theories for the range of instructional situations in which they find themselves (Forster & Holbrook, 2005; Harvey et al., 2008). This is because, for many paraprofessionals, their work has evolved well beyond the original paraprofessional role of administrative support. Increasingly the paraprofessional role involves instruction and is often unsupervised (Forster & Holbrook, 2005; Likins, 2003; Harvey et al., 2008).

Added to concerns about paraprofessional training is the lack of teacher direction in planning and the paucity of time paraprofessionals spend in preparation for teaching sessions with learners. A two year evaluation of the work of classroom assistants in Scottish primary schools illustrates a number of these points. Classroom assistants in the study were not grouped according to the type of teacher/student they supported, however the group did include assistants supporting ELL students. With reference to planning, 84% of classroom assistants were assigned tasks by teachers only when they arrived in the classroom; 53% liaised with teachers informally at breaks; 50% of participants listed planning tasks in a diary or notebook; 35% of participants met teachers occasionally without pupils present and only

25% met teachers regularly without pupils present (Wilson, Schlapp & Davidson, 2003, p. 200).

Related issues are those of paraprofessional relationships and communication with teachers. Giangreco (2003) writes that teachers can be so relieved at having a paraprofessional in their classroom to deal with a student/s with special needs that they disengage from teaching the student/s themselves. Moreover, if the paraprofessional has had any level of training (or many years of experience) they may well be deferred to as the person with the expertise as far as a particular student or group of students is concerned. Giangreco (2003) warns against this and urges teachers to take responsibility for directing learning for *all* their students including those with high/special needs. A corollary is that teachers need more training themselves in how to direct the instructional activities of paraprofessionals, either through pre-service or in-service training (French, 2001; Downing, Ryndak & Clark, 2000; Wallace, Shin, Bartholomay & Stahl, 2001). An important feature of the ELA professional development programme sponsored by the Ministry of Education, is that CTs attend the six day course run over one semester alongside the paraprofessionals that they direct.

## **1.2 Part one of the research: Description and evaluation of paraprofessional practices in supporting initial reading programmes**

The first stage of the research is reported in Harvey et al. (2008). This was a qualitative study which included as participants, twenty eight supervising teachers and twenty four paraprofessionals. Data for the project was gathered through interviews with teachers and paraprofessionals and observations of paraprofessionals working with ELL students across primary, intermediate and secondary schools. Interview and observation data was augmented by ERO (Education Review Office) reports for all the schools involved, as well as ESOL verification reports obtained through the Ministry of Education.

The range and diversity of settings, practices and materials paraprofessionals supported students with in their initial reading and wider ESOL programmes was considerable. Concomitantly, the levels of effectiveness of paraprofessionals across all school sectors also varied widely with some paraprofessionals working very effectively, while there were others who were not. In situations where paraprofessionals were not working effectively, they tended to be working in roles which exceeded the Ministry's guidelines (Ministry of

Education, 2006) that is, they were working largely autonomously without clear teacher direction or supervision. A clear finding of the report was that professional development is needed for paraprofessionals working with ELL students. Areas that the researchers found needed particular attention were as follows:

1. **Planning:** Researchers found that sessions were more effective and student learning optimised where there were clear routines and guidelines for students and paraprofessionals to follow. Planning was most effective where paraprofessionals were working in dedicated ESOL units with ESOL teachers who incorporated paraprofessionals explicitly into their planning. It was important in these situations that there was ongoing incidental and scheduled face to face communication between the ESOL teachers and paraprofessionals.

In many instances, however, liaison between the paraprofessionals and/or the ESOL teacher and mainstream teachers was sporadic, relying on chance meetings in the staffroom or school grounds. Some participants (teachers and paraprofessionals) raised the concern that paraprofessionals were only paid for their hours teaching students and not for any planning time. This tended to mitigate against regular planning sessions between teachers and paraprofessionals.

2. **Group size:** Paraprofessional interactions with students at all levels seemed to be most successful when they were working with groups of four or fewer students, although some particularly successful sessions were observed in intermediate schools of paraprofessionals working with very large groups of students (with some students trained as peer tutors). In small groups, the researchers found that students were engaged and very keen to learn from paraprofessionals. Many students enjoyed the extra attention and gained confidence in smaller withdrawal groups.
3. **Questioning:** While some paraprofessionals in the study were effective questioners, others consistently lost learning opportunities by not pushing students to consider a range of issues in relation to texts. The research team observed a predominance of questioning in relation to the meaning and pronunciation of individual words but there were fewer predictive, endophoric and exophoric questions.

4. Feedback: Paraprofessionals, on the whole, gave ongoing, encouraging, positive feedback to students but often this was neither specific nor differentiated according to purpose or learning context.
5. Materials and resources: Particular areas needing development were the ability of paraprofessionals to select appropriately levelled material and the practice of providing strong visual support for written texts.
6. Language support: Some paraprofessionals found it difficult to gloss new vocabulary for students and to explain language points effectively.
7. Working with culturally and linguistically diverse students: Some paraprofessionals treated students differentially according to their ethnic background and needed more awareness around their own practices in this regard. Another area for attention was the status of the home language in the classroom and how to best work with this.

### **1.3 The ELA programme**

The English Language Assistant (ELA) professional development programme began in 2002. It was introduced as part of realising the government's goal of 'increasing the participation and achievement of migrant students across all areas of education<sup>3</sup>'. A key platform of the goal was to increase ELL proficiency in English and by 2002 a number of paraprofessionals were working with ELLS in schools in order to help realise the goal. The project description noted:

The need for training for those who assist in English language learning is supported both by anecdotal evidence, from verification reports on the use of ESOL funding and by data from formal and informal surveys and research commissioned by the Ministry of Education on provisions both for students funded for ESOL support and for international fee paying students<sup>4</sup>.

In 2002, training for paraprofessionals working with ELLs focussed on tailoring the course to Pasifika paraprofessionals. In subsequent years the focus of participants shifted as sources of targeted funding changed. For example, in 2003 the course was funded from migrant

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<sup>3</sup> Letter to Principal introducing training, 2003.

<sup>4</sup> Project Description in personal correspondence from Daniel Haddock, January, 2009.

professional development money but in 2004, funding for international students was used and the focus for training shifted to ESOL paraprofessionals working with international students. Since 2002, 652 participants from 146 schools have taken part in the ELA professional development programme. Courses have been held predominantly in Auckland, but also in Wellington, Hawkes Bay and Hamilton.

Quality indicators for the ELA programme as identified by the course leader in Milestone One were described as follows:

- Optimise the English language teaching and support ELAs provide for students from language backgrounds other than English.
- Enhance and expand ELA's professional and personal capacities.
- Develop further the understandings, abilities, skills and practices of ELA's in English language teaching and support.
- ELAs to gain a better understanding of their role in the school and in language programmes, and become fully participatory and effective in their role and position, recognised and effectively utilised.
- ELAs to become more confident to deliver and apply enhanced understanding and competencies in Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), as well as general oracy and literacy development, teaching and learning.
- ELAs to develop as lifelong learners.
- Participating schools to have a number of trained ELAs, with enhanced understandings and practices in learning and English/language development, recognising them as key contributors to the educational progress of selected students.
- Target students, that is, Pasifika, Māori, Non-English speaking background/ New learners of English (NESB/NLOE) students with special needs in learning and language, will show gains in English language development, in oracy and literacy.
- The coordinating teachers will have undertaken the key role of coordinating, supporting and organising the effective delivery of the ELAs' work in the school, with identifiable personal and professional gains (van Hees, 2004, p.5).

ELAs themselves were to:

- have gained a better understanding of their role in the school and language programme;
- have become more fully participatory and effective in their role and position; take an active part as professional staff members and be recognised and effectively utilised for their specific areas of expertise and work;
- have developed enhanced, understanding and competencies in English language oracy and literacy development, teaching and learning, especially with Pasifika and new migrant, dual language, dual culture learners;
- be better able to diagnose learner strengths and needs, and make informed decisions about approaches and ways of working that progress their learning and English language acquisition;
- have confidence to communicate well with teachers, to work effectively alongside them, and independently, in order to maximise English language outcomes for students;
- through this training, have opened up and enhanced their present capacities and extended their professional/lifelong learning pathways in this specialised area of work.

Quality indicators were also identified for schools, coordinating teachers and students (van Hees, 2004, p.5).

The course was delivered in six full day workshops. These were entitled:

1. Language assistant effectiveness: 'The Heart of the Matter'.
2. Developing and enriching concepts and language: First principles.
3. Developing and enriching concepts and language with a bilingual student.
4. Scaffolding for language.
5. Effective reading 'to' and 'with' children.
6. Effective writing development with students: How to make the difference.

## **1.4 Organisation of the report**

This report is organised into eight chapters. The focus of the entire report is to describe the changes in paraprofessional practices over 2008 as a result of participation in the ELA course. The second chapter describes the design of the research as well as the approach to

analysis. In this chapter, we consider the limitations of the research and also describe the demographics of the participants and schools. Chapter three provides biographical data about participants and examines organisational and affective aspects of paraprofessionals' roles in schools. Chapter four analyses how paraprofessionals' practices and knowledge of pedagogy changed over the year while chapter five considers the changes in participants' understanding of English language and their ability to impart this to students. Chapter six looks at the use of resources in detail and chapter seven considers the connection between the ELA course and ongoing learning for the paraprofessionals. Chapter eight provides a summary of findings and issues to consider for ongoing ESOL paraprofessional development.



## **Chapter Two Approach to research**

### **2.1 Background**

At the beginning of 2007, AUT University (Auckland University of Technology) was contracted by the Ministry of Education to investigate paraprofessional practice in ESOL programmes in primary, intermediate and secondary schools in a regional study across the Auckland isthmus. The first part of that study required that the team evaluate the practices of paraprofessionals involved in initial reading programmes for ELL students. This second part of the study required that the team evaluate the paraprofessional ELA programme based on an analysis of paraprofessionals' changing practices during the year in which they undertook ELA training.

The brief was to:

... provide an evaluation of the 2008 ELA programme, based on pre-, during and post-training information gathered from interviews with and observations of participants from a sample of schools (Ministry of Education, 2007).

The research team received AUT ethical approval for part two on 25 February, 2008. The approval number was 08/04 (see Appendix Three). Because of the year-long duration of the study and the variety of different research tools that needed to be deployed at different times, this was a staged application with subsequent staged approvals following. The ethics documentation presented to participants consisted of an initial introductory letter to principals, a participation information sheet and a consent form. Copies of this documentation are in Appendix One of the report.

### **2.2 Design of part two of the research**

The research conducted for this contract was qualitative in nature. The size of the 2008 sample ( $n = 10$  paraprofessionals and  $n = 9$  teachers) did not enable quantitative analysis. The research aimed to be descriptive and analytical. The focus was on the changing practices (as a result of the ELA programme) and contexts of the paraprofessionals in their daily work in ESOL programmes with ELL students throughout the 2008 academic year. While one of the three researchers attended each of the six ELA sessions and graduation, this was for

information purposes only and the notes from these sessions were used as contextual information rather than as data.

### **2.3 Data gathering**

The data for the project was gathered through interviews and observations. This was augmented by ERO (Education Review Office) reports for all the schools involved as well as ESOL verification reports obtained through the Ministry of Education.

Data was collected in the following way:

1. Ten paraprofessionals from Years 1-6 were interviewed twice. The first interviews were held in March, 2008. Eight paraprofessionals were interviewed after one ELA session and two were interviewed after the second session on 15 March, 2008. As has been noted, final ethical approval was not granted until 25 February, 2008 and there was some delay at the beginning of the year in securing consent from participants especially since many ESOL programmes in schools were not underway for a couple of weeks after school started.

All the paraprofessional participants were interviewed for the second time in November, between three and four months after the final ELA session.

2. Ten paraprofessionals from Years 1-6 were observed while teaching three times during 2008. Eight paraprofessionals were observed after one ELA session and two were observed after the second session on 15 March, 2008. All the paraprofessionals were observed for the second time between the end of June and early September. They were observed for the third time in November, 2008. Each observation was for the duration of one teaching session for one group of students, usually between thirty minutes and an hour.
3. Nine CTs from Years 1-6 were interviewed twice. Again the interviews were held in March, 2008 with researchers often interviewing teachers and paraprofessionals and undertaking an observation in the one visit. Seven CTs were interviewed after one ELA session and two were interviewed (just) after the second. The interviews focussed on the teachers' practices of support for paraprofessionals, and their observations of paraprofessional practices and changes over the course of the year.

4. Selected copies of paraprofessional assignments and course evaluations were collected from research participants in order to triangulate findings and further contextualise the experiences and practices of paraprofessionals as they undertook the ELA training.

Consequently, although the research and analysis was ongoing, there were three key data collection stages over the course of 2008. These were as follows:

Stage One (March, 2008): Initial interviews with paraprofessionals and teachers, initial observations of paraprofessionals.

Stage Two: Second observations of paraprofessionals.  
(Late June to early September, 2008)

Stage Three (November, 2008): Final interviews with paraprofessionals and teachers, final observations of paraprofessionals.

The collection of copies of assignments and evaluations were ongoing during the year. An observation prompt sheet informed observations, and handwritten notes were taken during observations. Notes were also taken during interviews. These were then transferred into electronic files.

A fine grained analysis was achieved through the coding of themes from interview and observation notes and assignment and evaluation data. The analysis was gradual, incremental and initially tentative so that premature explanation and conclusions were avoided (Tolich and Davidson, 1999).

## **2.4 Participant characteristics**

Coordinating teachers and paraprofessionals were all drawn from a particular ELA cohort which was concentrated in one area of Auckland. Consequently the decile range of participating schools was less extensive than what were able to work from in Part One of the study (Harvey et al., 2008). The school deciles were as follows: three schools were decile ten, three were decile nine, two were decile six and two were decile five. All the CTs were female and nine of the paraprofessionals were female and one was male. Further bio data on paraprofessionals and teachers is presented in chapter three.

## **2.5 Risk factors**

An important part of our approach to research (and a significant feature of our ethical approval) was to protect the identity of our participants and participating schools. We have achieved this by not using proper names at all, nor revealing identifying information about participants or their schools. To this end, although there was one male in the paraprofessional group of participants all participants have been referred to as ‘she’.

In our experience it could have been possible for participating schools to think they and their staff might have been obliged to participate in the research because it was funded through the Ministry of Education. However, we went to considerable lengths to explain to principals, potential participant coordinating teachers and paraprofessionals their rights to voluntary consent and their right to withdraw from the research without explanation or negative consequences. We also explained our independent status as researchers. Although we had no withdrawals once people had consented to participate in the research, we did have several paraprofessionals exercise their right not to participate. This was despite principals and senior teachers being supportive of the research. We took this to be an indication that our initial meetings and explanations of the project to potential participants were rigorous and ‘pitched’ appropriately.

## **2.6 Research tools**

In the first round of interview questions for paraprofessionals (see Appendix Two) there were thirty one indicative questions relating to the categories of background information, knowledge of the English language, pedagogical and related practices, school relationships and professional development and ongoing learning. The first interview schedule for teachers (see Appendix Two) included thirty six questions covering the same categories as well as an additional category relating to teachers themselves.

In the final paraprofessional interview there were thirty five indicative questions organised into the same categories as above with the addition of a category relating to the ELA course itself. In the final teacher interview schedules, again the categories of questions stayed the same; there were thirty eight indicative questions and there was an additional category for the teachers to discuss the impact of the ELA course on themselves.

For each of the observations the same observation schedule was referred to. This consisted of ten prompts relating to the paraprofessional practices in the lesson being taught (see Appendix Two).

## **2.7 Limitations of the study**

A number of limitations have constrained the conduct of this research. The timing of ethical approval and the logistics of recruiting the ten paraprofessionals early in the school year delayed the first round of data collection until after the first ELA session in eight cases, and after two ELA sessions in two cases. Ideally, the first round of data collection should have occurred prior to the first ELA session. However, in some schools, paraprofessionals had not started teaching at this time and were still involved in planning for the year.

The relatively high deciles of the schools (see section 2.4) meant that participating schools were not ‘typical’. The nature of qualitative study means that it can rarely be generalised anyway. Nevertheless the paraprofessional stories over 2008 are important for ascertaining the effectiveness of the ELA course in this context.

It has been noted that there was one male amongst the paraprofessional participants. While this ratio of nine to one possibly reflects the balance of male to female paraprofessionals (there seem to be many more female paraprofessionals than male) it does not allow us to show a picture of gendered differences in relation to practice changes over the year.

One of the quality indicators for the course is that ELAs develop their own proficiency in English. This indicator arose as a result of experiences by the trainers on one of the early courses where many of the paraprofessionals were ELLs themselves with relatively low levels of proficiency in English (van Hees, J., 2004, p.24). Eight of the paraprofessional participants in the current research were first language speakers of English and the two bilingual speakers were European and had native speaker proficiency in English. In this sense, also, the group was not representative of the wider paraprofessional workforce in Auckland where a number of paraprofessionals are Asian and/or Pasifika, and bilingual.

Another limitation of the research was that in observations, researchers sometimes found that they were being shown ‘model’ or one off lessons containing what paraprofessionals and CTs

thought the researchers wanted to see (for example, lessons and materials modelled on the ELA course) rather than what they normally did with students. A problem here was that it was then difficult to ascertain the relevance of the ELA course to what paraprofessionals were expected to do in schools on a regular basis.

Researchers were occasionally observing one-off groups constructed for paraprofessional teaching sessions because the usual students were elsewhere (on a trip, at swimming etc). Teachers and paraprofessionals had obligingly arranged the groups thinking we wanted to see them with ELLs and it did not necessarily matter which ones. The researchers felt that participants (teachers and paraprofessionals) were doing their best to accommodate what the researchers had asked for in sometimes complex timetabling contexts and did not insist on making another time for a more usual grouping of learners.

While the paraprofessional participants have remained constant throughout the year, the students they have taught have not. The student groups have varied in all but one group of observations. The research was designed in this way and it has meant that researchers have been able to see the considerable diversity of teaching settings and students that each paraprofessional works with. However, it has also meant that researchers have not been able to observe how paraprofessionals work consistently with a group of students over an academic year.

The spaces in which observations took place were not always ideal for observation. In some cases the situation was just too noisy to hear the interactions between students and paraprofessionals, and in others it was very cramped with hardly enough room for the researcher to write. This sometimes affected the detail with which data could be recorded.

While researchers were able to attend the six ELA course sessions, data gathering during these sessions was not a part of course design. During the ELA course, researchers took notes to aid their interpretations of paraprofessional practices and improve their understanding of the context. They were not always able to obtain course materials and outlines and therefore do not hold a full record of what was taught on the course. Neither were they required to discuss the course with the course leader or other teachers/advisers on ELA.

It is important to note that this research focuses on an evaluation of the ELA professional development programme from one very specific (although, arguably one of the most important) angle, that of changes in ESOL paraprofessional practices over 2008, the year in which the paraprofessional research participants undertook the six day ELA paraprofessional course. It should be noted that considering changes in paraprofessional practices only is a relatively narrow basis on which to build an evaluation and in this sense it is a further and perhaps the most important limitation of the study.

Other areas that could have been considered in an evaluation are: the quality of delivery of the programme, the long term (beyond a few months) sustainability of practices learned in the programme, the views of all participants obtained through an in depth questionnaire, the structure of the programme and its long term continuation and potential for replicability, and the policy framework in which the programme is nested.

## **Chapter Three The working contexts of paraprofessionals**

This chapter considers the roles and working contexts of the paraprofessionals in relation to their CTs and the classroom teachers, and the changes to those roles after the ELA course. It also reports on how the school profile of the paraprofessionals shifted over 2008 and changes in their planning and lesson preparation arrangements as a result of the ELA course. In addition, the chapter details the wide range of backgrounds CTs and paraprofessionals brought to the programme, their qualifications and previous work experience.

### **3.1 Paraprofessionals' backgrounds**

The paraprofessionals had a variety of previous educational experiences and qualifications, as can be seen from Table 1. Six of the ten paraprofessionals were born and educated outside New Zealand, four were from the United Kingdom and two from countries where English was not their first language. Three paraprofessionals had completed degree qualifications, in Languages, English and Business from the United Kingdom, Europe and New Zealand respectively. One paraprofessional was in the second year of teacher training and two others had previously enrolled in some form of teacher training but had not continued with the study. The majority, nine out of ten paraprofessionals, had 'pathwayed' into the role through some form of voluntary, parent-help or associated work in a kindergarten or school.

Only three paraprofessionals had a formal teacher aide (TA) qualification, one of which had a focus on special needs. Although three paraprofessionals had completed a range of related courses including CLTA (Certificate in Language Teaching to Adults), ESOL Home Tutor training and literacy and grammar courses, seven had no previous specific ESOL training for working with younger students.



Previous education	Earlier work experience	Pathway to role of paraprofessional	Teacher Aide (TA) training	ESOL training /experience
BA from United Kingdom. Studied languages (listed five).	Overseas commerce background. Worked in accountancy with Auckland Kindergarten Association.	Saw the job advertised.	No TA training.	A language teaching to adults course at University of Auckland. Other language study and wide knowledge of English.
Degree in Business from Europe.	Office administration. Day care help in New Zealand and Europe.	Parent help in schools and kindergartens. TA for special needs primary student. Moved to ESOL role in current school.	No TA training. Helped in role by CT.	No ESOL training. Had taught a European language as second language.
Degree in English (New Zealand). Started teacher training (New Zealand) but did not complete.	Administration in University and in hospitals in United Kingdom.	CCS TA supporting special needs student at kindergarten. International student administration and liaison at secondary school. Some reading support. Current role was special needs and ESOL, now only ESOL.	No TA training.	ESOL Home Tutor training. CCS in-house training management and behaviour.
United Kingdom - O Levels.	Retail for 13 years overseas.	Worked in kindergarten supporting several children. Worked for special education, with special needs child. Moved to ESOL.	No TA training.	No ESOL training. Experience in the job.
Armed forces. Currently studying second year teacher training through Massey University distance programme.	Armed forces.	Worked at local kindergarten. Parent help (special needs) then moved to ESOL.	No TA training. Training to work with special needs children.	Not until ELA course.
New Zealand secondary school to fifth form.	13 years as a receptionist, secretary, sales representative.	Wanted to be a teacher. While doing TA Certificate volunteered to get experience. Gained experience and learnt a lot from teachers.	TA certificate (Massey University).	No ESOL qualifications. Only recent experience.
New Zealand secondary school to sixth form. Certificate in Social Studies from Victoria University in, late 80s. Open Polytechnic Certificates in Business and Computing, and Web design. Speed reading programmes, First Aid and Psychology for Human Resources.	Retail, office, secretarial and human resource work. Trainer for TOPs course on adult computer training.	Voluntary work teaching overseas, also reading programmes and parent help in Pacific country.	Completed TA Certificate in 2008.	No ESOL qualifications. Three years experience.
New Zealand secondary school. Certificates in Talk to Learn, Sign Language, Home Tutoring. Gained limited authority to teach, 2003.	Secretary. When children at school was a librarian.	School librarian. School received more ESOL students. Helped in the classroom. Principal encouraged her to do a literacy course. Private tutoring and ESOL work at school	No TA training, learnt on the job.	Literacy course, AUT Grammar For Teachers' Course. Online 3-4 day intensive TESOL course.
Secondary school overseas. Incomplete Montessori and teacher training.	Worked in banks, overseas and New Zealand. Was also involved in training new recruits in human resources role.	After school care at a primary school. Church volunteer to support refugee families. TA position was advertised in the paper.	No TA training.	No formal ESOL training.
United Kingdom O levels, bank training, IT training course. Two Open University science papers.	Undertook bank apprenticeship, series of other jobs.	Overseas, school lunch supervisor. One day asked to cover for someone sick – special needs class. Enjoyed it, decided to train.	Overseas TA training with focus on special needs. Worked four years overseas as TA special needs.	No ESOL training or experience.

Table 1: Background of the paraprofessionals

### 3.2 CTs' backgrounds and ESOL knowledge

CTs brought a considerable depth and breadth of experience and qualifications to their role and to the ELA course. Of the ten CTs, five had an ESOL qualification or ESOL study had formed part of their academic qualification. Of these, one teacher had a Diploma in TESSOL, one was enrolled in a Diploma in TESSOL programme in 2008, another had completed two Diploma in TESSOL papers and one had an ESOL component in her bachelor's degree. The five other CTs had no formal ESOL qualifications, although as can be seen from Table 2, they may have had specialist qualifications in other educational areas. Six of the CTs had degree qualifications, including one with a Masters in Educational Management. Another teacher was completing a Masters in Educational Psychology. Four other CTs with bachelor degrees had majored in a mix of education and language subjects. In addition to their ESOL coordinator role, four of the CTs had other management responsibilities. There were two Deputy Principals, one of whom was also a Special Education Needs Coordinator (SENCO), one Assistant Principal who was also a SENCO and another who was a SENCO and responsible for Reading Recovery.

When asked about whether their knowledge in working with ELL students had changed as a result of the ELA course, six of the nine CTs pointed out that the ELA course had prompted them to reconnect with their prior knowledge. They talked about the course having, *'refreshed my memory about best practice'*, *'made me think back to my previous study'*, *'reminded me of the basics'*, *'confirmed what I thought'*, *'reinforced what I know about how children learn best'* and *'reinforced what I knew and also gave me new information'*. As well as the identified connection to their previous knowledge, two of these teachers also felt they had learned more about the expansion of students' oral language. This topic was a strong component of the ELA course. One CT commented, *'I now take a resource and can draw out more oral language with children and develop this more appropriately, [...] less is more'*. Another teacher found the way that the ELA course built on language techniques was new to her, *'for example, sentence building from vocabulary – phrases – sentences – paragraphs'* and she also indicated, *'I know it's okay to take time to expand'*. Another CT with a composite role reported a transfer of learning to other areas e.g. Reading Recovery. She felt that this added value to what she was already doing.

CT's role in respect of the paraprofessional	CT's knowledge, qualification and experience working with ELL students
CT is Assistant Principal, Director of Special Programmes – umbrella role, including SENCO and ESOL.	Masters in Educational Management. Teaching experience and experience with ESOL but no formal qualification. SENCO for four years.
CT is Assistant Principal and shares physical space with paraprofessional. Liaises with paraprofessionals in regards to what they do.	No formal ESOL qualifications. Trained teacher. Has provided learning support for twelve years, looking after international students and students with learning difficulties.
CT supervises and supports the paraprofessional.	Degree in English. Just completed Diploma in TESSOL. Has attended 'Self Pacing Boxes' workshop. Some ESOL experience in previous schools.
CT is Deputy Principal, SENCO and ESOL coordinator.	Completing a taught Masters in Educational Psychology.
CT is Deputy Principal. Is also specialist ESOL coordinator, responsible for paraprofessionals' observations, assessment and appraisal.	Degree in Educational Psychology. Diploma TESSOL study (University of Auckland). Some experience with special needs students.
CT has ESOL coordinating role.	Diploma in TESSOL, CELTA, Post Graduate Diploma TEFL (London). Two and a half years overseas working with children.
ESOL CT - new position in the school. Responsible for mentoring, organisation, timetable, planning and overview. Liaison between teachers and management. Helping with ELA course.	Degree in Education, Linguistics, English and Māori. Diploma in teaching. Interested in language acquisition. Has completed two TESSOL papers.
Five paraprofessionals in the school.  CT responsible for paraprofessionals, students they work with, timetable and materials. All touch base at least once a day.	BA with a teaching focus and an ESOL component (USA). Experience teaching overseas in country where English not the first language.
CT is SENCO, responsible for three paraprofessionals, establishing their timetables and overseeing programmes.	SENCO, including Reading Recovery. Classroom teaching experience. No formal ESOL qualifications. Experience in a multiethnic school.
CT is senior teacher in junior school, takes new entrants class. Responsible for three ELAs and one other paraprofessional. General responsibility for ESOL students.	Diploma in Teaching. First year involved with ESOL students. Interested in ELLs, wants to know more about what they need.

Table 2: Backgrounds of the CTs

Two CTs used the terms '*heaps*' and '*massively*' to indicate the extent of change in their knowledge of working with ELLs. One teacher thought the key messages of the six workshops reinforced what she knew already but also provided new information such as how to coordinate with ELAs. This teacher felt that after the workshop, she knew what instructions and materials to give the paraprofessional and that '*everything was linked to the curriculum more*'.

Two CTs referred to the very important need to understand and take into account individual student's language(s), their previous educational experience and cultural backgrounds. One CT stated that as a result of the ELA course she was now cognisant of students' *'past culture and history'*, recognised that students were bicultural and saw the need to include families in school life. Similarly, another teacher felt that although the content of the ELA course was not new for her, she had *'gained from the duality work and was remembering to value first culture and language more'*.

Two teachers mentioned the concurrent study they were undertaking. For one CT, masters level TESSOL study had more of an impact on the knowledge of working with ELL students than the ELA course. The other CT found that the two courses she was studying concurrently which were the ELA course and CLTA, complimented and reinforced each other. She felt *'the time was good for consolidating new learning'*.

### **3.3 Paraprofessionals and their roles**

At the beginning of the ELA course, the roles of the paraprofessionals varied from only providing in-class support in mainstream classes working one to one with students. This range also included those who worked only with withdrawal groups, those who worked in separate dedicated ESOL spaces or shared a space with other paraprofessionals and/or the CT. Times worked by paraprofessionals also differed markedly as did the number of hours they were employed for (see Table 3). Four paraprofessionals worked every day from 9-3pm, two of these paraprofessionals worked only in ESOL support, while the other two had composite positions made up of ESOL, and some hours of one or more of: special needs, behaviour and learning, reading or library support. The remaining six paraprofessionals had part time positions. Two worked three and four days a week respectively from 9-3pm, one in an ESOL only situation, and the other a composite position. The remaining part time paraprofessionals worked mornings only, one for an hour a day, five days a week, two worked every morning; one with a composite role, the other ESOL only, and another paraprofessional worked three mornings a week supporting ESOL students.

Time in current position 2008	Hours	Learner characteristics	Responsible to:
In fifth year of the role. Started in 2004 with special needs. From 2007 teaching ESOL.	One hour, 9-10am daily.	ESOL students.	ESOL CT and DP.
In first year of role.	Nine hours over three mornings.	In-class support for first session. Small groups after morning break.	ESOL CT.
In fourth year of the role. Has had variety and two or three terms of ESOL.	9-3pm daily.	A special needs student. Rainbow reading for students below cohort. Students with behavioural needs in the mainstream.	Reports directly to DP who is ESOL coordinator. Has encouraged paraprofessional to talk to teachers, particularly at morning tea.
In second year of the role.	9-3pm daily.	In-class support. One or two students in withdrawal situation.	ESOL CT.
In tenth year of the role.	9-3pm daily, 11 ½ hrs ESOL per week.	Rainbow reading, Library, ESOL withdrawal groups.	SENCO.
In third year of the role.	20 hrs a week ESOL. Five mornings week.	ESOL students	ESOL CT. DP for administration.
In third year of the role.	9-3pm, three days a week.	All in-class support.	ESOL CT.
In third year of the role. Started working with special needs students. Now role is all ESOL.	9-3pm, four days a week.	ESOL withdrawal groups, 1 to1, 1 to 2.	SENCO
Started 2008, first year in the role, special needs and ESOL	9-12pm daily.	Supports years 1& 2 students with behaviour and learning, and ESOL.	SENCO for administration, assessment, appraisal. Class teacher for daily needs and plan.
Started as a librarian 18 years ago. 4-5 years in ESOL.	9-3pm daily.	ESOL groups.	Junior class teacher and AP.

Table 3: The nature of paraprofessional work at the beginning of the ELA course

After the ELA course, there were few structural changes in the roles, timetables or the number of hours worked. Only one paraprofessional's hours had changed markedly during the year from mornings only, to 9-3pm daily. However, other changes were reported. A change in the focus on the year level supported was mentioned by two paraprofessionals, for example, *'now (I'm) more in the junior section'* and the other, *'mostly working with seniors'*. Three paraprofessionals indicated there had been a change in the macro skill area they focussed on, or that they included different macro skills in their support repertoire after the ELA course. For example, one paraprofessional who had been supporting reading development before the ELA course was involved mostly with oral language development

after the course. A change in the amount of writing support was mentioned by two paraprofessionals, *'don't do as much writing, do more talking - oracy'* and *'doing writing assistance'*. Another paraprofessional requested a change of role in the school after the ELA course and was providing ESOL support in-class for a wider variety of children. She was no longer specialising in phonological awareness. The CT concurred that there had been *'considerable change'*, *'there was not as much phonology'* and the assistance was now *'more child focussed'*.

It was difficult to clearly ascertain if there had been any changes in whether paraprofessionals worked in groups, in-class, one to one or on a one to two basis, after the ELA course and whether any such changes were directly related to the ELA course. As detailed in Table 3, the nature of the roles of the paraprofessionals involved in the research was incredibly varied. Although some paraprofessionals had structured regular timetables, others, particularly those who had a composite role or supported students in-class and took direction from the classroom teacher had to be prepared to be flexible, for example, *'.....in-class or take one to one or two students out, whatever the teacher wants'*. This person's CT reinforced this, *'teachers are all different, request different things for teacher aides to do'* and another teacher stated, *'teacher aide doesn't have a specific withdrawal space, mostly in-class support [but] some teachers request withdrawal'*. Two paraprofessionals said after the ELA course they were now working with groups, or had more opportunity to do more group work, whereas others had had a change in the amount of in-class work they were doing, for example, *'no longer in-class with the middles'*.

### **3.4 Paraprofessional attitudes to their roles**

All ten paraprofessionals indicated at the beginning of the ELA course that they felt positive about being a paraprofessional (see Table 4), with six saying that they *'loved it'*, three reporting that they *'enjoyed/really enjoyed it'* and one *'liked'* being a TA and liked *'seeing the students make progress'*. After the course, when asked similar questions, five paraprofessionals reported an increase in confidence, and in some cases, feelings of confidence related to *'having more information'*, *'feeling better about talking to teachers and parents about things'*, *'take(ing) more decisions on my own'* and *'having more tools in the toolbox [and] having more skills to use'*. One paraprofessional spoke of feeling *'enabled'*

because she was ‘not just a Teacher Aide, I feel I’m viewed on an equal footing. I have purpose, I see the bigger picture, helping the children to progress’. These responses reflected the paraprofessionals’ greater understanding of the role, there was an indication of more specific knowledge, and they were able to articulate more why they liked the role.

Three paraprofessionals said there had not been any change in terms of status. For two participants, this lack of change was not negative, as they both felt positive about the job before the ELA course. One of them said, ‘I always felt I was part of the school and included in meetings’. One paraprofessional, although part of the group that expressed an increase in confidence, also commented, ‘It still depends on how you are perceived, nothing has changed. [I am] still a Teacher Aide’.

At the start of the ELA course	After the ELA course
<i>Enjoy the ESOL role in the school.</i>	<i>There hasn't been any change in status for me as I always felt I was part of the school and included in meetings.</i>
<i>Good, I enjoy what I am doing. I never leave feeling I haven't accomplished something.</i>	<i>For me, every time you learn something you feel different. Feel more confident, more tools in the tool box/ skills I use. It still depends on how you are perceived, nothing has changed, still a TA. Although I'm sure the teachers know we went on the course.</i>
<i>I love it. I get a buzz. The kids are wonderful. I enjoyed the age change from secondary to primary. I enjoy the interaction e.g. the greetings in the playground.</i>	<i>Love it. Feel satisfied / enabled. Do feel I'm not just a TA I feel that I'm viewed on equal footing. I have a purpose; I see the bigger picture, helping the children to progress, part of the scaffolding.  Position/ hours have changed and I feel vulnerable.</i>
<i>I love it. The 'goods' far out way the 'cons'. I'm here for the kids.</i>	<i>Changed to a degree. Having more information has given me more confidence. What I'm doing was along the right track. Have always talked to teachers, I feel comfortable with what I'm saying.</i>
<i>Like being a TA. Like seeing the students make progress.</i>	<i>Enjoy it. Overall I feel more confident. I feel happier about what I'm doing because I'm more confident.</i>
<i>Love it, better this year because there is more support. Has been a big change in staffing.</i>	<i>There is no change, not called ELAs.</i>
<i>Love it. Love young people coming in. But sick and tired of being a TA. It is frustrating, think that they should strike for higher rates of pay as it takes the integrity out of the job.</i>	<i>Love it.</i>
<i>Love it, very different from what I thought it would be. Like working with children and the school and staff is very supportive, great facilities.</i>	<i>Much more confident than before. The course has made me think more about how kids have difficulty learning English as well as the diversity and cultural influences they have, and also what differences they bring to school.</i>
<i>Love it.</i>	<i>Great, I really like it. I feel more confident and better about talking to teachers and parents about things.</i>
<i>Very enthusiastic – really enjoy it.</i>	<i>Now doing in class support with a variety of children, not just ESOL. Sick of phonological awareness and asked to take a break from this.</i>

Table 4: Paraprofessionals’ comments on their roles

### 3.5 Support for paraprofessionals

The ELA course provided an opportunity for both teachers and paraprofessionals to network, share ideas with their colleagues from other schools and become aware of how other schools organised their ESOL support. It also provided an opportunity for CTs to work alongside the paraprofessionals in a neutral environment and to get to know them better. Because of their increased awareness of the capabilities of their paraprofessionals, four CTs indicated changes that had taken place or would take place in the future. A need for clearer guidelines around planning and support structures for the paraprofessional was identified by management in one school and it was planned that the paraprofessional would be working more with ESOL students in groups in 2009 rather than providing one to one support. One CT commented after the ELA course that the *'ELA was not a teacher'* and needed more guidelines and support. In another school, although the structural role of the paraprofessional had not changed, the CT indicated she (the CT) had taken more responsibility, *'the paraprofessional has less responsibility now as I am doing all the planning'* and felt that this was better for the students. In another school where there were many new learners of English and no ESOL teachers, the CT in the final interview discussed her awareness of the situation and said that *'because there were so many English language learners and no ESOL teachers in the school, the prominence of the paraprofessionals is higher than it should be'* and the paraprofessionals were *'sometimes seen as the ESOL resource which is a big responsibility'*. One teacher, who now knew the paraprofessional much better, reported that the paraprofessional's role had changed and *'her responsibilities had increased'* because the CT had greater awareness of her strong points and capabilities, and now *'tended to treat them as teachers rather than only teacher aides'*.

The nine CTs were asked if there were any changes in their own role and position in respect to their paraprofessional/s after the ELA course. Six of them reported that there had been no change to their role but one indicated there had been a *'change in her confidence in the ELAs'*. Another CT thought there had been changes in how she *'thought and addressed things since ELA'* and the third commented that *'the paraprofessional had to organise her own time more'*. Two CTs discussed the changes in their roles in terms of the supervision of the paraprofessionals. One CT in particular, who had other management roles in the school, realised that the paraprofessionals needed more support and training to work with difficult students and that because she was busy with her other roles, she could not provide as much



support as the paraprofessionals needed or wanted. The other CT who reported changes, discussed a shift in the relationship between herself and the paraprofessional regarding special programmes. The paraprofessional was to assist with the assessment of children, the selecting of the groups, being responsible for the groups and reporting back to the CT.

Changes in the amount and type of communication between the CT and the paraprofessionals was highlighted. CTs also discussed changes in communication within the group of paraprofessionals where there were several in a school. Three CTs spoke of more general communication, for example, *'I am able to discuss things more easily because we are on the same page. We are now not working in isolation'*. Working more closely as a team was also mentioned, *'closer team than before, more open communication....we were a team before but we have added to that'* and *'I think we've taken opportunities to observe and share what we are doing more'*.

The CTs from three schools indicated more major changes to the ways they were working with the paraprofessionals. At one school where there were several paraprofessionals, they initiated a change because the paraprofessionals felt they *'were better'* and *'wanted more support'*. They appointed a leader, and the CT worked with them to try to create *'a unified group with a timetable, relief release, and access to resources and other school events'*. The CT attempted to meet with the group each week for a regular minuted meeting. Unfortunately this was not always possible because of the difficulties associated with coordinating a number of part time paraprofessionals. The CT expressed some disappointment at not being able to instigate all of the identified actions, including not being able to provide the ELAs with appraisal and observation time. However, she had been successful in negotiating an increase of \$1.00 an hour in the paraprofessionals' fixed position remuneration.

Regular meetings were also instigated in another school, where there were changes in the nature of the communication between the CT and the paraprofessionals. The CT made a submission to the Board of Trustees requesting that the paraprofessionals receive one and a half hours paid planning time for a regular meeting and also eligibility for sick pay. The resulting meeting was divided into three half hour time slots for *'assessing the previous week, planning forward and discussion'*. In addition, the paraprofessionals at this school now have a *'share shelf'* and enjoy collaborating over resources. Like the previous CT, this teacher also identified time constraints as having restricted her ability to follow up or sustain the

momentum of some of the new initiatives. Another teacher also highlighted a change in planning. After the ELA course, the planning for the paraprofessional was done by her so she could ensure the planning was linked to the curriculum.

### **3.6 Time for planning**

Considering the range in the number of hours per week the paraprofessionals were employed and the varied nature of their roles, time spent on preparation and planning and allocations of time for planning varied accordingly. At the beginning of the ELA course, the paraprofessionals all did some form of planning and preparation, including three who indicated that they did this in their own time.

Four schools indicated after the ELA course that there were regular meeting times scheduled for the paraprofessionals and the CT. These meetings were also used for planning and resource discussions. In many cases the CT also reported that other times, when the paraprofessionals were not required or the students they supported were not available, could also be utilised for planning and preparation, for example, assemblies, special events, when the children were eating morning tea, and the forty five to sixty minute lunch break.

In three schools (one with two paraprofessionals participating in the study), there was an increase in the amount of time available for planning and preparation following the ELA course. In contrast, at the end of the year, six paraprofessionals reported that there had been no change in the amount of time allocated or available for planning and preparation as a result of the ELA course.

At the start of the course	After the ELA course
( time not indicated)	There had been a change, 1 ½ hours paid for planning and resource preparation (Thursdays).
1 ½ hours/week and own time, two paraprofessionals work together. Lesson format provided.	No change.
10 minutes a day.	Change to one hour extra, paid per week. Paraprofessional works directly with coordinating teacher who now does all the planning. Paraprofessional adapts the plan.
15 mins/day when students at morning tea.	No change.
30 mins/ start of the day.	No change.
30 mins/day in own time.	No change – no paid planning time.
No timetabled preparation. All in-class work.	No change. One paid day as a one off after ELA to make resources.
No timetabled preparation time. Can use special events/assembly time.	No change.
Own time.	Change to 1 ½ hours paid planning time (Fridays).
Very little, teacher gives paraprofessional plan for the week.	Change to 1 ½ hours paid for planning and resources (Thursdays).

Table 5: The amount of time available for the paraprofessional’s planning

All the paraprofessionals indicated some form of change in the type of preparation they did, even those who had had no increase in the time available for planning. One paraprofessional thought she spent less time planning after the course because she found it easier to think through the planning and her ideas came more quickly. Another paraprofessional thought more about the planning and the actual learning aims for sessions. A change in timetabling was the reason one paraprofessional could plan more easily. After the ELA course she was working with the same students all week and this made it easier for her to recycle vocabulary and link the oral language to the reading which was taught by the CT. For another paraprofessional, after the ELA course, organisational changes meant that she worked directly with the CT in regards to the planning. Three paraprofessionals included information about the ‘reading packs’ they had been making, modelled on the ELA course materials. Two paraprofessionals reiterated that there was still no official paid time for preparation and planning.

### 3.7 Quality of planning

Eight CTs included comments on the nature and quality of paraprofessional preparation following the ELA course. The data gathered is summarised in Table 6. Positive comments were made by five of the CTs on some aspects of the paraprofessionals’ planning and

preparation. Two CTs felt that the paraprofessionals were spending more time on preparation. Three other CTs were also positive about the changes, commenting respectively that the paraprofessional was able to *'better justify what she was doing'*, *'the nature of the planning was slightly different and the paraprofessionals were using ideas and background knowledge from the ELA course'* and the third coordinator thought the paraprofessional had more time and so was able to *'think things through more'*.

Conversely, two CTs thought that the paraprofessional was not doing very much preparation. One went further and said that it was not enough and the paraprofessional *'needed to think about the next step'*. The CT was more aware after completing the ELA course that the paraprofessional needed *'more planning, record keeping and stronger systems'*. Another CT thought that the planning for the paraprofessional, who worked in-class, was the classroom teachers' responsibility.

CT has sometimes reminded classroom teachers they need to have something prepared for paraprofessionals to focus on. It is the classroom teacher's responsibility.
More time, so paraprofessional can think things through more and is not so rushed. CT thought this was working well for the paraprofessional.
Nature of the activities paraprofessionals are planning is slightly different. Using ideas and background knowledge from ELA course.
Not enough planning, needs to think about the next step, needs more systems, more structure, more record keeping. CT more aware of the issues following the ELA course.
Not much preparation. Paraprofessional thought about the topics. Sometimes difficult to link what was taught on the course with the paraprofessional's actual situation.
Paraprofessional much better at justifying what she is doing.
Teacher thought the paraprofessional spent more time on preparation after the ELA course because the change in the paraprofessional's composite role allowed more time. The paraprofessional liked to be fully prepared for her withdrawal lessons.
The CT felt the paraprofessional was doing a lot more preparation.

Table 6: Paraprofessionals' preparation following ELA course (CTs' perspectives)

### 3.8 Communication with classroom teachers

Effective, planned and regular communication between classroom teachers and paraprofessionals is a vital factor in providing needs-based and properly focussed learning for students. When paraprofessionals were questioned about the preparation and contact they had with classroom teachers after the ELA course, they interpreted the questions and responded to them according to their particular contexts. Four paraprofessionals thought there had been

some form of change in their communication with the classroom teachers. One thought she interacted more with the classroom teachers since the ELA course but there was no increase in contact with the CT. Another paraprofessional saw the classroom teachers once a week and the CT was supportive, trying to organise a set weekly time to meet with them. Another paraprofessional thought there had been a slight change as she was more prepared and confident after the ELA course to tell the classroom teachers what she wanted the students to do. Another person also felt there had been some change and she was more prepared to ask the classroom teachers for feedback, confirming that what she was doing with students was also what the classroom teachers wanted.

Of the three paraprofessionals who felt there had been no change in their communication with classroom teachers, two felt the level of communication was good before the ELA course and the other paraprofessional was more tentative, indicating there had been no change but not specifying whether there had been good communication before. One paraprofessional, who did not indicate if there had been a change in her communication with the classroom teachers, clearly stated that she thought the ELAs needed to liaise more with the teachers.

### **3.9 Profiles in schools**

One of the quality indicators for the ELA course was that paraprofessionals gain a better understanding of their role and that they become fully participatory in the school. Consequently, as part of the ELA course, the CTs and the paraprofessionals were asked to report back to their schools about the new practices they had been learnt and how they were implementing these with ELLs. Six groups reported that they had presented information about the ELA course and the work of the ELAs to their staff. Four of the CTs had talked at staff meetings, one had presented at two staff meetings and another CT had modelled reading packs for the other teachers. At two schools, the paraprofessionals had been involved in the presentations at staff meetings. Paraprofessionals felt that these presentations had helped to give teachers in their school more idea of their role and what they were doing to support ELLs. Comments included, *'the teachers have taken ideas from the course to their classrooms'* and *'all staff know the role has changed slightly'*.

One CT, although she had told staff informally at a morning tea meeting that TAs were now English Language Assistants (ELAs), had not given a formal presentation to the school staff.

One of the paraprofessionals was not doing anything special to promote her role in the school as she felt the staff already knew about the ELA course as paraprofessionals from the school had completed the course previously. Another paraprofessional felt that the CT should have promoted the ELAs more.

The promotion of the role of the ELAs by the paraprofessionals and the CT at one school deserves particular mention. The ELA group presented their work at two staff meetings and the staff response was very positive. One of the paraprofessionals became the staff liaison person for a special programme which supported the home languages of the students. Moreover, when the ELAs were working on the duality posters with students, they held a dinner for parents who were able to share and discuss the duality posters with their children. The posters were also shared at assembly. This group of ELAs also organised a week of language instruction across the school involving each of the languages that formed part of the school community. This prompted useful discussion about children from 'other Englishes' backgrounds (for example, British and South African) and monocultural Pakeha students. Parents were involved in the week and led some activities. For example, some came to read fairytales from their culture to the students. All these activities had a positive effect in raising the profile of language and culture issues in the school community as well as enhancing the profile of the ELAs and promoting their role in the school.

### **3.10 Conclusion**

Changes in the paraprofessionals' levels of confidence in their roles were manifested in the increased visibility of their profiles in the schools. This was particularly the case in schools where the paraprofessionals worked more closely together after the ELA course or where the CT had become more aware of the paraprofessionals' strengths and weaknesses through working with them. Paraprofessionals were in general more visible through their actions in the school and their increased confidence in speaking with classroom teachers about the students and the ESOL programme.

The shared common body of knowledge that resulted from attending the ELA course in school groups, in conjunction with the increase in levels of paraprofessional confidence led to an increase in communication within ESOL teams with discussions on aspects of the ELA course and the course tasks. Communication and liaison with classroom teachers regarding

the progress and needs of the students and the ESOL programmes is still an issue. Organising processes and time for this feedback continues to be difficult even though it is seen as an important part of the support provided to the students.

In terms of preparation and planning, some CTs acknowledged that paraprofessionals were more able to justify choices they made regarding what they were doing with the students and using ideas from the ELA course. The lack of paid preparation and planning time remained an issue with most schools although some CTs were able to successfully advocate for paid time for preparation.

Considering the wide range of contexts in which paraprofessionals worked, it may have been advantageous during the ELA course for paraprofessionals, in future, to have time to gather in groups according to the type of supporting roles they had in their schools, for example, groups of paraprofessionals providing in-class support or working with withdrawal groups, or providing reading support only or those with composite roles. This could have provided an opportunity for the paraprofessionals to consolidate the new learning and discuss ways they could implement the strategies modelled on the ELA course in their particular contexts. It would also have provided them with a network of people who work in similar contexts.

## Chapter Four Pedagogical practices

This chapter considers how paraprofessional pedagogical practices changed over 2008, in general and in terms of English language education, in particular. Paraprofessionals and CTs were asked what the paraprofessionals did well with their learners, and what they felt they needed to improve on. The researchers also asked about the achievement of ELL students of paraprofessionals and observed the quality of paraprofessional interactions with students. As well, there were questions about the paraprofessionals' ability to diagnose learner strengths and weaknesses, their ability to question and give feedback and their attitude to students' home languages and cultures. Further data was gained throughout the year from researchers observing the paraprofessionals working with their learners.

### 4.1 What paraprofessionals did well

A key theme in paraprofessional responses at the beginning of the course was that they believed they related well to their learners. Paraprofessionals variously described their approaches as sensitive, motherly, welcoming, patient and friendly. One paraprofessional commented on the skill she felt she had in creating tactile, practical learning experiences for students. These experiences, she believed, extended and stimulated students' oral language. Eight of the CTs responded in a similar way, mentioning the paraprofessionals' rapport, supportiveness, enthusiasm and general confidence in working with their learners. One CT confirmed the practical skills of the paraprofessional, commenting on her ability to provide experiences for the learners which they enjoyed. Another CT said the paraprofessional showed initiative and was a good communicator with both students and staff, checking with them for feedback and direction. Other CT's comments focused on the paraprofessionals' dedication and planning, the speed with which the paraprofessional was able to prepare resources and the control the paraprofessional had with the students. Two other paraprofessionals were seen to work well with phonics and vocabulary, and another made a good attempt to meet the learners' needs.

After the course, paraprofessional responses were noticeably more focused than they had been at the beginning. They no longer mentioned their general rapport with students but rather discussed their learning in detail, using professional language teaching and learning terminology. New learning for paraprofessionals included their ability to develop learners'



macro skills. For example, six paraprofessionals mentioned their increased confidence in developing speaking. They reported that ELLs were producing more and more appropriate English, for example, talking more, using longer sentences, and taking turns when speaking. One paraprofessional was listening more attentively to students. Another said she was developing learners' reading through encouraging them to predict the story from the story title and the pictures. Another paraprofessional commented on her success in co-editing texts with students. As well, many noted that they were providing learners with more repetition of new language, and had the ability to give learners clearer task instructions. Two paraprofessionals discussed the much improved relationship they now had with the CT and the benefits there were in supporting their learners with work that was more related to the school curriculum.

Paraprofessional initial interview	Paraprofessional final interview	CT initial interview	CT final interview
Rapport, children trust her, understands children's needs, has patience. More understanding of language learning because had recently learned a community language.	Better at elaboration, children produce more. Encouraging more speaking using full sentences, asking more questions related to texts during reading.	Has good rapport with students. Building phonic knowledge, Develops vocabulary.	Gets learners wanting to learn, they love going to the class, Gives confidence, works on building vocabulary and phonics.
Interacts well, learners comfortable coming to class, good rapport.	More effective, not working so much in isolation, more linked to class work. Likes having CT on course. Reorganised timetable, now does oral work.	Prepares resources speedily and well.	Starting to scaffold and model more.
Rapport, ELLs comfortable coming to class.	Tries to expand thinking. Learners talking more.	Supportive of students, tries hard to target what they need	Tries to have a good rapport. Prepares resources enthusiastically, needs to remember the language level.
Makes learners comfortable, 'can keep them in order'. Uses positive reinforcement.	Better at focusing on what children say, not just listening on the surface. More aware of need for repetition in lesson, picks up errors more in chatting to children.	Calm doesn't get stressed, has control of students.	Excellent skills, tries to focus on the language content of lessons.
Patient, listens and prompts.	Turn taking, clearer instructions, discusses vocabulary, children doing more. Working on sentence structure, working on blends.	Dedicated, plans and prepares, achieves aims, structures lesson, enthusiastic, clear pronunciation. Paraprofessional had not been observed.	Plans and has goals, knows what she's teaching, more confident, more aware, good rapport, wonderful organisation of school level activity.
Uses eye contact, talks slowly, sensitive to children's needs, has a good relationship.	Listens, allows more time to produce words, discusses pictures more while reading, edits texts better.	Confident, innovative, sensitive to students, develops relationships, takes initiative, checks with staff.	Reflects well on lessons, can make changes, e.g. supplements Rainbow Readers, scaffolding.
Patient, tries to help with language support, flexible.	Preparing planning, better at levelling, aware of repetition, now does more oracy, prompts for expansion of language, does not control the conversation.	Makes children feel comfortable, doesn't know the CT well yet.	Makes students feel comfortable, confident, Understands more since the ELA course. Understands how students learn, more understanding of why teachers do things, goes with the flow.
Calm way of working, friendly. Children like games.	Does more prompting for speaking. Writing, co-editing. <i>'Co-writing worked well last term I knew what I was doing'</i> .	Relates well, friendly manner. Students like her, communicates well.	Relates more effectively. Teaches using techniques learned from ELA course. Keen, now has learning intentions and asks ELLs 'What have we learnt today?'
Hands on practical activities like gardening with children, tactile experiences good for language development.	Course energised her, confident to answer questions, developing students independent learning. Using reading prediction skills, dictionary skills.	Thinks about children's interests, tries to do hands on things, children have new experiences and language.	Don't know haven't observed.
Approachable, motherly, children feel at ease.	More listening, turn taking, repetition, lots of front loading, prepares learners, tells them what they are going to do, gets students to produce.	Works well, gentle approach, students at ease, seeks advice and support.	CT not sure, paraprofessional working closely with classroom teacher.

Table 7: What paraprofessionals do well with learners

At the end of the course, eight of the CTs were positive in their reporting of what their paraprofessional/s now did well. Two CTs felt they were unable to comment as they had not observed the paraprofessional working with learners. One of these responses indicated that the paraprofessional had maintained their initial skills and no specific change had been noted. The other CTs noticed that paraprofessionals had changed their practice in a number of positive ways. There was an overall feeling of improved effectiveness as paraprofessionals had developed strategies to use with learners. In particular, teachers mentioned paraprofessionals using scaffolding, preparing lessons with more focus on language content, including learning intentions in their plans, reflecting on lessons and providing supplementary material where necessary, and using modelling with their learners to promote speaking.

It was evident in the CTs' responses in the final interviews that they had a greater depth of knowledge of the paraprofessional and their work. This could be attributed to the fact that both the CT and the paraprofessional attended the ELA course together. The requirement of joint attendance on the ELA course was seen to be beneficial in a number of ways. The CTs and the paraprofessionals had to work closely together on course days and this may have helped to foster more effective, focused working relationships when they were back in their schools. In turn, the closer working relationships in some cases helped link the paraprofessionals work in more with the school curriculum giving them greater satisfaction in their work.

## **4.2 Areas for improvement**

As well as gaining information about what the paraprofessionals did well with their learners, responses were sought on what each paraprofessional felt they needed to improve on. At the beginning of the course, the paraprofessionals mentioned very general needs; with five saying they needed *'more training'*. One said she needed to know, *'more ways to work with students'* and three had more specific needs, *'more knowledge of technology and resources, more understanding of language and how to deliver language to learners, and how to have tighter links with the class teacher'*. Another wanted to know how to be *'more positive and encouraging rather than using 'no' and limiting children'*.

The CTs' responses were varied. Two CTs mentioned the need for paraprofessionals to be more collaborative with the teachers. As well, the teachers mentioned the following specific areas paraprofessionals needed to improve on: knowledge of English language, amount of preparation, knowledge of different learner proficiency levels, understanding of tasks, greater understanding of learning intentions and more knowledge of scaffolding. In particular, CTs said the paraprofessionals needed to know how to '*reduce their 'teacher talk''*' through providing prompts for learners rather than direct questioning so students would talk more. This was no doubt influenced by their participation on the course where, from the first session, everyone was encouraged to employ prompting rather than questioning to promote the elaboration of spoken language.

The data from the final interview with the paraprofessionals indicated a considerable change in their ability to note their own specific areas for improvement. While two responses were still rather general, '*there's always something to learn*' and '*I need more training*', the others were more specific. They identified the following areas for improvement: how to help more with writing, how not to ask questions, more understanding of second language acquisition (SLA), more knowledge of how language works, and how to make links from the ELA course to work with learners. The CTs' responses to the same question after the course had finished were less detailed than those given by the paraprofessionals. Five of the CTs did not really answer the question while the others mentioned the paraprofessionals' need for more scaffolding techniques, more knowledge of the function of words and their meanings, more focus on how to expand their learners' language and one teacher noted that the paraprofessional needs to '*give the learners more time to learn*'.

There was a noticeable difference in the paraprofessionals' reporting of what they needed to improve on at the start of the course and what they felt they needed after the course had finished. The rather general response for more training by the majority of participants at the beginning was replaced with more specific responses on particular pedagogical issues after the course. On the other hand, in the case of the CTs, in the initial interview, they had an extensive range of things they thought paraprofessionals needed to improve on. However the CTs' responses after the course, in some cases, were less specific. One reason for the lack of response to the question by five of the CTs could be because they had not observed their paraprofessionals following the finish of the course, so they were unaware of actual

paraprofessional practice at the time of the final interview (which was three to four months after the finish of the ELA course).

### **4.3 Learner progress with English language acquisition**

At the start of the course participants were asked about the progress their learners were making in English. Responses varied. One paraprofessional did not know if the learners were making progress, one paraprofessional said she felt the students gained confidence in using English by working with her, *'the quieter ones are doing well because they have space to think and learn here'*. Six of the paraprofessionals mentioned that it was difficult to generalise about their learners as the progress varied. Some children made steady progress while others seemed to take more time. One paraprofessional commented, *'once they get going its very rewarding'*. Of the six paraprofessionals who commented on the variation in student progress, three noted they knew this by either looking at the class records or through positive class teacher comments that they received.

At the end of the year all the paraprofessionals felt they could *'see a change in their students'* and their students had made progress with English. For two of the paraprofessionals, the progress was manifest in greater student confidence and a greater eagerness to come to class. Three other paraprofessionals indicated the learners had made progress in specific areas, they were more receptive to learning, more focussed when reading, and they were more productive when speaking. Although three paraprofessionals had commented briefly at the start of the course about evidence of student progress, after the course had finished, six paraprofessionals mentioned a wider range of indicators of student progress. One paraprofessional kept students' Running Records so was able to ascertain learner progress. Others had access to class assessment records so they could monitor student progress. However, the indicator of student progress most frequently referred to by the paraprofessionals was the acknowledgement by either class teachers or the CTs of the learners' progress. Positive staff feedback to the paraprofessional was mentioned seven times as evidence of students' progress. Acknowledgement by staff of the work the paraprofessional was doing was important as one paraprofessional said, *'I know it's OK because the class teacher is very pleased with his (the learner's) progress'* and another, *'the class teacher has noticed she (the learner) is talking more in class'*.

Several paraprofessionals elaborated on why they thought students were making progress. One reported that there was a direct link between the work on the ELA course and what she was doing with her learners. Another paraprofessional said her own confidence had grown because of the ELA course and this was reflected in her students' confidence, *'my confidence has helped them relax more - they are less tense'*.

CTs' initial responses about the progress students made when working with paraprofessionals fell into four groups. Two CTs commented on the students' willingness to go to the paraprofessional and work with them and three CTs made general comments about students' progress being steady or good. Two CTs commented on the need to track students formally and felt this would be more effective if the paraprofessional was working regularly with the same group of learners. Another two CTs did not comment on student progress, possibly this was because it was too early on in the year to be able to make an informed judgement.

However, CTs in the post course interview indicated that there had been considerable student progress. One CT reported *'massive student progress'*. She attributed this to the paraprofessional's better routines, better support from the CT and a reorganisation of learner groups which enabled her paraprofessional to work regularly with the same students. Another CT observed that students had made *'excellent progress in their oral language'* and another student was *'now more intelligible because of the intonation work the paraprofessional was doing with the learner'*. One CT reported that her paraprofessional was able to *'help the students more with their writing now and not just deal with surface level errors'*. Another CT noted that the students had gained confidence but indicated that students needed to be formally tracked so that there was more *'concrete evidence of learner progress'*. Three CTs also mentioned class teacher feedback. Class teachers had noticed the progress of students who were working with paraprofessionals and comments included, *'students are doing well and moving steadily up the school'* and *'the students have made good progress since she (the paraprofessional) started the ELA course'*. One CT said, *'I get positive feedback from the class teacher all the time. I have been here a year and have now more positive feedback since the paraprofessional has been on the course'*.

Initially, student progress in language development was reported in very general terms by paraprofessionals. However after the course had finished the paraprofessionals were able to describe student progress in a lot more detail. They reported on students' increased focus and

involvement in class as well as their development of the macro skills. The CTs and the paraprofessionals made comments about evidence they had about students' progress through class records and in one case, Running Records. Two CTs said that they thought students made progress when working with the paraprofessionals and indicated that they intended to track the students' progress with the paraprofessionals more formally in the future. Perhaps most significantly, feedback about students to a paraprofessional, by either the CT or the class teacher, was noted by seven of the eight paraprofessionals as important and valued evidence of students' progress. Feedback to the CT by the class teacher was also considered by the CT to be important. The positive effect of feedback from class teachers and the CT to paraprofessionals working with learners needs to be noted as it has a significant role in developing confidence and encouraging paraprofessionals in their work with students.

#### **4.4 Interactions with students**

Data gathered initially, from all participants in the study, about paraprofessional interactions with the children they were working with, was positive. At the start of the course, nine of the paraprofessionals said they had good interactions with the students and they liked working with them, and commented that children enjoyed coming to the classes. One paraprofessional said her interactions were *'mostly good but she didn't like having to growl'*. Six CTs also indicated their paraprofessional had good interactions with students and comments focused on traits such as showing interest in students, being calm and positive and not flustered, being firm and able to manage children or being friendly. One CT commented, *'she interacts beautifully'*. Three CTs said that although the paraprofessionals were positive with students they needed to either, *'talk less and allow more student talking time'* or they needed to *'become more ethnically aware'*. One CT was unable to comment as she did not know much about her paraprofessional.

Paraprofessionals' perceptions of their interactions with students after the course had finished, showed there had been little change. Nine paraprofessionals still responded positively about their interactions. Of these, three paraprofessionals elaborated further on their positive interactions. They noted they *'had a better profile in the school as they knew more children'*, they were providing *'more than just games and the lessons were more useful for the students'* and that overall they *'felt a lot more relaxed and confident with the students'*. The majority of CT responses were equally positive about paraprofessional

interactions, noting the paraprofessional was *'listening more to the students'*, the paraprofessional had enhanced their skills, or they were more confident and more focussed. However, one CT reported their paraprofessional still needed to work on the balance of teacher talking time and student talking time and there had not been much of an improvement from the start of the course.

#### **4.5 Optimal student group size**

Paraprofessionals and CTs tended to concur in their responses about the optimal group size for the paraprofessionals to work with. At the start of the course, seven paraprofessionals said they enjoyed working with children in small groups of three or four at a time. Several of the paraprofessionals commented that if there were more than four children in a group there were issues with *'behaviour problems'* and *'children not paying attention'*. However, five of the ten paraprofessionals indicated their main preference was to work with one child at a time. In this situation they were able to *'pick up mistakes more easily'* and they could *'work more intensively'* with the child. When working one to one, participants said they could liaise more with the teacher which *'made things easier'*. On the other hand two paraprofessionals said they found working one to one with a child was difficult. The reasons both paraprofessionals gave for this were because of the *'intense focus on the child'*. One paraprofessional who was working in a classroom with another paraprofessional and the teacher said that any group size was fine. Seven CTs in the initial interview all confirmed that either one to one or small group work was optimal for their paraprofessional. However there was little elaboration on why this was so, other than the reference to group management issues. Three CTs did not respond to the question about the best group size as they said they did not know the paraprofessional well enough.

After the course had finished, there was little change in the paraprofessionals' preference for either working one to one or working with children in small groups. However paraprofessionals gave clearer reasons for their preferences. Those who preferred working one to one now noted that this situation was *'better for more serious work'* or that it was good because then they *'could get to know the student better'*. One paraprofessional elaborated on the benefits of having a student in a one to one situation saying, *'I can get to know the needs of the student so I can think about who I can pair them up with'*. Those who preferred working with small groups commented that a group of four children was preferable because



they could ‘pair share’ or there was ‘more competition for children, which promoted learning’.

In terms of CT opinions about optimal group size after the course, eight CTs felt that the maximum number any paraprofessional should work with was four students. However, there was some change in that two CTs said their paraprofessional could now cope with groups of up to six to eight students. As with other CT responses at the end of the year, nearly all the teachers’ comments were more detailed and personalised. They were more aware of the paraprofessionals and the work they were doing, for example, ‘she works more effectively now with a group as everyone is on task’ and ‘she is gaining confidence and so she can now manage up to four children well’. Two CTs noted that their paraprofessionals had acted as relievers in a full class of primary students, on occasion when the teacher was absent, and ‘had coped well’.

The following table gives group sizes for each of the observations.

Observation one	Observation two	Observation three
Five students withdrawal.	Four students withdrawal.	Eight students withdrawal.
In-class, paraprofessional moving between four students.	Two students withdrawal.	In-class one to one.
Four students withdrawal.	Two students withdrawal.	Two students withdrawal.
Five students withdrawal. Three ESOL, two with learning difficulties.	Three students withdrawal.	Two students withdrawal.
One student withdrawal.	One student withdrawal.	Two students withdrawal.
Four students withdrawal.	Four students withdrawal.	Four students withdrawal.
Two students withdrawal.	Four students withdrawal.	Four students withdrawal. Three ESOL students and one with learning difficulties.
One to one withdrawal.	Two students withdrawal.	Four students withdrawal
Three students withdrawal.	Four students withdrawal.	Four students withdrawal.
Three students withdrawal.	Four students withdrawal.	Five students withdrawal.

Table 8: Number of students in sessions with paraprofessionals

#### 4.6 Diagnosing learner strengths and weaknesses

Paraprofessionals working with small groups of learners have a unique opportunity to notice learners’ strengths and areas of weakness. While paraprofessionals should not be expected to undertake summative diagnosis and assessment it was apparent from observations that students were better served by paraprofessionals who had a strong awareness of how students

were progressing. This awareness enabled them to pace their delivery of lessons appropriately. Researchers asked paraprofessionals early on about their effectiveness in gauging students' abilities and addressing their needs. Only one of the paraprofessionals tested and assessed the students at this time. She used the Junior Oral Screening Test (JOST) test *'to find the gaps'* and, as well, she was able to keep Running Records of the students she was working with. Four paraprofessionals felt they could identify some aspect of their learners' ability through their regular interaction with students. Their responses varied from *'fine most of the time'* and *'I know if they have problems with pronunciation or tenses'* through to *'I can see if they fit in socially or not and I know which are the strong ones and the weak ones'*. Three of the paraprofessionals said they obtained information about their students from either the class teacher or the CT and noted that assessment was not part of their job. Two of the paraprofessionals said that although they administered the tests, the teachers did all the analysis and then made the results available to the paraprofessional.

With one exception (the CT responsible for the paraprofessional administering JOST tests and keeping Running Records), all the CTs confirmed that assessment was not part of the paraprofessionals' job. The senior teachers or class teachers did all the assessment of the students and then passed on the relevant results to the paraprofessional where they felt it was appropriate. CTs' comments indicated that some paraprofessionals were more accurate than others in knowing children's strengths and weaknesses. Two said the paraprofessionals were not confident at noticing individual students' needs, while three others noted that the paraprofessional had, *'a natural feel for knowing where the students were at'* or *'experience helped the paraprofessional note problems which they then discussed with the coordinating teacher'*.

At the end of 2008 paraprofessionals indicated that there had been some change in their ability to diagnose learner strengths and weaknesses. One paraprofessional noted she was more aware of learner pronunciation problems and realised some students were not aware of *'the sounds'* and so she was providing dictation exercises to help students identify particular sounds and blends that were difficult for them. Another paraprofessional said that although she was still just administering the tests for assessment, she was able to notice areas that some students needed to work on. Five paraprofessionals said they were more able to identify problems students were having and they felt more confident to seek help from the CT who would discuss problems with them and offer suggestions as to how they could be dealt with.

One commented, *'it is no longer falling on deaf ears'* and another said *'the teacher gives directives and I look at what they point out and I will try to work on it'*.

The CTs' responses after the course, indicated fewer changes in the paraprofessionals' ability to diagnose learner strengths and weaknesses than those mentioned by the paraprofessionals. However, one CT said her paraprofessional was *'perceptive and good at diagnosing what children need to such an extent that the class teacher asks her [paraprofessional] about what some new students need'*. Another CT reported the paraprofessional was now checking a lot more with the class teacher to follow the progression of students in the class. A further CT reported her paraprofessional now administered phonics testing and the MOE ESOL/AF (ESOL Assessment Form). And two CTs said that sometimes the *'paraprofessional picks up on things the teacher doesn't pick up'*. Another CT said the paraprofessional was now quick to gauge what the student could do but was still *'not good at identifying weaknesses, so tended to move on too quickly when working with learners'*.

It is interesting to note that at the end of the year, paraprofessionals felt they were more aware of students' strengths and weaknesses and in turn were becoming more responsive to student needs. In addition, the paraprofessionals clearly felt both more confident and more supported by the CTs than they had at the beginning of the ELA course. Although the CTs responded positively about the paraprofessionals' ability to identify student strengths and weaknesses, the change they noticed was not as marked. This may have been because CTs did not see diagnosing students as the role of the paraprofessional. Possibly the most significant and positive finding in this area was that after the course, as well as noticing more learner strengths, weaknesses and problems, paraprofessionals felt sufficiently confident to seek help from the CT. It also appears from the CTs' comments after the course that they saw the paraprofessionals as being generally competent to deal with student issues. In no case was it mentioned that the CT stepped in and took control of a situation where there were perceived problems.

Factors which may have contributed to paraprofessionals feeling more confident and supported were the strong focus on course participants working together from the start of the course. In the first workshop on the ELA course 'The Heart of the Matter,' one aim of the course leader was to *'cohere the school team, reflecting on its role in the wider context of the school'*. This was achieved through a series of activities as well as the introduction of key words and

prompts, the first being *'togetherness and personal journey'* and *'we are a select group and we are in this together'*. Other prompts throughout the course focused on team building, collaboration, sharing and working together as well as being part of a family and working in with the whole school. Although there were short amounts of time on the ELA course where the CTs and the paraprofessionals met in their own groups, mainly for administration purposes, for the majority of course time all participants worked together. Furthermore, when the ELA project team visited the participants in schools, both CTs and paraprofessionals were involved in all the meetings. The researchers observed in the workshops a cohesive group with a strong feeling of unity between the CTs and paraprofessionals.

#### **4.7 Expanding oral language**

The ELA course had a strong focus on expanding oral language with learners. The course leader noted that *'all the workshop sessions were important but the most important was the focus on oral language'*. She pointed out that many of the problems learners had with literacy were often related to issues of oracy and vocabulary so it was essential learners develop elaborated oral language. Thus, the key focus for those working with learners was to support and challenge learners to develop their English oracy. Course participants observed the course leader skilfully working with young learners to expand their English oracy. As well, paraprofessionals and CTs practised activities to promote oral language and were introduced to new material relating to topics in the school curriculum. By the end of the ELA course, participants had had significant exposure to best practice in the area of expanding oral language and were provided with supporting resources to use with their learners.

After the ELA course the CTs' were asked about the paraprofessionals' skills in extending oral language. Their responses are shown in Table 9. Two CTs were unable to say what skills the paraprofessionals had for developing oral language as one was involved with working on student writing and the other paraprofessional had not been observed. However, the remaining eight CTs, as well as noticing how the paraprofessionals had developed, also indicated there were areas the paraprofessional should continue to work on. One of the CTs noted the paraprofessional was using *'think, pair, share'* with a strong focus on input, and still needed to work on *'pushed output'* with her learners. Another teacher reported the paraprofessional was orally building vocabulary with the learners but not using scaffolding to extend oral language.

Builds vocabulary knowledge
Now working solely on oral production
Worked on this, making some small changes, more aware
Good, engages with learners, doesn't over-talk, skills are developing all the time.
Not sure
Follows think pair share, focused on input, needs more forced output
Improved and improving, understands the value of expanded language , trying hard not to ask questions and to elicit more
Developed a lot, uses tools from ELA course, prompts rather than questions, student participation up as a result
Gained more skills on ELA course, has more tools, is confident, now can draw out and encourage students
Don't know, she focuses on presentation, writing and the written task

Table 9: CTs' comments on paraprofessionals' skill in expanding oral language after the ELA course

In the mid and final observations paraprofessionals were seen to be attempting to put what they had learned on ELA into practise. The following accounts of two post course observations show examples of two paraprofessionals expanding oral language. The first was not effective and the second was:

1. One class teacher had identified a need for two Year 6 learners to develop their oral language before they left the primary for intermediate school. The paraprofessional was working with the two learners on a regular programme to accomplish this. In this observation the paraprofessional was developing learners' oral language around a story for which she had created the resources. She had utilised pictures from the internet and made vocabulary prompt cards relating to a story the students had seen on a video. They were encouraged to use the key words and pictures to help them recap the story. The paraprofessional began the interaction with the students effectively, prompting the learners so they were able to narrate the key events with enthusiasm. However as the lesson progressed the paraprofessional stopped prompting and began intensely questioning the students requiring them to give increasingly detailed answers involving complicated character and place names. As a result learners began producing less English, eventually only being able to manage short phrases and key words with many pronunciation errors. The paraprofessional appeared to switch her

lesson aim from developing oral language to testing the learners' comprehension of fine details of the story leaving learners less buoyant and somewhat frustrated.

In this session, the paraprofessional started the lesson using strategies from the ELA course but then was unable to maintain this. She seemed to revert to former teaching/testing practices which undermined the students' confidence to learn.

2. Another paraprofessional was observed working more successfully with a group of three Years 1 and 2 learners using an 'At the Beach' set of cards. The learners were given a card each and were engaged from the start. They had worked with the material previously and so were keen to make sentences about the pictures. Two students produced full sentences, for example, '*The boy was riding the bike at the beach*' and with prompting '*he went very fast*'. Students were encouraged to listen to each other and took turns to make sentences about their picture. One student was weaker and newer to the group than the others but he was encouraged to contribute as well, albeit more modestly. He repeated some of the vocabulary items and was intensely focussed during the whole lesson.

In this session students were motivated throughout. The paraprofessional gave appropriate wait time for student responses, effective feedback, and used suitable prompt structures and questions to engage students and promote learning.

## **4.8 Supporting writing**

The area of supporting students with writing was addressed in the final workshop session of the ELA course. The course leader indicated at the start of the workshop that some of the paraprofessionals would be asked to support writing while others would not and so the session would be a brief introduction to '*helping learners in this most difficult skill*'. The session gave an overview of three key ways to work with students and writing; co-constructing, co-editing and retrieving a text (referring to dictation). The observations indicated that some of the paraprofessionals, possibly those who were already more familiar with features of writing, made gains from the session enabling them to support their learners effectively. However, other paraprofessionals needed to raise both their awareness of features of written language and develop their skills further before they should support student writing.

CTs' comments on the paraprofessionals' skills to support writing after the course are shown in Table 10 and indicate that paraprofessionals' skills varied considerably. There were five CT comments indicating paraprofessionals were using skills demonstrated on the ELA course. They included the paraprofessional using more dictation and more interactive tasks, the paraprofessional gaining more 'tools' from the ELA course, and the paraprofessional working well in supporting senior learners. Two CTs commented very positively about change, reporting the paraprofessionals had improved because of the writing work they experienced on the ELA course. One had used co-editing skills and made booklets of students' finished writing to share with other learners. The other paraprofessional had a much greater awareness of the way writing was organised and was supporting learners more effectively in class. She had acquired a small whiteboard and used it to model writing more effectively than she had done previously.

Paraprofessional uses dictation to help writing, tries more interactive writing tasks. No scaffolding.
Wants paraprofessional to support writing.
Needs to focus on basic work, not be too ambitious.
Guided by class teacher, ELAs need more guidelines and more understanding of scaffolding.
Not sure if she helps with writing.
Not observed but thinks this is an area of weakness.
Good ability to support writing, enjoys supporting senior students.
Improved because of ELA, co-editing, very keen, through own initiative made booklet of students' writing to share with class.
Not much change, more tools in tool kit. ELA session on writing created discussion.
Good, changed, organises information, plans what students need to do. Worked on duality posters. Works with vocabulary and students' encouraged to record information

Table 10: CTs' comments on paraprofessionals' skills in supporting writing after the ELA course

Some of the CTs felt paraprofessionals needed more writing guidelines and a greater understanding of how to scaffold writing successfully. One CT felt that the paraprofessional was too ambitious with learners and needed to focus more on basic work. This was confirmed by the researcher who observed the paraprofessional after the course had finished taking a group for oral language development followed by writing their own stories. The paraprofessional articulated her lesson focus to the students as making writing less boring. She said they would do this by using more adjectives. However, in the paraprofessional's

attempt to encourage students to produce imaginative stories they quickly became overloaded and confused. This was because of the paraprofessional's expectation that students would use new vocabulary which had not been taught previously. The students quickly became demotivated and the session devolved into one of copying words from the board rather than producing original work.

#### **4.9 Questioning and prompting**

The role of questioning in encouraging learning is important in the classroom. Effective questioning skills are needed to promote learning in all curriculum areas. Harvey et al. (2008) reported that paraprofessionals had a limited range of questioning techniques (e.g. mainly only checking word meaning or pronunciation). They were unaware of the differentiated roles of questioning as well as the wide range of questions that could be used to promote learning. One of the recommendations of the report was, therefore, that paraprofessionals' needed to learn more about how to question students appropriately for development in each of the four macro skills.

As already noted, one of the key themes of the ELA course was the importance of extending students' oral language. Paraprofessionals were specifically told not to ask questions and instead taught to prompt to encourage a higher level of learner language output. A range of prompt structures were skilfully demonstrated by the course leader. Most paraprofessional participants in the current study actively tried to use the demonstrated techniques and attempted to avoid questioning throughout the course. However, not asking questions was seen to be a considerable challenge by both CTs and paraprofessionals. There was confusion about when to prompt, when or whether to question and what constituted effective questioning. Some of the confusion arose because the paraprofessionals were not always having to expand oral language, rather they may have been working on another skill such as reading or writing. Significantly, if paraprofessionals were not modelling a range of questioning, students were not able to acquire question forms from paraprofessional input.

In the first ELA workshop the course leader introduced the concept of promoting learner language output through prompting and expanding language. Prompt structures included imperatives such as '*tell me ....*', or, alternatively reflecting back to the student what they had already produced, for example, '*so the boy felt sad ...*', allowing time for the learner to



expand further. This new (for paraprofessionals) concept of prompting and expanding language without direct questioning clearly influenced the paraprofessionals' responses to the initial interview question. All the paraprofessionals mentioned they were aware of questioning and the need to either avoid asking questions or use different question types and they were trying to use other techniques to prompt learners. Some were struggling with this more than others. Several comments were made about how difficult it was and the need for support to know how to not ask questions. However a positive effect of avoiding questions was that paraprofessionals in some instances became aware of their own use of language. The comment '*I am now more aware of my own speech*' indicates a developing awareness of the role of teacher language and its effects on student language output.

The paraprofessionals' responses in the post course interview indicated they had continued to think about how not to ask questions. Six paraprofessionals said they were rephrasing and using alternative structures such as '*tell me more*' with their learners. Two paraprofessionals suggested the idea of non-questioning was a good one. One noted that using rising intonation and incomplete sentences were also ways to question. Another said that although a good idea, not asking questions was very difficult and suggested in some cases not asking questions was '*unnatural*'. One participant said there had been no change in her asking questions. Two paraprofessionals were aware of the importance of prompting for oral language output but were also aware of effective questioning techniques. They wanted more direction about the ideal level and nature of effective questioning, including when to question and when to prompt.

The following is an example of a paraprofessional in the final observation using a mix of prompting and questioning techniques with the intention of expanding students' oral language about a farm visit. In some instances students provided extended utterances, for example, *I was feeding the cow with milk*. In others students gave one word utterances, for example, *goat*, *wool*. The dialogue demonstrates what was evident in a number of observations: prompting can result in one word answers as easily as closed questions can. Moreover, the leading nature of prompting in the following dialogue indicates that the paraprofessional had an expectation of the words she wanted the student to produce. This led to production which appears to have restricted rather expanded the student's length of utterances.

*PP: Rose tell me about your picture. Rose it's a g.....*  
*S: Goat.*  
*PP: Tell me something about the goat.*  
*S: She's standing.*  
*PP: She's standing l.....*  
*S: Looking.*  
*TA: Looking at you.*

And later

*S: I was feeding the cow with milk.*  
*TA: Is that a cow?*  
*S: No a sheep. I was feeding the sheep with milk.*

And later

*S: The curly blanket.*  
*PP: What do we call the curly blanket?*  
*S: Wool.*  
*PP: What is the word for the thing we use to cut the wool?*  
*S: Shears.*

Figure 1: Dialogue between paraprofessional and students: questioning and prompting

As suggested by a number of the CTs and the paraprofessionals, the role of questioning needs to be further explored in professional development settings and perhaps on the ELA course. The skill of promoting oral language through a range of prompting techniques could be distinguished from the role of questioning in fostering learning. Once these differences are made clear paraprofessionals will be able to focus more on the structures needed to prompt learner oral language effectively and use appropriate and varied questioning in a range of learning contexts.

Just after the course started seven of the CTs said they had no knowledge of the paraprofessionals' questioning ability. However, of the remaining three, one said the paraprofessional was good at questioning, another said the paraprofessional could improve with training and another thought the paraprofessional needed to reduce the number of questions she asked (see Table 11).

Initial interview	Final interview
Not observed.	Knows how to question effectively, asks many open questions.
Not observed.	Asks too many questions. There was confusion over this on the course.
Limited knowledge of question types.	Aware of different levels of questions. Uses prompt structure 'tell me more' but doesn't allow wait time.
Not observed.	Wanted to discuss the area further, Course leader very skilled, raised awareness of questions.
Don't know, goal of ELA course not to ask questions, challenge of the course.	Not sure about course leader's message, everyone aware of no questions. Needed to know more about good questions.
First level need to reduce questions	Struggled with non-questioning, takes a lot longer. Needed to explore it more.
Not observed closely, trying not to ask questions.	Not observed. Paraprofessionals were confused.
Could improve questioning with training.	Good, no change.
Good at questions, ELA course challenge is to rephrase	Not observed. Challenging for ESOL learners to be prompted.
Not observed	Doesn't know if change due to ELA course. Paraprofessional good at talking to students.

Table 11: CTs' perceptions of paraprofessionals' ability to ask questions

After the course had finished, CTs' responses revealed a range of paraprofessional understandings and practices in relation to questioning. One paraprofessional was reported to ask effective questions and asked '*a lot of open questions*'. One paraprofessional was seen as asking too many questions. This was confirmed through observation where the paraprofessional wanted learners to recap the story. Rather than using prompts such as '*Tell me .....*' she asked several questions which checked comprehension of the story and only elicited one word answers from students. Another paraprofessional was reported to use prompting structures however she did not allow sufficient wait time for learners to reply. One CT was not sure if the change in the paraprofessional was due to the ELA course but said her paraprofessional was '*good at talking to the kids*'. This paraprofessional was observed working successfully with young learners on two occasions where she used a mix of prompting structures, rephrasing and questions to promote oral language and interaction between herself and her learners. Five CTs said the area of questioning was confusing for the paraprofessionals and although the ELA course leader was very skilled in her demonstration of prompting with learners, there was a need for participants to know what good questioning was.

## 4.10 Effective feedback

Feedback has a number of roles in promoting effective learning. Creating a positive learning environment is important, but constant undifferentiated positive feedback is not effective, and in some circumstances it can be counterproductive. Targeted feedback, where students receive accurate information about their work, enables them to gain greater awareness of the learning process. With this information they can begin to monitor their own skill development more effectively.

At the beginning of the course paraprofessionals had varied interpretations of what constituted feedback. Three paraprofessionals focused on giving positive feedback to the learners, mentioning the importance of praise for doing well and in one situation, praise for learner effort. One paraprofessional described her feedback as effective and stressed that she did not say *'no that's wrong'*. She also said that she did not over-praise but was *'realistic'*. Another paraprofessional felt she could give more effective feedback in a one to one situation compared to working in a group. Two paraprofessionals reported giving learners both positive and specific feedback on writing, for example, *'I like the way you chose purple to ...'* and *'You need to have a capital letter at the beginning of a sentence'*.

After the course the paraprofessionals' answers effective feedback produced a range of responses with three specifically indicating that there had been a change in their practice as a result of the course (see Table 12). One paraprofessional acknowledged that giving feedback was difficult and another still thought feedback was checking student understanding by asking questions. However, one participant reported greater effectiveness at listening and responding to students appropriately while another had more confidence and noted a change in her feedback style saying she was now able to give specific comments on student writing. Although some paraprofessionals had made changes to their practice, observations and coordinating teacher responses indicated that a few still did not have a clear understanding of the role and importance of feedback by the end of the course.

Initial interview	Final interview
Effective. Does not say, 'No, that's wrong'. Repeats the correct answer as a model, does not 'over praise', realistic.	Does not find it easy. 'They are out the door it's not always easy, children are not listening. It was easier further up the school'
Tries to feed back all the time, for example, 'that's a great idea'. Wants to be positive.	Always positive and encouraging with young learners.
Likes to give encouragement and says, 'well done'.	Praise, encouragement and 'that is not good enough' with older children.
Gives useful feedback when working one to one, not as focused in a group.	Listens to students more before responding to what they say. Encourages them.
Tries to be positive, tries to be specific, for example, 'you need to have a capital letter...'	Instead of good, says, 'I like the colours you use'. Style has changed, gives reasons as well as positive feedback.
Good at giving feedback: high fives, 'that's great!'. Does not give much negative feedback. Tries to be specific.	Writing feedback has changed. Feels more confident. Provides more wait time in reading.
Confident. Asks students to repeat. Asks questions, 'Do you understand the task?', 'Can you tell me what...?'	Tries to answer questions promptly. Tries to correct errors by modelling. Sums up at the end of the lesson.
Tries to write a comment, 'I like the way you ....', probably forgets to give feedback a lot of the time.	Improved, tries to provide a quick summary at end of lesson.
Good, praise if doing well, praise for effort.	Gives positive feedback on behaviour. Praises students when one to one.
Focus at the end of the session. 'I think they understand. They always say thank you. They always go away with a smile'.	Recalls pointers and phrases from ELA course. Checks student vocabulary.

Table 12: Paraprofessionals' reports of their feedback to students

The CTs' responses are shown in Table 13. Their responses were less informative than the paraprofessionals'. At the initial interview three CTs had not observed their paraprofessionals and two said they did not know what their paraprofessional's practice was. Two CTs were unsure about paraprofessionals and feedback. In one case the teacher said the paraprofessional needed to sum up her lessons and another said the paraprofessional possibly gave 'subtle feedback rather than direct feedback'. One paraprofessional was seen to give positive encouraging feedback but needed to provide more focused feedback to learners while another gave praise and 'got back to her students to make sure they completed work'.

After the course two CTs were still unable to comment on the paraprofessionals' ability to give feedback while the remaining eight all focused on paraprofessionals giving positive feedback. One CT commented generally on the paraprofessional as giving 'good appropriate feedback'. Two paraprofessionals were seen to praise the students 'naturally'. One paraprofessional was encouraging but needed to have a greater focus on specific areas, while another paraprofessional needed to be 'more targeted in her feedback and reduce the amount of correction she did with learners'. Two CTs reported their paraprofessionals not only gave

learners positive encouragement but supported this with models or examples at the feedback stage. Another CT, intending to observe her paraprofessional in the near future said she was confident the paraprofessional gave appropriate constructive feedback as she was using the structured Rainbow Reading programme which incorporated clear teacher guidelines.

Initial interview	Final interview
Not observed.	Gives feedback. Needs to develop more focus.
No observation.	Offers encouragement. Gives appropriate model answer, very supportive.
Praises and encourages but needs to give more focused feedback.	Encourages but still limited, will give some focused feedback.
Not observed.	Praises students naturally.
Doesn't know.	Appropriate, good.
Not sure – needs to sum up lessons.	Praises, needs to be more targeted and reduce correction. She doesn't need to fix everything.
Doesn't know.	Unable to comment.
Time constraints make it difficult.	Developed, has a very natural response.
Not sure may be subtle not direct.	Knows she now gives corrective feedback. She uses Rainbow Reading programme.
Encouraging, gives praise, gets back to students.	Don't know if she gives feedback or reviews before moving on.

Table 13: CTs' teachers' perceptions of paraprofessionals' feedback to students

Positive feedback in the form of praise and encouragement are fundamental for learners. When this is accompanied by specific focused comment it can both reinforce good practice and help learners to notice areas to work on in turn fostering new learning. Paraprofessionals and their CTs need to be aware of the importance of targeted, explicit feedback so they can provide maximum opportunities for learners to progress.

#### 4.11 Attitude to learners' home languages and cultures

Understanding the bilingual and bicultural learner was a strong focus throughout the ELA course. From the start, each workshop began and finished with the involvement of learners from participating schools presenting songs and dances from a variety of cultures. As well, there was a full workshop session on the importance of culture and the '*need to wrap it around yourself like a warm coat*'. The course leader explored the idea of '*walking in the inner and outer worlds of others*' with the course participants with examples and activities. One activity that was demonstrated and explored, was creating bilingual/bicultural child

posters (referred to on the course as ‘duality posters’). Working on duality posters was seen as a way to acknowledge and work in a concrete way with learners’ dual cultures and languages. When making the posters students liaised with their families to develop information in their home language and/or about their home cultures. Paraprofessionals were required to work on the posters with students as one of the course assignments. In doing this, they developed an increased awareness of what students bring to school in terms of their own and their family’s cultural and linguistic expertise and backgrounds.

In Table 14 paraprofessionals’ provide comment on their knowledge of learners’ home languages and cultures. In the initial interview, all the paraprofessionals indicated they had an interest in students’ home languages and cultures. One paraprofessional had a particular interest in languages and extensive knowledge of several languages through travel and extra study. Another paraprofessional had less knowledge of student cultures but was trying to learn more. One strategy was to ask students in her class how to greet in their first language. Two paraprofessionals who had experience of living in a culture where they were a minority group mentioned how important it was for families to maintain home languages and culture. They reported having a strong empathy for the students they were working with. Six paraprofessionals gave extensive explanations of how they respected different cultures by referring to students’ home languages in their lessons, mainly through greetings, showing interest in the students’ background and when working with vocabulary. The duality posters provided opportunities for students to introduce home language vocabulary items and phrases. This in turn led to some paraprofessionals asking students for first language (L1) vocabulary for some key items in the classroom. One paraprofessional, although expressing interest and keeping notes about students’ home languages and cultures, said she did not allow students to use their home language in class.

Initial interview	Final interview
Knows about some cultures: Pacific Islands, South East Asian, some European cultures.	Got Samoan reader for Samoan boy. In the past had maps for older children. No longer does that. Most children New Zealand born.
Respects learners, asks questions, brings out own (western but non New Zealand) culture.	Talks more about home cultures at the start of topic, refers incidentally to culture.
Keeps notes about different languages. Does not want students to use L1 in class.	No response recorded.
Does not know much. Learning about Korean. Asked Hindi student how to say Hello.	Greets students in L1 in class and in withdrawal sessions. School organised assemblies to celebrate cultures. Worked with parents who came into the school to read to groups of students in L1.
Provides home language greetings, provides opportunities for discussion about festivals. Some students have no home language or culture (other than English).	Wanted to do more. Many students do not speak home language but parents do. Organised a culture day with shared lunch.
Engages incidentally and naturally gathering information for class 'culture box'. Links to home and family.	Organised culture assemblies.
Grew up where another language was spoken at home. Empathises with students. Understands bigotry and effort children make to maintain L1.	Incorporates L1 into vocabulary, tries to include examples of home country's language. Made duality posters.
Asks students about language and culture. Relates vocabulary to L1.	Tries to make more links, for example asks 'what is that word in your language?' Asks about what they remember from home country.
Believes it is important for students to maintain home language, most students New Zealand born and don't use home language	Knows that students who don't make eye contact with the teacher are not disrespectful. Talked to group of students about eye contact. Integration of L1 depends on the topic e.g. Philippine students and volcano. Made duality posters, linked with home.
Students think in L1 and use electronic dictionaries. ELA greets in L1. Tries to use basic vocabulary in L1.	Duality maps evoked a lot of emotion. Always interested in other cultures. Surprised Koreans do not want to learn about their own culture.

Table 14: Paraprofessionals' comments on learners' home languages and cultures

The paraprofessionals' responses after the course had finished were more detailed and revealed a range of specific occasions when they tried to make connections between the home language and culture while on the ELA course. Some activities were at class level while others were at the school level. One paraprofessional reported talking more about home languages and culture at the start of a new topic and then referring to culture incidentally as it arose in class. Two other paraprofessionals said they were integrating languages and culture



into their lessons more through asking about vocabulary and key words in the students' L1 or asking questions about students' culture and home country. This was supported by data gathered in observation where one paraprofessional provided a pre-prepared sheet with Tagalog translations for the Philippine learners to refer to when working on their duality posters. Further insights gained through making the duality posters were reported by three paraprofessionals. Engagement with parents and the family was seen as a valuable experience and gave the paraprofessionals a new understanding of some of the issues and challenges the learners faced. Although three paraprofessionals agreed the posters were time consuming to make, the process and the results were worthwhile, and they intended to make further posters on different cultural topics in the future. Four paraprofessionals spoke about celebrating children's culture at a school level by organising culture days, shared lunches or organising culture assemblies with other paraprofessionals. The preparation of songs, dances and costumes by paraprofessionals, parents and learners also fostered links between home and school which was a valuable experience for the paraprofessionals.

From the start, most CTs' responses to the question about paraprofessionals' attitudes towards student's languages and cultures were positive as shown in Table 15. In fact their responses reflected the views reported by the paraprofessionals themselves. One CT reported that the paraprofessional had a wide knowledge of other languages. Two CTs said that the paraprofessionals valued children's home languages and cultures. Two CTs mentioned two paraprofessionals who had experience of being part of a minority group. They reported these paraprofessionals empathised with children from other cultures and they understood the difficulties these children faced. One CT felt the paraprofessional was supportive of first language maintenance. And three other paraprofessionals who were noted to have positive attitudes were either including aspects of children's languages and cultures in their lessons or involved in this area at school level through organising assemblies and culture activities.

Initial interview	Final interview
Wide knowledge, spends time getting to know students.	Great attitude, builds and supports relationships, brings in realia for students.
Feels it's important. Refers to students' cultures.	Interested in diversity and duality.
Keen to promote home language and culture in school. Engages others in culture assemblies.	Aware of diversity and the importance of a strong home and school partnership. Promotes diversity has done another course about cultural diversity.
Empathises well, respects children and understands being a migrant.	ELA course changed awareness of diversity. She embraces the idea more, understands different ethnicities.
Positive attitude but doesn't really understand what it's like for the children.	Empathises more and realises the issues, kind and understanding, trust her with new children and parents.
Acknowledges home languages and cultures.	Knows the importance of L1, not so annoyed by children using L1.
Supports L1 maintenance.	Strongly supports L1 maintenance.
Responds well to ELL students. Shares own language. Includes L1 greeting in lessons.	She is bilingual, respects students. Empathises, uses maps to find out about backgrounds, duality maps, good interactive skills.
Uses L1 through greetings, brings in as much culture as possible.	Open to other cultures. Duality posters had a good result. May do others with group about food. Open to other cultures.
Empathises with students because of her experience in being part of a minority group. Wants students to be proud of L1/ culture. Helps find things to share. Keeps a culture box for displays of students' cultures.	Paraprofessional encourages learners to explore aspects of their own culture.

Table 15: CTs' understanding of paraprofessionals' attitude to learners' home languages and cultures

After the course had finished the CTs perceived a change in the paraprofessionals' attitudes to students' home languages and cultures in a number of areas. One CT said the paraprofessional had a greater awareness of learner diversity and a greater awareness of different ethnicities. The paraprofessional herself was a recent arrival to New Zealand with no previous experience of working with learners from different backgrounds. During the course the CT noticed the paraprofessional's increasing interest in finding out where her learners were from. Another CT reported her paraprofessional was more aware of the importance of home languages and although *'she [paraprofessional] struggled with the balance between first language and English ... she doesn't get so annoyed when students are*

*speaking in their first language*'. Other paraprofessionals were reported to be supportive of students, interested in students' culture and language, and the biculturalism and bilingualism of migrant students. Three CTs' responses indicated specific ways the paraprofessionals were working in their classes with students' languages and cultures. In addition, the researchers noted several instances where paraprofessionals were linking the language of the classroom with vocabulary items from individual learners' cultures. In one case, the paraprofessional was working with a Chinese student and the interaction resulted in the learner promising to tell the paraprofessional some Chinese words the following day. In another instance there was a useful exchange about Chinese words for items to take to the beach. One bilingual paraprofessional was reported to be skilled at engaging children by using resources such as maps and duality posters to understand their backgrounds. Another paraprofessional had made strong links between the school and family while working on duality posters and was planning to do further work on posters with a different topic. And a further paraprofessional was seen to be encouraging and supporting her students in their inquiry learning projects to explore their culture.

It was noticeable that all the paraprofessionals and the CTs' reported paraprofessionals having a positive attitude to students' home languages and cultures from the start of the course. Those paraprofessionals who had experienced being part of a minority group themselves were aware of the importance of home languages, and culture and empathised with students about some of the challenges they faced. All paraprofessionals were apparently interested in knowing more about students' different ethnic backgrounds. This meant paraprofessionals were very receptive to the intercultural aspect of the ELA course and, in many cases, motivated to begin incorporating students' languages and cultures into their classes as well as in the wider school community. At class level, paraprofessionals extended their acknowledgement of students' languages through greetings and working with vocabulary items in L1. Aspects of cultures were introduced through the detailed duality posters which strengthened the home and school partnership and further raised paraprofessionals' language and cultural awareness. At the school level, several paraprofessionals initiated and embarked on extensive projects with their students organising assemblies and culture days involving other staff and, in some cases, parents.

The ELA course raised the paraprofessionals' awareness of bilingualism and biculturalism from the beginning. The course leader encouraged course participants to make links with

learners in the class by carefully targeted activities such as working on the duality posters which encouraged students to draw on their family language and cultural resources. All ELA participants were also regularly challenged on the course to reflect on the experiences their students brought to school and how this impacted on their learning. They were also challenged to consider *their own* ethnic and language identities and how this affected what *they* brought to the learning context. The change that was achieved in the area of intercultural understandings and competencies as a result of the ELA course was significant. It positively affected how paraprofessionals conducted their learning sessions with students as well as the tone of broader home – school relationships.

## **4.12 Conclusion**

The gains the paraprofessional participants made in their pedagogical practices as a result of the ELA course were apparent in many areas. All the paraprofessionals started the course with a positive attitude towards their learners and some had developed effective ways to work with them. After the course, when the CTs were asked about changes in what paraprofessionals did well, all noted a general improvement commenting, for example, the paraprofessionals were *'more effective than they had been at the start of the course'*. Areas of change included: paraprofessionals understanding more about how their students progressed, they had more focused interactions with learners and an increased ability to notice learner strengths and weaknesses. In addition, both paraprofessionals and CTs noted paraprofessionals developing their skills in expanding oral language and in some cases in helping students with writing. All paraprofessionals were reported to demonstrate a greater awareness of understanding learners' language and culture.

Paraprofessional knowledge of writing, questioning and giving feedback are key areas for further consideration and professional development. In the area of writing some paraprofessionals appeared to work well supporting learners with co-editing, however other paraprofessionals were still noted to need more skills after the course had finished. Before some paraprofessionals can work appropriately with learners in writing they need to develop more knowledge of both the features of language and the process of writing. Another area for consideration is the role of questions and questioning. Throughout the ELA course there was concern by paraprofessionals, and in some cases CTs, about the role of questions when working with students. Almost all the paraprofessionals commented on the difficulty of

avoiding questions. As has been discussed there is a case for non-questioning and prompting with learners to promote and expand oral language. However, this strategy may not be so effective when other skill areas (e.g. reading) are being developed. It would be useful for paraprofessionals on future professional development courses to learn how questions are important in promoting learning and to be introduced to effective questioning techniques.

Additionally, the role of feedback is important to consider. In observations it was apparent that paraprofessionals still needed a greater awareness of the role of feedback when working with learners, although some progress was made as a result of the course. All paraprofessionals responded positively to learners using praise, however, as mentioned previously, effective feedback should be specific as well. Being explicit about how effective targeted feedback can promote learning is important for paraprofessionals.

Another aspect of feedback is the feedback the paraprofessional receives from the CT and other teachers. Praise from the class teacher and the CT was valued by paraprofessionals as evidence that not only their students were doing well but also they, the paraprofessionals, were doing a good job. Significantly, in some cases paraprofessionals were rarely observed, if at all. This included prior to, during and in the months after the course had finished. While paraprofessionals understood that this was often because of time constraints, they said they would have welcomed the attention, comments and critique.

A key requirement of the ELA course was that CTs and paraprofessionals attend the course at the same time. This was seen by the researchers to be a very beneficial aspect of the ELA course. Teachers and paraprofessionals working together on the course helped foster positive relationships which enabled a closer working relationship in schools. The CTs gained greater insights into the paraprofessionals' work as well as getting to know them more personally.

Further evidence of changes in the paraprofessionals' knowledge and understanding of good practice is also evidenced by the amount and quality of paraprofessionals' response to the research questions. It is relevant to note the shift from general responses to questions at the start of the course and the fuller and often more focused and detailed answers after the course had finished. Paraprofessionals demonstrated an increased confidence and keenness to talk about what they were doing with their learners as the course progressed. Participating in the

ELA course appears to have strengthened relationships and generally given many paraprofessionals' a greater sense of involvement and purpose in their work with students.

## **Chapter Five Working with English**

This chapter considers the changes the paraprofessional participants' experienced in terms of their understanding of the English language and their ability to impart this to students. The paraprofessionals' understanding of English was ascertained through questions about how much the paraprofessional knew about features of English and how the language is structured. As well, there was a question about the paraprofessionals' confidence in their own literacy skills. To find out about their ability to impart knowledge of English to their students, participants were asked to reflect on their ability to explain language points effectively to students and their overall ability to promote language learning in students. These questions were asked when interviewing the paraprofessional and their CT towards the beginning of the course and after the course had finished. Further evidence of the paraprofessionals' understanding of English language was gained from the researchers observing the paraprofessionals in their sessions with students.

### **5.1 Confidence in own English literacy and language skills**

At the start of the course the CTs reported the paraprofessionals on the ELA course felt either fairly confident or very confident about their own oral and written English language skills and the paraprofessionals reported a similar level of confidence. The CTs indicated that paraprofessionals' level of confidence in this area was maintained throughout the course by eight of the participants. Two of the paraprofessionals were noted to have made gains in their English literacy and/or language skills by the end of the course. One CT noticed a considerable improvement in the paraprofessional's accuracy in both her written and oral language. Another CT mentioned that the bilingual paraprofessional had become far more confident in her use of oral language as a result of having to work closely with other members of the ELA team. Whereas at the start of the course she had tended to sit back and make little comment, as the course progressed she made an increasing contribution to the group, she spoke to teachers in her school about the ELA programme and also represented her school by speaking at the ELA course at the opening of a workshop.

When paraprofessionals were asked at the end of the course to consider their level of confidence in their own literacy skills, nearly all reported they had been maintained

throughout the course. One paraprofessional noted that although initially she had difficulty writing the assignments her writing skills had improved noticeably as the course progressed.

## 5.2 Understanding of English

CTs reported on the paraprofessionals' understanding of English at the start of the course. Two paraprofessionals were perceived to be knowledgeable and comments on these participants included, '*they are very skilled and qualified in this area*' and '*they are an expert, they understand grammar and can answer other teacher's questions on this subject*'. These paraprofessionals also felt they knew about how English works and in both cases noted this was because of their learning of other languages. Another CT felt her paraprofessional had a good understanding of English language features through her previous TESOL study. The paraprofessional confirmed she had done several courses in how to help EAL learners however she felt she needed to understand '*more grammar*'. CTs felt three paraprofessionals had some understanding of features of English, and four were perceived to need a much greater knowledge of how English works. These particular paraprofessionals agreed about their lack of knowledge in the area. Two admitted to never really having thought about English before the course, three indicated this was an area of weakness and they wanted to understand more and know more terminology.

At the end of the course there was a wide range of responses with varying degrees of change in paraprofessionals gaining an understanding of English language features. For those paraprofessionals who indicated at the start of the course they were most proficient, both CTs and paraprofessionals said there had been little change. One paraprofessional expressed disappointment at the lack of grammar on the course. She had been hoping she would be able to compare English grammar with other languages so she could become more aware of why learners of other ethnicities made similar errors. This in turn would enable her to help her students more effectively. She also mentioned she felt an understanding of traditional grammar was essential for those working with learners of English. The remaining eight paraprofessionals responded more positively. All their responses indicated a change in their general awareness of language. Two paraprofessionals mentioned they were now aware there was a difference between languages, one noting in the way they were organised and another commenting there were differences between spoken and written English. Another two paraprofessionals reported they thought more about the area of language than they had done



before and one was starting to consider language level as well as the topic of a text they were using with learners. One paraprofessional reported noticing students' errors in writing and she felt more confident to help students edit their written work.

After the course had finished one CT commented that knowledge of how English language works was difficult even for class teachers as many lacked an understanding of features of English. Three of the CT commented that the course did not explicitly address aspects of language and how it works. However, eight of the CTs confirmed that by the end of the course the paraprofessionals had a greater general awareness of language and some were more confident at noticing language features such as the level of difficulty of vocabulary in a text. The CTs also noted the paraprofessionals' progress in other areas such as developing oral language, changes in confidence and having more strategies to work with learners. Two CTs reported their paraprofessionals were beginning to focus more on the language components in resources rather than just the theme or topic of the content. One CT said the paraprofessional had made significant progress in her awareness of language and how it worked and was dealing with language on a more detailed level. She had been observed giving a useful lesson on checking understanding of small units of grammar with her ESOL learners.

In terms of an explicit understanding of English and its features, the paraprofessionals fell into two groups. In the first group were the three paraprofessionals who came to the course reporting a good understanding of how English works through their own learning of other languages or their previous training in TESOL. The second group of seven participants indicated they either lacked knowledge or had only some knowledge of how English works. Paraprofessionals' language backgrounds and their experience influenced the range of perceived learning gains. The two paraprofessionals who had learned other languages reported not gaining any new knowledge of English language features while on the ELA course. However, the other paraprofessionals felt they had learned new aspects of English. In the final interview paraprofessionals were using some language specific terms to describe their work, indicating they were beginning to understand the importance of managing and organising language for their learners.

### 5.3 Explaining language points

The paraprofessionals were also asked at the start of the course about their ability to explain language points to their learners. Five paraprofessionals did not feel at all confident while three said they had some ability but they wanted to know more. Two paraprofessionals on the other hand reported feeling confident. Of the two who felt confident one identified the importance of *'finding another way other than talking'* to explain language features to her learners who did not have a sufficient level of English. The initial interviews with the CTs indicated that several paraprofessionals were not well equipped to show students how language works. One CT felt the paraprofessional's own knowledge of English would need to increase before she could attempt to help the learners. Another CT reported her paraprofessional taught young learners grammatical conventions out of context which was not appropriate, while another said the paraprofessional would not point things out to the students so there were many missed learning opportunities. Two other CTs noted the paraprofessionals understood the past tense and basic punctuation as they had heard these being referred to with learners. One CT felt the paraprofessional was good at explanation, noticing and dealing with small chunks of language with her learners. This was confirmed by the researcher who saw the paraprofessional skilfully clarify the meaning of *can, can't and cannot* with learners. After the lesson the paraprofessional elaborated on why she had done this. Earlier in the week she had noticed the learners, although able to say the words, had been unable to use them correctly to complete a task. To help them understand the meaning of the words she then took photos of the learners in the group completing activities such as hopping, jumping etc. The observed lesson involved learners making sentences about group members in the photos with *can, can't and cannot*. The observed lesson was very successful showing the paraprofessional had a significant degree of language awareness, knowledge of language features, and skill in making meaning clear to ELLs. In her own words she summed up, *'I am trying to do this [make language clear] more through demonstration rather than explanation, so I prepare material more and try to contextualise things'*.

### 5.4 Promoting language learning

When the paraprofessionals were questioned, at the start of the course, about their ability to promote language learning with their students many of their responses related to levels of confidence (see Table 16). One paraprofessional noted she had more success with some students than others. Another reported she was aware when learners didn't understand her

and so was trying to grade and reduce her language and check understanding. General comments included, *'I'm getting there'* to *'great, I'm confident'* and *'I don't have formal experience but I have life experience'*. However, the CTs' perceptions of the paraprofessionals' ability to promote language learning were less general and more focused on specific language teaching techniques. Comments included *'she's unsure of when to change activities and needs to know how to work with learners to get the maximum output'*, *'she gets sidetracked and needs skills'*, *'there's too much teacher talk'*, and *'she sees the importance of language but needs to step back and wait more for students to produce'*. Other more positive comments were *'she does a good job in a quiet way'*, *'her previous background has helped her grade her language'*, *'she has good ability, good wait time, understands what children are going through'* and *'she is more skilled than some teachers, with good pacing and has a natural initiative and is able to change direction'*.

After the course, there had been a positive change for all of the paraprofessionals in their ability to promote language learning. Four paraprofessionals reported in detail with specific reference to developing language teaching skills. They mentioned their lessons were more structured, they were scaffolding students more, they had more strategies to use to promote oral language, and they were focusing on how to check both meaning and new concepts. Two paraprofessionals reported more understanding of lesson goals and what was required. The others mentioned a better understanding about what the learners were going through and how to deal with student problems.

The CTs also indicated there had been a positive change in the paraprofessionals' ability to promote language learning. They noted improved wait time, reduction in teacher talk, an increased ability to develop oracy, a greater focus on language aims, more effective planning, and one CT felt the paraprofessional was *'more effective than some teachers'*. However, three CTs were less positive, explaining the paraprofessionals were either not grading their language, asking too many questions with insufficient wait time, or not providing sufficient student talking time with too much teacher explanation. One CT felt the paraprofessional had not demonstrated progress and wanted to see the paraprofessional incorporating more of the information and strategies she had been given on the course into her lessons.

<b>Paraprofessional initial Interview</b>	<b>Paraprofessional final Interview</b>	<b>CT initial interview</b>	<b>CT final interview</b>
<i>Good ability, more success with some learners.</i>	<i>Scaffold more, elaborate more, encourage full sentences, model more, don't teach words in isolation as before, more interesting for students.</i>	<i>Helps learner learn well.</i>	<i>Needs to use and promote more of the learning on the ELA course, some fossilised behaviour – needs to use information from course.</i>
<i>Getting there. I have started to get students to interact more.</i>	<i>Hard to separate progress, more of an extension rather than a big change, more scaffolding, and structure now.</i>	<i>Unsure, needs to know how to work with young learners, when to change activity and move on.</i>	<i>Now scaffolding, modelling more, made some 'grab bags' to encourage talking. She asks too many questions – problem.</i>
<i>Confident, many teachers come out with little knowledge of grammar.</i>	<i>Broader understanding of needs now. Have more strategies.</i>	<i>Sees importance of language, needs to step back more and wait more for students to produce, too much teacher talk not enough student talk.</i>	<i>Gained greater understanding of learner, but ability to promote learning still limited. Problem with grading language, talks too much although has reduced, have talked about it. Doesn't demonstrate change, needs more think and wait time, explains too much, tries to do too much in one session.</i>
<i>Getting there, previous work helps me grade and reduce language, aware when students don't understand and try other means, check through questions.</i>	<i>Hugely improved, understand more about student needs, more focus on meaning and concepts now for individual students.</i>	<i>Early learner, previous experience influenced her needs to increase her expectations of ESOL learners.</i>	<i>Great real sense of wait time, doesn't over-talk students, natural playfulness with learners and they respond to her and respect her so they learn.</i>
<i>Goes to CT if there are problems.</i>	<i>Feel a lot better, plan more, got aims, not rushing any more.</i>	<i>Not aware of her ability – she's new.</i>	<i>Yes, a change, soaks up learning – now discusses more with me.</i>
<i>Reasonably confident. Wants to know how to get from A to B.</i>	<i>More confident, more tools to work with, learned a lot from ELA course, wanted more on the subject – less personal information.</i>	<i>More skilled than some teachers, good pacing, natural initiative, self reflects, changes direction, could manage her time better.</i>	<i>Good intuition, does better than some teachers who don't have TESOL training. Her new knowledge is very good.</i>
<i>No formal qualifications but have life experience – confident.</i>	<i>Understand stages more, less writing more talking with students.</i>	<i>Needs the opportunity, gets sidetracked, ELA course will give her more confidence.</i>	<i>Confidently works with students, expands on things that students haven't got, now more confident at building oracy.</i>
<i>Some students learn faster than others, quietly confident about helping students learn.</i>	<i>Better idea of what my goal is. Skills have improved, planning and goal setting better.</i>	<i>High ability, wonderful, good at waiting for students to produce; understand what students are going through.</i>	<i>Since ELA course she's more effective, more prepared, more in tune with what students need, asks, what is it we want to teach?</i>
<i>Happy where I am , could learn more.</i>	<i>More confident, relating better to students now, understand the process more.</i>	<i>Paraprofessional is regarded as a teacher by the learners, have confidence that she does this.</i>	<i>Confidence has grown, tries different things, more focus on learning and language.</i>
<i>Great, good, confident.</i>	<i>More confident, have got skills from the course, implementing them. Duality maps and reading activities. Good results with students.</i>	<i>Works well, does a good job in a quiet gentle way.</i>	<i>Excellent ability, some due to ELA and also second year with learners, better relationship with teachers and students now.</i>

Table 16: Paraprofessionals' ability to promote language learning

## 5.5 Further needs in relation to knowledge about English

When asked at the start of the course about what they would like to know more about in relation to features of English and how the language works, the paraprofessionals' answers were diverse and not directly related to the question. The paraprofessionals' interpretations were focused more on pedagogical aspects, possibly indicating many of them were unaware of what there was to know. Two paraprofessionals mentioned they would like to know more about student learning styles and others wanted to know how learners acquire a second or additional language. One paraprofessional wanted to increase her knowledge of the resources to use with students. Further responses included how to teach learners accurate pronunciation, how not to ask questions, how to teach literacy and how to gain a better understanding of the school curriculum. However, one paraprofessional with extensive language learning experience wanted an opportunity to compare languages so she had a better understanding of the different problems learners face, indicating she did have an awareness of language features. The CTs' responses to the same question were similar to those given by most of the paraprofessionals. CTs' responses were also mainly concerned with pedagogical issues and focused more on paraprofessionals needing more teaching strategies such as how to teach vocabulary, how to scaffold and how to develop fluency. Two CTs' mentioned the need for the paraprofessional to understand how to grade their language when working with learners.

When asked the same question about the knowledge they would like to continue to develop in relation to English language at the completion of the course the paraprofessionals' responses were very generalised, ranging from, '*I'm fairly confident*' to '*there's always something to learn*' to '*I could do with more*'. Two paraprofessionals had more specific responses but more related to pedagogy noting they would like to know more about assessment and reading levels. One paraprofessional still noted she would like to understand more about the languages spoken by her learners which she felt would enable her to help them more with their errors.

## 5.6 Conclusion

This chapter has considered the changes the paraprofessional participants experienced in terms of their understanding of English language and their ability to impart this to students. At the start and throughout the course most paraprofessionals reported feeling confident in

their own literacy and English language skills. Some positive changes were identified by two CTs in two paraprofessionals' literacy and language skills.

Another area of change to consider is the paraprofessionals' understanding of the English language and how it works. The diversity of backgrounds meant there was a variation in the reporting of learning gains. The findings revealed two main groups a small group with a language learning background who considered themselves knowledgeable to an extent and another larger group who had no language learning background and were less aware of features and organisation of language. It is important to consider the weakness in the larger groups' knowledge. In a number of instances, although overall there was some change in the paraprofessionals' awareness of some features of English, the changes were basic. In several cases, these needed to be greater so paraprofessionals could teach effectively.

The lack of confidence among half of the paraprofessionals in the area of explaining language points to ELLs needs to be considered. Before these paraprofessionals are able to show learners patterns and features of language, they need to improve their own knowledge of how language/s work/s. One way to encourage the ELA participants to become more aware of language features could be for them to learn a language themselves. During the ELA course participants did get the opportunity to try reading in a language most of them did not know and this was a valuable exercise. Further exposure to a new language would be useful not only in raising an awareness of language features but also in alerting paraprofessionals to the importance of clear lesson delivery and the techniques skilled language teachers need to use.

The paraprofessionals' ability to promote language learning was linked to gains in understanding basic classroom management and teaching techniques. Some paraprofessionals were noted to have more structure to their lessons, they were using more scaffolding and they deployed a wider repertoire of teaching strategies. However, several CTs indicated there were other paraprofessionals who had not mastered these basic skills. To ensure weaker paraprofessionals continue to develop skills for working with new learners of English they need to be observed further with focused feedback from CTs. As well, they would benefit from more opportunities to observe skilled teachers working with ELLs.

To conclude, in some situations paraprofessionals did make changes in areas of understanding English language and in their ability to impart this understanding to students.

Changes may be even further enhanced if there is more attempt on the ELA course to raise participants' knowledge of language features, although in the current six days it is difficult to see how this would be managed. Alternatively, learning about English and how to explain it to ELLs could form part of another stage of professional development for ESOL paraprofessionals. This knowledge will help paraprofessionals bring a greater language focus to their lessons as well as provide insights into some of the difficulties faced by their ESOL learners.

## Chapter Six Using resources

In our 2007 study (Harvey et al., 2008), we found that some paraprofessionals were routinely selecting and sometimes creating resources for a range of ELL students. A few paraprofessionals were skilled at doing this but others were not able to choose materials at the right language proficiency levels for students. In addition, resources were sometimes not age appropriate or culturally appropriate. This chapter considers changes in the ways resources were used by paraprofessionals.

Resources formed an integral part of the ELA course. Where strategies and principles were demonstrated and modelled by the workshop leader, key resources were introduced. Moreover, the participants were given opportunities to explore and use examples of pre-prepared teaching materials in their groups and in some instances, for example, in the ‘Reading to and Reading with’ workshop, to use materials with the student volunteers. Participants received examples of teaching resources used in the ELA course, to take away with them. Lists of materials and ideas for making resources, e.g. ‘curriculum packs’, ‘reading packs’ and ‘resource bags’ were also distributed. Each workshop included the requirement for an inter-workshop follow-up task and/or assessment. These frequently incorporated either the use of one of the resources demonstrated in the workshop or the development of a resource similar to those which had been demonstrated.

How the paraprofessional chose, used and created resources depended to some extent on their working context. In their answers to the interview questions, paraprofessionals and teachers did not always make a distinction between resources at an appropriate language level and resources appropriate for the topic or the student’s particular interests and background.

### 6.1 Choosing resources at an appropriate level for the students

When the paraprofessionals were asked at the beginning of the course about resources and materials, the majority declared that they chose their own resources albeit with the knowledge that the CT or a classroom teacher was available for consultation or guidance. Other paraprofessionals chose resources from a range of available published levelled or categorised materials. The following table illustrates the levels of independence paraprofessional participants had in choosing resources at the beginning of the course.



Who chooses the resources?	Number of paraprofessionals
Paraprofessional and the classroom teacher choose resources.	One.
Paraprofessional chooses the resources used.	Four plus one* (*with some consultation).
Paraprofessional and CT collaborate/confer.	Two.
Paraprofessional chooses from a range of supplied, already levelled resources.	Two.

Table 17: Choosing resources

At the start of the course five paraprofessionals said that they felt confident selecting the resources (or some of the resources) they used with the students, for example, *'I do choose some resources [...] because the CT feels confident that I know what I am doing. The CT will suggest resources when I ask'*. Two of the five paraprofessionals qualified their statements with the following comments, *'if I'm not sure I would speak to a teacher'* and *'I feel confident but now run things past the CT'*. In this latter case, a new CT had requested that the paraprofessional check resources with her in 2008. In addition, four other paraprofessionals discussed how they chose resources. Comments included, *'I try to fit in with the classroom teacher and get resources, then get things to expand the language'* and *'I usually talk with the CT or choose myself if I feel I know what I should use'*. In one school, both the CT and classroom teacher provided resources for the paraprofessional.

When CTs were asked at the beginning of the course about the paraprofessionals' abilities to choose resources at the correct level, four of them confirmed the levels of confidence that the paraprofessionals had reported. One CT was aware that the paraprofessional needed guidance *'she needs to adjust the level of the resources more [...]she tries to select for the right level but she's not always successful'*.

Comments from three of the CTs indicated that they were not sure as to whether the paraprofessionals' could choose resources at an appropriate level or not. One CT was new to the coordinating role (and had not yet observed the paraprofessional) and another expressed the reservation, *'she does use the resource room and I think she is levelling ok but perhaps not'*. One teacher reported that the paraprofessional, who was very experienced, had been at the school for a long time and as a result was quite autonomous. She had an agreed programme to follow. This CT alluded to a lack of time to supervise the paraprofessional, *'I try to get time to look at the lessons, but don't have time'*.

Information gathered after the ELA course from nine paraprofessionals showed that the majority were conscious of a change in either the ways they selected, worked with or processed resources. Six paraprofessionals reported that they had support in this area, with either all or some resources provided by the coordinating or classroom teacher. They used or chose from these resources or they could ask the teachers for advice, for example, *'I have a list of basic resources which are supplied'* and *'I ask the coordinating teacher if I'm not sure'* and *'now with the CT's backing and her being on the course it's a big help, we work well together'*.

Interestingly, four paraprofessionals were not sure exactly how much improvement they had made in this area. Their comments included, *'I don't know, I am probably doing it better than before....'*, *'I have improved a lot but need more work on that'*, *'possibly...'*, *'I think I choose the most appropriate thing for them'* and *'still have to think about it, I feel capable'*. This apparent equivocation may be the result of an increased awareness of the complexity of the issues involved in resource selection. Two paraprofessionals stated that there had been no change in their situation with regards to choosing resources, for example, *'goes really well, did before [the ELA course] as well,'* and *'not really changed since ELA'*.

In the main, CTs confirmed the statements from the paraprofessionals. For the four paraprofessionals who chose their own resources a lot of the time, the corresponding CTs confirmed that they usually chose appropriate material. One CT acknowledged there had been a change, noting, *'... she usually gets the level right now'*, *'Yes, correct level'* and *'I haven't had a problem, what I see is accurate'*. Two CTs indicated that the school had purchased more resources since the ELA course. In one school, when the students were being assessed, the paraprofessional chose appropriately levelled assessment material. Another CT said that *'the school has more resources to choose from'* and the paraprofessional *'dips into these'*.

Some CTs observed that the changes in their paraprofessionals' use of resources were related directly to the ELA course. One teacher felt that the choices the paraprofessional made were *'now based on more knowledge'*, the resources were *'more targeted to what they want to do'* and the course had *'given permission or backing to go ahead with their ideas'*. Another teacher felt the *'ELA course had helped with awareness of what was available'*. Moreover the

making of the curriculum packs (bags of realia put together by the paraprofessional for language teaching and demonstrated by the ELA course leader) boosted their confidence.

## **6.2 Making and using resources**

Resources and resource packs were an important part of the ELA programme and were important to the course assessments. The researchers observed many of the ELA resources or new variations based on the ELA resources being used during the observed lessons. Overall, the paraprofessionals enjoyed being able to make effective use of the ELA resources, however time to make new resources was an issue for some. One CT commented, *'the assignments showed how to use everyday resources but it takes a long time to be able to do this'*.

Three paraprofessionals felt that they were using resources more effectively, for example, *'... when I get the resources I have a much better idea of how to use them', 'I am more effective. I have changed and I'm not working so much in isolation but am more linked to the classroom which is better. Before it was more off the top of my head' and 'can now look at stuff given and think around the points...'* that were presented and discussed in the ELA course.

Nine of the paraprofessionals (see Table 18) were positive and confident about their ability to make resources when interviewed at the beginning of the ELA course. Three mentioned specifically that they had made materials adapted from the ELA course materials already. One had made a similar resource to the 'Mini Beasts' resource pack introduced during the ELA session. Hers was based on the beach. Two other paraprofessionals had prepared resources following the format of the 'Leisure and Pleasure' material from the ELA course (laminated picture and word cards). Both participants commented on the amount of time involved, *'took a long time to prepare the materials'* and *'spent too long on it for the amount of use I was able to have from it'*. Another paraprofessional indicated that she occasionally made resources but that not much preparation time was allocated and resources took a long time to make. This was reinforced by the CT who reported that she, not the paraprofessional, prepared the resources as there was no paid time allowance.

Is confident.
Likes doing this. Has adapted material from the ELA course and tried it with groups. Resources took a long time to prepare.
Really likes making resources and has made a lot. Has prepared a curriculum resource pack about the beach based on the ELA course material.
Good at resource preparation. With another paraprofessional adapted the ELA course material, and made a pack with objects and key words rather than sentences. Took a lot of time relative to the amount of time it was used.
Has no problem with making resources.
Confident.
She is confident but does not make many resources.
Makes resources occasionally as not much preparation time is allocated and it takes a long time. Has made resources for the ELA course. Does not take things home.
Has no problems making resources. Has made charts with pictures of the students and their written captions. Wall chart definitions of parts of speech useful for students and paraprofessionals.
Loves making resources. Feels it is natural because her family come from a teaching background.

Table 18: Confidence in making resources at the start of the ELA course

Seven CTs at the start of the course were either very positive about the paraprofessionals' abilities to make resources, describing their ability as '*excellent*', '*brilliant*' and '*good ability to prepare resources, she can whip them up*'. Others either did not know how well their paraprofessional made resources or felt that the paraprofessional needed to think more about how to use the resources in their teaching session i.e. '*to continue the journey*'.

When questioned after the ELA course all the paraprofessionals indicated they were feeling positive about their ability to make resources (see Table 19). Three paraprofessionals referred directly to the ELA course when discussing changes, one paraprofessional whose school had provided a lot of resources for her to use said, '*I have changed because of the ELA course, I now notice more materials and now I know how to use them*'. Two paraprofessionals commented on the materials they now had to make resources with and the systems they had established to store them. An example was '*more access to laminating pockets*'. It was interesting to note that one of these paraprofessionals although she reported making higher quality resources, said that the content and substance of the resource was no different than previously.

Felt confident before. Has not made as many resources because had been busy. Time constraints.
Good ideas and has made resources. Now laminated, higher quality but content no different. As a result of ELA, has made reading packs.
Has made more resources, developed a filing system so that all ELAs can store resources to use in the future. Greater access to laminated pockets.
Has produced a lot of resources, uses and stores them well. Has adapted tasks from the ELA course to use with students.
Likes making resources and finds it easy to prepare things for the learners.
Loves making resources, especially resource packs.
Now knows she could make resources but there is no time allocation.
She is more aware of the graphics and how to use them. Now notices more materials and knows how to use them
The nature of her support work has changed, now mostly in-class. Students involved in 'enquiry' learning. She could make resources if this was required but has not made many.
Was confident before the course, does not feel any different now.

Table 19: Confidence in making resources after the ELA course

The CTs were mostly very positive about the paraprofessional's ability to make resources. Only one CT indicated there had been a big change in the paraprofessional as a result of the ELA course, and felt that the paraprofessional now realised the importance of resources. Three CTs included comments about the difficulties the paraprofessionals had finding time to make resources.

As part of their inter-workshop tasks, paraprofessionals used resources that were distributed at the ELA course or developed and trialled resources they had made. Opportunities were provided on the ELA course for schools to display and share the resources they had created. During the observed lessons the researchers saw many instances of both resources from the ELA course and resources made by the paraprofessionals following the ELA model, being used. Even in the first observation at the beginning of the ELA course, two paraprofessionals (see Table 20) were observed using a Leisure and Pleasure pack as demonstrated on the course. In seven of the final observations paraprofessionals were using ELA modelled or adapted resources.

Observation one	Observation two	Observation three
Prepared laminated chart of letters and cut up alphabet + laminated pictures from <u>First Thousand Words Picture Book</u> Usborne. Letter and sound , word, picture matching.	<u>Little Red Hen</u> storybook from shared reading box. Little Red Hen puppet. Introduced alphabet letters, words, and sentences. Developing oral language.	Used puppets. To work on phonics and initial sounds. Picture-initial sound identification. Some expanded utterances.
' <u>The Fun Bus</u> ' (picture book) Heinemann. Oral vocabulary focus. Forming sentences.  Oral fluency.	<u>Too Much Noise</u> , shared reading. Oral –unknown vocabulary, blends, recycling language, reading aloud.	Laminated pictures of characters and events from <u>Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows</u> .  Oral recap of story. Sequencing and talking about characters.
Laminated pictures and words from leisure and pleasure pack. Photographs of students. Teaching/using vocabulary and expanding oral language focus.	'Lego type' construction set, straws, connectors, wheels. Selection of containers with lids. Oral revision of classroom topics; push-pull, movement, the body.	Pictures of students from previous day's class trip and animals. Laminated flash cards of animal 'sound words'. Small plastic animals.
' <u>Lorna and the Ladybird</u> ', large picture book with captions. Oral focus, key words and sentences.	' <u>The Baby Shark</u> ', One book for shared reading. Elicited and discussed vocabulary, group reading.	' <u>Bingo's Ice-cream</u> ', PM reader. Bingo board game using laminated cards and words. Recap story. Oral word bank –oral sentences, preparation for writing.
Basic laminated reading word cards, play dough, sand tray, felt pens and crayons for copying words. Learners choose a word, choose medium to practise the word.	Laminated picture of the beach with cut outs of key items. Matching word cards to make sentences. Oral focus, talked about vocabulary items, developed sentences.	Paraprofessional prepared laminated photos of learners in group. Word cards to make sentences.
A laminated sheet from <u>Write Now Book 1 Learning Solutions</u> . A sequence of drawings for oral discussion before writing.	Rubbish and bin realia. (including cellophane a low frequency word in the text). Reading pack from the ELA course. ' <u>Don't Throw that Away</u> '. Laminated sequence pictures, words, and sentences.	Reading pack for text ' <u>No Skipper</u> '. Laminated picture pages from the book, language chunks, and sentences.  Bingo game matching blends, with picture and word on the Bingo card.
Leisure and pleasure pack. Bag of laminated words and pictures. Used to teach vocabulary and expand oral language and concepts.	Sheets of paper, pencils, dice. Students making board games and writing instructions. Support from paraprofessional as requested by the class teacher.	Drafts of duality maps. A4sheet of 'home language–English translation' words for one language group. Photocopied picture resources of students' home countries and cultural activities.
In-class support. Technology class 'acids and bases'. Students using equipment in related to the lesson.	A3 laminated picture –'school'. Laminated words and language chunks. Vocabulary and expanding oral language. Worksheet from mainstream classroom 'the body'.	In-class support (1:1) in the computer room. 'Inquiry' learning project. Student's worksheet. Small hand held whiteboard. Explaining unknown vocabulary, reviewing concepts, developing a mind map with learner.
A3 sheet of labels of classroom items to be cut up and placed on items for very new learner of English. Learner translated items into own language so labels became bilingual.	Reviewing student writing from texts in students' exercise books. Errors were underlined and discussed.	Laminated cards of different animals given out to small group. Learners describe the animal to the group and the group had to guess what the animal was. Oral prewriting practice in using adjectives to describe characters..
Teacher copied strip story about candles. Print too small to easily read Students arrange and read alone and together. Review key vocabulary.	Laminated pictures of planets. Two series of sentences about the planets increasing in detail, length and complexity. Students discuss the characteristics of the planets generally and then in increasing detail. Match sentences with planets.	Concentrating on the blend 'gl'. Large glitter poem all children read together. There is a 'gl' book in the room. Students generate sentences with 'gl' words. They then write them on strips. Paraprofessional writes on whiteboard.

Table 20: Resources used in observed lessons

One issue that arose in relation to the use of resources was the sometimes very cramped, inadequate spaces available for paraprofessional teaching sessions. In several observations paraprofessionals and students struggled to utilise resources effectively because there was not enough room to spread out and manipulate the resources appropriately, for example, picture sequencing, word sentence matching.

### **6.3 Using new technologies**

Increasingly, computers and digital cameras as well as other forms of technology are considered an everyday part of the learning landscape and particularly for making resources. Consequently the research team included a question relating to the use of new technologies in the interviews. Seven paraprofessionals indicated (see Table 21) that they were competent users of the new technologies. However, six of the paraprofessionals, reported that they did not have many opportunities to use ICT with the students.

One observation particularly demonstrated effective use of new technology. The paraprofessional downloaded photographs of her students who had been on a school trip the day before. The photographs had been taken by the class teacher and posted on the school shared drive. The paraprofessional printed the photos and used them in her teaching session as a stimulus for expanding the students' oral language by eliciting what the students had done on their trip the day before.

Proficient, not much opportunity to work with computers.
Not overly confident. CT providing some training. Has learnt to use colour printer since ELA and is using photographs with students in class.
No, does not use ICT.
Does not use ICT in role. No change.
Confident user. Occasionally uses computer to access resources e.g. flags for duality posters. Good with digital cameras.
Confident user. Has always used the camera but she has been using it more since the ELA course.
Competent user. No occasions to use ICT with students. Often uses the web to download pictures.
Competent user. No computer in the ESOL classroom, not many opportunities. Has taken students to the library to use the internet.
Competent user. Having extra tuition for Macs. She has started to plan lessons around using digital pictures. Is in charge of 'Word Shark' programme and is seen as a resource in this area.
Capable user. Has used the digital camera. Has learnt new skills from observing ICT teacher with a class. Can now confidently work supporting students setting up their homepages.

Table 21: Paraprofessional proficiency with new technologies after the ELA course

## 6.4 Conclusion

Choosing resources at an appropriate level for learners is crucial to support effective student learning. The increased level of confidence paraprofessionals expressed in their ability to select resources after the ELA course was generally confirmed by the CTs. Moreover, support for the paraprofessionals in the selection process was apparent in a variety of ways over participating schools. It was provided through: the availability of the CT or classroom teacher for consultation, the CT and paraprofessional being in a close professional working relationship in the same ESOL classroom, prescribed materials being levelled for the paraprofessional, the paraprofessional delivering an already established or commercially published programme and, in a few situations, scheduled planning meetings.

Paraprofessionals were exposed to a range of resources on the ELA course and as part of their inter-workshop tasks made resources modelled on those presented during the ELA course. After the course, all the paraprofessionals expressed self assurance in their ability to make resources with the majority using ELA based resources in the final observations.

Comments relating to time constraints from both paraprofessionals and CTs, while not universal were a recurring theme and related to lack of paid time, the length of time it took to



prepare resources and there was one comment on the length of time taken to prepare a resource compared to the amount of use made of the resource. Paraprofessionals at one school specifically noted that they were planning ahead and processing, storing and collecting potential resources, for example, for curriculum packs for both making and reusing resources in the future. Physical space was also a limitation in the effective use of resources. In the observations of the paraprofessionals who worked in-class or took withdrawal groups in offices and other restricted areas, space to spread out and use the ELA resources was an issue, particularly with the reading packs that required space to sequence pictures.

Although the majority of paraprofessionals reported they were competent users of new technologies, apart from one paraprofessional working with Years 7 and 8 students, most had very few opportunities to use computers on a regular basis with learners. New technologies were used by some paraprofessionals, for example, components of duality posters and pictures of the learners, in the process of making resources.

## **Chapter Seven Learning after the ELA course**

One of the quality objectives of the ELA course was that of promoting lifelong learning. The specific goal for paraprofessionals was that they would, ‘...through this training, have opened up and enhanced their present capacities and extended their professional/lifelong learning pathways in this specialised area of work’ (van Hees, 2004, p.6). The concept of lifelong learning encompasses both formal, credentialised learning and non-formal learning. For many paraprofessionals, including the participants in this study, a lot of learning happens informally in meetings with teachers and through incidental observations, as well as in more planned school-based professional development initiatives that include paraprofessionals.

The researchers were interested in finding out whether paraprofessionals’ views on their ongoing learning changed as a result of the course. The questions in the interviews were relatively open but the emphasis on ‘education and training’ probably led participants towards considering more formal learning, in particular. All the participant paraprofessionals identified in the first interview that they were either concretely or more vaguely considering further formal education in the future. None of them changed in this goal. The impact of undertaking the course for paraprofessionals was that it strengthened their resolve to undertake further study rather than to change it altogether. It also seemed to focus them more closely on areas they thought they might pursue. The areas paraprofessionals were interested in moving into fell into three categories: working in the ESOL area specifically, working as a school teacher or other school based profession and undertaking further education in another field. This latter paraprofessional wanted to study for a degree in a science area (not related to education).

### **7.1 Further development in ESOL**

Three paraprofessional participants expressed a clear interest in ESOL as a future field to work in, two particularly wanted to work with adults (adult refugees in one case) and/or privately. They saw the course as a way of certificating them to teach in the community (to adults and school students), as well as in schools. One of the comments made was that the course had provided an invaluable (but understandably basic) introduction to the ESOL field

which the participant now realised was ‘huge’. She said she now better understood that the field was extensive and she had more of an appreciation of the amount there was still to learn.

## **7.2 Continuing in education to be a teacher or related professional**

Seven of the paraprofessional participants initially intended to become a teacher in the future. Two equivocated between this and some other education based career working with children. One of the paraprofessionals with a degree in business was initially tentatively interested in pursuing a Diploma in Education but by the end of the year was less sure about having responsibility for a whole class; she also liked the more flexible hours being a paraprofessional afforded her. This person was also considering doing a Dip TESSOL and perhaps teaching adult refugees in the future.

Another paraprofessional was already studying for a Diploma in Education and at the time of the research was in her second year. She had not changed her goals through the year and still intended to graduate in the following year and pursue a career in teaching. Three other paraprofessionals wanted to undertake a teaching qualification when their children were older. They said that working in a school environment between 9.00am and 3.00pm suited them for now and they needed to wait until their family responsibilities were not so heavy before they could consider moving on in their career. In the meantime they were enthusiastic about taking ongoing professional development in relevant fields.

Another paraprofessional wanted to professionally qualify in the education field either as a teacher or a speech language therapist. The course impressed on her that she did want to teach ESOL and gave her the confidence to think more carefully about this area for the future. One paraprofessional originally thought she wanted to be a teacher but by the time we spoke to her in the first interview had decided against this. However, she did want to study further in the field of education and had also thought about training to be a speech language therapist or psychologist working with children. The special attraction for her was working with ‘*children who were not mainstream and had behavioural or other ‘differences’*’. In the meantime this person wanted to continue undertaking relevant professional development and was content being an ELA paraprofessional (while her children were younger).

### **7.3 Changes as a result of the ELA course**

As noted above, the paraprofessionals on the whole, did not change their views markedly about future professional development, education or their careers as a result of the ELA course. All the participants were reflecting on the possibility of undertaking degree level study in the future before the ELA course and it sharpened their ideas rather than changed them substantially. There was only one paraprofessional who felt the ELA course had shifted her view on a post course direction. This person felt the course had made her more enthusiastic about teaching ESOL (in particular) in the future. One of the goals of the ELA course was to foster lifelong learning in participants. However no explicit mention of the types of future study paraprofessionals might undertake was made during the course.

In terms of skills acquired for pursuing further education, several of the paraprofessionals observed that the requirement for written assignments had improved their writing skills. For several participants their feedback rating for their assignments had moved from *satisfactory* for the beginning assignment to *well done* and *excellent* as the course progressed.

## Chapter Eight Conclusion

While this study is entitled ‘Evaluation of paraprofessional English Language Assistants’ professional development programme’ it is in fact an evaluation of just one aspect of that programme: the changes in paraprofessional practice over the period of and following the ELA course. This is what was requested by the Ministry of Education. The study has followed and analysed the progress of ten paraprofessionals who participated in the 2008 Auckland based course. This has been achieved through interviews with the paraprofessionals and their CTs, as well as through observations of paraprofessionals working with ELLs.

### 8.1 Gains

There is no doubt that paraprofessionals made substantial gains as a result of their participation on the ELA course and that many ELL students have benefitted as a result of the professional development programme.

The course had a positive impact on paraprofessionals’ self perception and view of their role. Every paraprofessional expressed satisfaction in their role early in the research. However, following the course they were all able to articulate in more educationally specific terms, and terms that directly related to their learners, why their role was important and what they enjoyed about it. A recurring theme for most of the paraprofessionals was their general increase in confidence as well as a belief that their capacities in specific areas had lifted. Certainly, paraprofessionals were able to respond to researcher questions about their practices more knowledgeably as the year progressed.

Connected to their general increase in confidence many of the paraprofessionals were able to carve out an increased profile in their schools for themselves and their work. This was supported by CTs and the wider school and took different forms in each school. For example, one paraprofessional organised a ‘fashion parade’ of different ethnicities’ national costumes followed by a shared lunch, while another profiled a different school culture and language each week at full school assemblies. In some schools these activities sparked whole school interest (including parent participation) and valuable discussions around languages and cultures.

In terms of their general pedagogical practices, both paraprofessionals and their CTs believed that paraprofessionals were more effective after the ELA course. Areas specifically mentioned were: the scaffolding of student learning, support for writing, expanding oral language and a greater empathy and understanding of learners' home languages and cultures. Paraprofessionals also noted that they felt more able to notice learner strengths and weaknesses. CTs specifically described how paraprofessionals had improved their teaching techniques and strategies in areas such as the provision of clear lesson structures and the communication of learning intentions to students. Importantly for paraprofessionals, they noticed more positive feedback about the learners they were working with from classroom teachers, as they progressed on the course.

One of the most significant gains on the course for paraprofessionals was their learning in the area of diverse cultures and languages. The course itself offered poignant opportunities for participants to reflect on what it was like to be learning in a new language and culture. Moreover, the assignment which required paraprofessionals to work with their learners to produce posters depicting aspects of ELLs' dual languages and cultures (the duality posters) was a powerful awareness raising exercise. This and related tasks resulted in the ability of paraprofessionals to consider more carefully the cultural and linguistic resources their learners brought to the classroom.

Understanding how English works and then explaining this to others is an important skill for an English language teacher. Researchers found that participants who themselves had learned another language were more able to discuss simple language points with their learners and were also more focussed in their discussion of language learning in interviews with researchers.

A goal of the course is for participants to gain in their own English language skills. In this respect one paraprofessional who was a non native speaker of English (albeit with a high level of proficiency) made significant gains in her levels of confidence during the course and another paraprofessional improved her writing through the iterative process of working on assignments.

There was considerable emphasis during the ELA course on the production of custom made, high quality resources for learners. This was modelled through the relevance, attractiveness, meticulous organisation and deployment of the resources that were distributed on the course for immediate course participant learning and for use with ELLs in schools. Several assignments required paraprofessionals to make resources and then reflect on how they had used these with ELLs. There was friendly competition among course participants as to who came up with the most innovative and interesting ideas for realia and related resources. Enthusiasm for making resources was high and researchers saw an impressive array of attractive examples in schools. Importantly, the course also provided an increased awareness of what was available and how it might be used.

Because the relationship between CTs and paraprofessionals can be very important in setting the tone and quality for paraprofessional sessions with ELLs it was important to consider how CTs had changed as a result of the ELA course. The CTs were a well qualified and generally senior group of teachers who reported that attending the course helped them reconnect to their own prior learning in ESOL and literacy teaching. Those who were less experienced with ESOL seemed to gain the most. Significantly, a clear strength of the ELA course *was* the co-participation of CTs. By attending, CTs learned more about the strengths and weaknesses of their paraprofessionals and so were able to deploy them more effectively as the year progressed. CTs also developed an awareness of the need for more planning and meeting time to provide guidance, where necessary, as well as for the cross-pollination of ideas (between paraprofessionals and paraprofessionals and teachers). Communication within ESOL teams increased as well, since teachers and paraprofessionals had common concepts, strategies and vocabulary arising from the ELA course, with which to discuss ELLs and their education. In addition, the ELA course afforded CTs the opportunity to network on the course with each other and share their experiences and challenges with others in a similar role.

## **8.2 Issues to consider**

While there were many positive outcomes of the course, there were also some issues that should be examined further. One of the most fraught areas on the course was that of questioning. In her push to focus participants on expanding ELL oral language through prompting, the course leader advised participants not to question learners directly. This led to some awkwardness in observed learning situations where paraprofessionals struggled to teach

reading (a different skill), for example, without asking students any questions. The language they modelled to children was non authentic and students sometimes misunderstood the intention of the paraprofessional. Undoubtedly paraprofessionals should reduce the number of questions they address to learners but perhaps even more importantly, they need to consider the form and purpose of their questioning i.e. what is it that they want the student to do and concomitantly learn as a result of their questions.

While the course leader regularly modelled focussed feedback to ELLs, researchers believe that the course could have been even more effective if this area had been addressed explicitly with paraprofessionals i.e. explicit rather than general feedback to ELLs is more likely to promote gains in language learning. In addition, the issue of feedback to paraprofessionals by classroom teachers and CTs would have been a fruitful area for exploration. Several CTs admitted at the end of the year that they had not been able to observe their paraprofessional all year and therefore were not aware of exactly what and how well they were doing in their teaching sessions. This meant minimal feedback to the paraprofessional on any changes they had made through the year.

Given that the ELA course was only six days long it would not have been possible to address aspects of grammar and discourse in any depth. However, understanding how language works is an important area of knowledge in language teaching. Both teachers and paraprofessionals were sometimes unfocussed or even unresponsive when discussing how they might explain language points to learners in specific terms. In a sense, they did not know what they did not know. One CT observed that some qualified teachers did not understand these things either and so it was perhaps not unreasonable that paraprofessionals were in the same situation. A lack of explicit knowledge of the English language, though, did impact on paraprofessionals' ability to help learners improve their level of proficiency in English across all four skills. Perhaps even a relatively modest language learning experience for those who had had no such experiences would raise awareness further, of the process their learners were going through. Researchers believe it would also assist paraprofessionals to understand the importance of structuring language learning, recycling learned language and pacing lessons to optimise their students' learning.



As noted above, there was a strong focus on the production and use of high quality resources some of which were time and cost intensive (e.g. the cost of lamination). While many of the paraprofessionals seemed to enjoy the focus and find it relevant, for some, who were engaged in supporting commercial programmes (e.g. Rainbow Reading), it was less applicable. In addition, the researchers found that paraprofessionals were sometimes not able to exploit resources fully because they had not considered carefully enough what the learning point for students was.

Lastly, the ELA course is currently a standalone programme that does not offer any follow up or articulation into other programmes. To some degree it feels like a capsule, an end in itself. However, as noted in chapter six, each of the paraprofessionals participating in the study did intend to undertake degree level education in the future. These goals were reinforced rather than shaped by the ELA course. It could be appropriate and useful for participants to have further education and career pathways addressed towards the end of the course.

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## Appendix One

### Letter to principals



Faculty of Applied Humanities Office  
Private Bag 92006  
Auckland 1142, NZ  
T: +64 9 921 9659  
F: +64 9 921 9631  
[www.aut.ac.nz](http://www.aut.ac.nz)

Thursday, 22 October 2009

Dear Principal

The Ministry of Education has commissioned myself and two other researchers (Karen Stacey and Heather Richards) from Auckland University of Technology to undertake research examining paraprofessional practice in ESOL programmes across the school sector. The research has been divided into two parts. Last year we undertook part one: a regional study into ESOL paraprofessional (teacher-aide) practices in supporting initial reading programmes. The report on this research should be available on the Ministry website in February. The second part of the research will run this year from February 2008 through to October 2008 and will focus on evaluating the professional development programme for English Language Assistants. The overall purpose of both projects is to gain a comprehensive understanding of the range of ESOL paraprofessional practices and ensure that professional development programmes are designed to meet the needs of ESOL paraprofessionals.

We are writing to you to inform you of the **second part** of the research. This is entitled 'Evaluation of paraprofessional English Language Assistants' (ELA) professional development programme'. We are contacting you because you have paraprofessionals and a coordinating teacher participating in the Ministry-sponsored ELA programme from February – July. This research project will involve:

1. Interviewing paraprofessionals twice, once in February/March at the beginning of the course to discuss their work and ESOL knowledge base, and once in October/November to discuss their reflections on the programme and changes in their practices working with ELL (English Language Learner) students.
2. Observing the same paraprofessional three times: once in February/March at the beginning of the course, once in July just as the course finishes and once in October/November. All observations need to be with usual groups of children at usual times.

3. Interviewing coordinating teachers twice, in February/March and again in October/November.
4. The collection of copies of course assignments and evaluations.

All data recording will be achieved by note taking. There will be no electronic recording and we will try to be as friendly and as unobtrusive as possible.

We will be aggregating the data we collect to provide an overall picture of practices across the school system. We will not be reporting on any individuals or their schools.

The Ministry is providing the payment of one Teacher Release Day for compensation of the school's involvement in the research if you and your staff decide to participate. Please note that participation in the research will be voluntary and will involve the consent of each individual.

The purpose in writing this letter is to ask you if I could arrange a meeting time with yourself or another senior staff member, an ESOL teacher and her/his teacher aide or other paraprofessional who is enrolled on the ELA programme beginning in February this year so that you might have time to consider whether or not you and your staff are willing to be involved.

One of us will contact you in the next few days by phone and/or email to follow up this letter.

Ethics approval for this research has been gained from the AUT Ethics Committee and we will be following their procedures throughout the course of the research

In the meantime if you would like to clarify any points or discuss the research further please feel to contact me on (09) 921 9659.

Yours Sincerely,



Dr Sharon Harvey  
Faculty of Applied Humanities

[sharon.harvey@aut.ac.nz](mailto:sharon.harvey@aut.ac.nz)

## Participant Information Sheet for teachers

# Participant Information Sheet



**Date Information Sheet Produced: 7 January 2008**

### **Project Title**

Evaluation of paraprofessional English Language Assistants' professional development programme

### **An Invitation**

We would like to invite you to participate in this research project funded by the Ministry of Education. The project aims to describe and examine the changes in the way paraprofessionals work with ELL students before, during and after the English Language Assistants' (ELA) professional development course (semester one 2008). The research will also consider changes in the way coordinating teachers work with paraprofessionals. The point of the research is to look at practices across the whole group of participants and we will not be identifying you individually. Participation in this project is completely voluntary and you can withdraw from the project at any time.

### **What is the purpose of this research?**

The purpose of this research is to help the Ministry to understand how ESOL paraprofessionals' practices change when they are involved in the ELA professional development programme. We intend to produce a research report for the Ministry of Education and a two page report sheet for everyone who participates in the research. We may also communicate key findings from the research to the wider education community through conference presentations and academic publications.

### **How was I chosen for this invitation?**

Your school is one of the participating schools in the ELA programme for semester one 2008. We need to enlist ten paraprofessionals and their coordinating teachers from participating schools. If a paraprofessional who you are coordinating is willing to participate we will ask you if you are willing to participate as well.

### **What will happen in this research?**

We will need to **interview** you twice during the year (in February /March and October/November) to gain an understanding of how your paraprofessional's practices and yours have changed over the year.

We would like to interview the participating paraprofessional twice over the course of the year to discuss their work with English Language Learners (ELLs). We would like to interview them in February or March, at the beginning of the ELA course and again in October or November when they have had time to reflect on their learning and experiences. In addition, we would like to observe them working with children in three sessions: at the beginning of the course, at the end (in July) and several months after the course has finished (October/November).

If paraprofessionals agree to participate in the research we will also need to collect copies of their assignments and evaluation sheets. It is important to note that we are independent from the people running the course and we will not be sharing information with them except through the published Ministry of Education report at the end of the research.

### **Are there likely to be any discomforts and risks?**

In our experience coordinating teachers can feel uncomfortable about their own lack of knowledge about ESOL and their lack of time to work in a coordinated way with paraprofessionals. If these are issues for you, you may feel relieved to discuss them openly in a context where your concerns will be taken into account (through incorporation in the final report). Our intention is to explore a range of factors related to the professional development of ESOL paraprofessionals.

### **What are the benefits?**

While there may be no direct benefits to you in participating in the research, the research will enable the Ministry of Education to gain information about how ELA professional development impacts on the practices of paraprofessionals and teachers in their work with ELL students

### **How will my privacy be protected?**

Your privacy will be protected in this research. Neither your school, your name nor your paraprofessional's name will be used in the report to Ministry and they will not know who has agreed to participate in the research. The only people who will be aware of the identity of research participants will be the three researchers (Sharon, Karen and Heather – see below for details).

### **What are the costs of participating in this research?**

The only cost will be your time for the two interviews (about one hour each). It is envisaged that this will be paid time for you. Your school will receive a payment of one Teacher Release Day for any costs incurred during the research.

### **What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?**

It would be great if you could contact us directly (email or phone) within a week of receiving this information sheet.

**How do I agree to participate in this research?**

If you agree to participate in this research please phone or email us to indicate your willingness. Also, please complete the consent form and we will pick it up when we come to interview you.

**Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?**

We will compile a two page report sheet for you and your schools which we hope to be able to distribute by the end of this school year.

**What do I do if I have concerns about this research?**

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Lead Researcher, Dr Sharon Harvey, sharon.harvey@aut.ac.nz, 921 9659, Faculty of Applied Humanities, Auckland University of Technology.

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary, AUTEK, Madeline Banda, madeline.banda@aut.ac.nz , 921 9999 ext 8044.

**Whom do I contact for further information about this research?**

Researcher Contact Details:

Dr Sharon Harvey Sharon.harvey@aut.ac.nz, 921 9659, Faculty of Applied Humanities, Auckland University of Technology

Karen Stacey Karen.stacey@aut.ac.nz, 921 9999 x6049, Centre for Refugee Education, Auckland University of Technology

Heather Richards heather.richards@aut.ac.nz 921 9999 x6046, School of Languages, Auckland University of Technology

**Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 25.2.08,  
AUTEK Reference number 08/04**



## Participant Information Sheet for paraprofessionals

# Participant Information Sheet



**Date Information Sheet Produced: 7 January 2008**

### **Project Title**

Evaluation of paraprofessional English Language Assistants' professional development programme

### **An Invitation**

We would like to invite you to participate in this research project funded by the Ministry of Education. The project aims to describe and examine the changes in your practice before, during and after the English Language Assistants' (ELA) professional development course. The point of the research is to look at practices across the whole group of participants and we will not be identifying you individually. Participation in this project is completely voluntary (it's your choice) and you can withdraw from the project at any time.

### **What is the purpose of this research?**

The purpose of this research is to help the Ministry to understand how ESOL paraprofessionals' practice changes when they are involved in the ELA professional development programme. We want to observe practices at the beginning of the programme, just as you finish and about three months after your graduation. We intend to produce a research report for the Ministry of Education and a two page report sheet for everyone who participates in the research. We may also communicate key findings from the research to the wider education community through conference presentations and academic publications.

### **How was I chosen for this invitation?**

Your school is one of the participating schools in the ELA programme for semester one 2008. We need to enlist ten paraprofessionals from participating schools. Your participation will be confirmed if your coordinating teacher also agrees to take part in the research.

### **What will happen in this research?**

We would like to interview you twice over the course of the year to discuss your work with English Language Learners (ELLs). We would like to interview you in February or March, at the beginning of the ELA course and again in October or November when you have had time to reflect on your learning and experiences. In addition, we would like to observe you working with children in three sessions: at the beginning of the course, at the end (in July) and several months after the course has finished (October/November).

If you agree to participate in the research we will also need to collect copies of your assignments and evaluation sheets. It is important to note that we are independent from the people running the course and we will not be sharing information with them except through the published Ministry of Education report at the end of the research.

We will also need to interview your coordinating teacher to gain an understanding of how their and your practices have changed over the year.

**Are there likely to be any discomforts and risks?**

If you have not been observed much in the past or you are not very experienced working with ELL students you may find the idea of being observed uncomfortable. Be assured that all three of us have worked with new teachers and paraprofessionals a great deal. We know what it is like to be new to teaching and learning or new education contexts. We aim to be friendly and unobtrusive during observations. Also, please note that our research will not focus on you specifically but rather will provide an overall picture of paraprofessional practices during and after ELA professional development.

**What are the benefits?**

While there may be no direct benefits to you in participating in the research, the research will enable the Ministry of Education to gain information about how ELA professional development impacts on the practices of paraprofessionals and teachers in their work with ELL students

**How will my privacy be protected?**

Your privacy will be protected in this research. Neither your school, your name nor your coordinating teacher's name will be used in the report to Ministry and they will not know who has agreed to participate in the research. The only people who will be aware of the identity of research participants will be the three researchers (Sharon, Karen and Heather – see below for details).

**What are the costs of participating in this research?**

The only cost will be your time for the two interviews (about one hour each). It is envisaged that this will be paid time for you. The observations will be during your normal timetabled sessions with students. Your school will receive a payment of one Teacher Release Day for any costs incurred during the research.

**What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?**

It would be great if you could contact us directly (details below) or through your coordinating teacher within a week of receiving this information sheet.

**How do I agree to participate in this research?**

If you agree to participate in this research please phone or email us to indicate your willingness. Also, please complete the consent form and we will pick it up when we come to interview you.

**Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?**

We will compile a two page report sheet for you and your schools which we hope to be able to distribute by the end of this school year.

**What do I do if I have concerns about this research?**

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Lead Researcher, Dr Sharon Harvey, sharon.harvey@aut.ac.nz, 921 9659, Faculty of Applied Humanities, Auckland University of Technology.

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary, AUTEK, Madeline Banda, madeline.banda@aut.ac.nz , 921 9999 ext 8044.

**Whom do I contact for further information about this research?**

Researcher Contact Details:


Dr Sharon Harvey Sharon.harvey@aut.ac.nz, 921 9659, Faculty of Applied Humanities, Auckland University of Technology

Karen Stacey Karen.stacey@aut.ac.nz, 921 9999 x6049, Centre for Refugee Education, Auckland University of Technology

Heather Richards heather.richards@aut.ac.nz 921 9999 x6046, School of Languages, Auckland University of Technology

**Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 25.2.08,  
AUTEK Reference number 08/04**

## Consent Form

<h1>CONSENT FORM</h1> <p>Interviews, observations and copies of ELA assignments and evaluation forms</p>	 <p><b>AUT</b> UNIVERSITY TE WĀNANGA ARONUI O TAMAKI MAKAU RAU</p>
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*Project title:* Evaluation of paraprofessional English Language Assistants professional development programme

*Researchers:* Sharon Harvey, Karen Stacey and Heather Richards

- I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated 11 March 2008.
- I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
- I understand that notes will be taken during the interviews and/or observations.
- I understand that the researchers will request copies of ELA assignments and evaluation forms.
- I understand that I may withdraw myself or any information that I have provided for this project at any time prior to completion of data collection, without being disadvantaged in any way.
- If I withdraw, I understand that all relevant information including notes, assignments and evaluations will be destroyed.
- I agree to take part in this research.
- I wish to receive a two page précis of the report from the research (please tick one):  
Yes  No

Participant's signature

.....

Participant's name:

.....

Participant's contact details (if appropriate):

.....

Date: .....

***Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 25.2.08 AUTEK  
Reference number 08/04***

## **Appendix Two**

### **Initial interview questions with paraprofessionals**

**Questions for initial interview with paraprofessionals (February/ March 2008)**

#### **Background Information**

1. Please tell me about your current job
  - Length of time in current position
  - Fulltime/ part time /hours
  - People you work with/class/teachers/responsible to
2. How do you feel about being a teacher aide?
3. Please tell me a little bit about your background
  - Your education
  - Earlier work experience
  - How you came to be an ESOL TA
  - Any TA training
  - Any ESOL training/experience

#### **Knowledge of English Language**

4. How much do you feel you understand about how the English language works?
5. How confident do you feel in your own English language skills?
6. How much confidence do you have to discuss language issues and related child achievement with teachers, other teacher aides and parents (where appropriate)?
7. How do you feel about your ability to help children learn English successfully?
8. How do you feel about your ability to explain language points effectively to children?
9. What would you like to know more about in relation to the English language?

#### **Pedagogical and related practices**

10. What do you think you do well in your ESOL work with children?
11. What do you think you need to improve on?
12. To what extent do you think you are able to discuss educational and language concepts accurately and professionally?
13. How much preparation and what kind do you currently do?
14. How much preparation do you do with a teacher (either ESOL, mainstream or coordinating)?

15. How do you feel about your ability to choose resources at the correct level for students?
16. How do you feel about your ability to make resources?
17. How proficient do you feel using new technologies such as digital cameras, computers and the world wide web?
18. How do you feel about diagnosing/ finding out about your learners' strengths and what they need?
19. How do you feel about your students' progress with learning English language?
20. How effectively do you feel you work in one to one/small (2-5) groups and larger groups (6-10)? Which grouping of children is best for your work?
21. How do you feel about your interactions with children?
22. What do you think about your questioning skills?
23. How effective do you think your feedback to children is?
24. How do you feel about the students' home languages and cultures?
25. How do you feel about appraisals and observations?

### **School relationships**

25. What is your understanding of your place in the school and the English language programme?
26. Please tell me about asking for support or help
  - Confidence/ willingness to ask
  - Kind of support/help
  - Who
27. How much support do you get from your coordinating teacher? Other teachers (including mainstream)?
28. What's your relationship like with other teacher aides?
29. How often do you share your success stories with other teachers and teacher aides?

### **Professional development and ongoing learning**

30. What are your plans for your own education and training in the future?
31. What are your plans for your career in the future?

### **Is there anything you would like to add?**

## **Initial interview questions with teachers**

### **Questions for initial interview with teachers (February/ March 2008)**

#### **(1) Please tell me about:**

- (a) Your teacher aide's current role and position
- (b) Your role and position in respect of your teacher aide
- (c) Your own knowledge, qualifications and experience in working with ELL students

#### **(2) English Language**

- (a) How much do you feel the TA understands about the English language and how it works?
- (b) How confident do you feel she is in her own English literacy skills?
- (c) How much confidence does she have to discuss language issues and related child achievement with teachers, other teacher aides and parents?
- (d) How do you feel about her ability to promote language learning in children?
- (e) How do you feel about her ability to explain language points effectively to children?
- (f) What knowledge would you like her to develop in relation to the English language?

#### **(3) Pedagogical and related practices**

- (a) What do you think she does well in her ESOL work with children?
- (b) What do you think she needs to improve on?
- (c) To what extent do you think she is able to discuss educational and language concepts accurately and professionally?
- (d) How do you feel about her ability to choose resources at the correct level for students?
- (e) How do you feel about her ability to create resources?
- (f) How much preparation and what kind does she currently do?
- (g) How much preparation do you do with the teacher aide?

- (h)How do you feel about her diagnosing learner strengths and needs?
- (i)How do you feel about your students' progress with English language acquisition under her guidance?
- (j)How do you feel about her interactions with children?
- (k)How effectively do you feel she works in one to one/small (2-5) groups and larger groups (6-10)? Which grouping of children is optimal for her work?
- (l)What do you think about her questioning skills?
- (m)How effective do you think your feedback to children is?
- (n)How proficient is she in using new technologies such as digital cameras, computers and the world wide web?
- (o)How do she feel about appraisals and observations?
- (p)What is her attitude to students' home languages and cultures?

**(4)School relationships**

- (a)What is your understanding of her place in the school and language programme?
- (b)How confident/willing does she feel in asking for help?
- (c )What kind of help does she ask for?
- (d)Who does she ask for help from?
- (e)How much support does she get from you? Other teachers (including mainstream)?
- (f)What's her relationship like with other teacher aides?
- (g)How often does she share her success stories with other teachers and teacher aides?

**(5)Professional development and ongoing learning**

- (a)What are her plans for her own education and training in the future?
- (b)What are her plans for her career in the future?

**(6)Teacher**

- (a)How do you think your own teaching/ESOL/educational background impacts on the way you interact with your teacher aide?
- (b) Is there anything else you would like to say?



## **Final interview questions with paraprofessionals**

### **Questions for final interview with paraprofessionals (October/December 2008)**

#### **Background Information**

1. Please tell me in what ways your role in the school has changed if at all since you started the ELA course
2. How do you feel about being an English Language Assistant (ELA) now?
3. Prompt to researcher: Make sure you have all relevant biodata.

#### **Knowledge of English Language**

4. What kind of help did the ELA course give you in understanding how parts of the English language work.
5. How confident do you feel in your own English language skills as a result of the ELA course?
6. How much confidence do you now have to discuss language issues and related child achievement with teachers, other teacher aides and parents (where appropriate)?
7. How do you feel about your ability to help children learn English successfully now as compared to before you undertook the ELA course?
8. How do you feel about your ability to explain language points effectively to children now?
9. Is there anything about how English works that you feel you'd like to know more about ?

#### **Pedagogical and related practices**

10. What do you think you do better now in your ESOL work with children?

Please give specific examples if possible:

- Speaking
- Listening
- Reading
- Writing –
- Relating to the curriculum

11. What do you think you still need to improve on?

12. To what extent do you think you are able to discuss educational and language concepts accurately and professionally now as compared to before you started the course?
13. How much preparation and what kind do you currently do? Has it changed since the ELA course?
14. Has the way you work and prepare with teacher/s changed since the ELA course?
15. How do you feel about your ability to choose resources at the correct level for students now?
16. How do you feel about your ability to make resources now?
17. Have you increased your use of new technologies or software over the last year e.g. digital cameras, computers and the world wide web ?
18. How do you feel now about diagnosing/ finding out about your learners' strengths and what they need?
19. How do you think your students are progressing with learning English?
  - What do you notice has changed since the ELA course?
20. How effectively do you work now in one to one/small (2-5) groups and larger groups (6-10)? Which grouping of children is best for your work?
21. How do you think your interactions with children have changed?
22. What do you think about your questioning skills now?
23. How effective do you think your feedback to children is now?
24. How do you engage with students' home languages and cultures in your lessons now?
25. Has there been any change in how you feel about appraisals and observations since the ELA course? Have you had any?

### **School relationships**

26. How has your understanding of your place in the school and the English language programme changed since the course?
  - How has the understanding of other people in your school towards your role changed since the ELA course?
  - What have you done to promote your role as an ELA?
  - What do you do differently now as compared to before in regards to your role school?

27. How do you feel about asking for support or help now?

- Confidence/ willingness to ask
- Kind of support/help
- Who

28. How much support do you get from your coordinating teacher now?

- Other teachers (including mainstream)?

29. What's your relationship like with other teacher aides/ELAs now?

30. How often do you now share your success stories with other teachers and teacher aides/ELAs?

- How does the school provide opportunities for you to share with others

### **Professional development and ongoing learning**

31. What are your plans for your own education and training in the future?

- Has this changed since the ELA course?

32. What are your plans for your career in the future?

- Has this changed since the ELA course?

33. How have your ideas about language/s, culture/s and identity/ies changed as a result of the

ELA course?

### **The ELA course**

34. What were the best things about the ELA course?

- For you?
- For the children you work with?
- For the school?
- How did the ELA observations go?

35. Do you think anything should have been different about the ELA course?

- For you?
- For the children you work with?
- For the school?

**Is there anything you would like to add?**

## **Final interview questions with teachers**

### **Questions for final interview with teachers (November/December 2008)**

#### **Please tell me about:**

1. Any organisational changes in your ELA's role and position since the ELA course
  - Timetable changes
  - Responsibility level
  - Balance between in-class support and small group withdrawal
  - Age of children
  - Proficiency of children
2. Any changes in your role and position in respect of your teacher aide ELA.
3. How your knowledge in working with ELL students has changed as a result of the course.
4. Any changes in your ways of working with the ELA.

#### **English Language**

5. How much do you feel the ELA understands features of the English language and how it works?
  - Has there been any change?
  - Examples?
6. How confident do you feel the ELA is in her own English literacy skills?
  - Has there been any change?
  - Examples?
7. How much confidence does the ELA have to discuss language issues and related child achievement with teachers, other teacher aides and parents (as appropriate)?
  - Has there been any change?
  - Does she have more opportunities?
  - Examples?
8. How do you feel about the ELA's ability to promote language learning in children?
  - Has there been any change?
  - Examples?

9. How do you feel about the ELA's ability to explain language points effectively to children?

- Has there been any change?
- Examples?

**Pedagogical and related practices**

10. What do you think the ELA does well in her ESOL work with children?

- Has there been any change?
- Examples?

11. What do you think she has improved on as a result of the ELA course?

12. To what extent do you think she is able to discuss educational and language concepts accurately and professionally?

- Has there been any change?
- Examples?

13. Does the ELA choose her own resources?

- How do you feel about her ability to choose resources at the correct level for students?
- Has there been any change?
- Examples?

14. How do you feel about her ability to create resources?

- Has there been any change?
- Examples?

15. How much preparation and what kind does the ELA currently do?

- Has there been any change?
- Examples?

16. How much preparation do you and other teachers do with the ELA?

- Is there paid planning time for pp's
- Has there been any change?
- Examples?

17. How do you feel about the ELA diagnosing learner strengths and needs?

- Has there been any change?
- Examples?

18. How do you feel about your students' progress with English language acquisition under the ELA's guidance?

- Has there been any change?
- Examples?

19. How do you feel about her interactions with children?

- Has there been any change?
- Examples?

20. How effectively do you feel the ELA works in one to one/small (2-5) groups and larger groups (6-10)? Which grouping of children is optimal for her work?

- Has there been any change?
- Examples?

21. What do you think about the ELA's skills in expanding children's oral language?

- Has there been any change?
- Examples?

22. What do you think about her ability to support writing?

- Has there been any change?
- Examples?

23. What do you think about her questioning skills?

- Has there been any change?
- Examples?

24. How effective do you think her feedback to children is?

- Has there been any change?
- Examples?

25. How proficient is the ELA in using new technologies such as digital cameras, computers and the world wide web?

26. How does the ELA feel about appraisals and observations?

- Has she had any observations by people in the school?
- How do you feel the ELA in-school observations went?

27. What is her attitude to students' home languages and cultures?

- Has there been any change?
- Is this integrated into classroom work in any way?

- Examples?

### **School relationships**

28. What is your understanding of the ELA's place in the school and the language programme?

29. How confident/willing is the ELA in asking for help?

- Has there been any change?
- Examples?

30. What kind of help does the ELA ask for now?

- Has there been any change?
- Examples?

31. Who does she ask for help from now?

- Has there been any change?
- Examples?

32. How much support does she get from you? Other teachers (including mainstream)?

- Has there been any change?
- Examples?

33. What's her relationship like with other teacher aides now?

- Has there been any change?
- Examples?

34. How often does she share her success stories with other teachers and teacher aides now?

- How is this done?
- Has there been any change?
- Examples?

### **Professional development and ongoing learning**

35. What are her plans for her own education and training in the future?

- Has there been any change?
- Examples?

36. What are her plans for her career in the future?

- Has there been any change?
- Examples?

**Teacher**

37. How do you think the ELA course has impacted on your own teaching?

- Interactions with ESOL students?

38. Is there anything else you would like to say?



## Appendix Three

### Ethics Approval 08/04 (January, 2008)



#### MEMORANDUM Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC)

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To: Sharon Harvey  
From: **Madeline Banda** Executive Secretary, AUTEC  
Date: 31 January 2008  
Subject: Ethics Application Number 08/04 **Paraprofessional practice in ESOL programme Part B: Evaluation of paraprofessional English Language Assistants' (ELA) professional development programme.**

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Dear Sharon

I am pleased to advise that the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC) approved your ethics application at their meeting on 21 January 2008, subject to the following conditions:

1. Provision of revised responses to section B.9 of the application reflecting the targeting of a particular social group, namely English Language teacher aides, and providing information about the effect of the consultation that has taken place on the design of the research.
- 2.

AUTEC observed that the interviews seemed likely to take more than the stated hour and suggests that the Information Sheet be amended accordingly. This approval is for the initial interview stage only and finalised information about the observation and other stages needs to be submitted for AUTEC's approval before those stages commence.

I request that you provide the Ethics Coordinator with a written response to the points raised in these conditions at your earliest convenience, indicating either how you have satisfied these points or proposing an alternative approach. AUTEC also requires written evidence of any altered documents, such as Information Sheets, surveys etc. Once this response and its supporting written evidence has been received and confirmed as satisfying the Committee's points, you will be notified of the full approval of your ethics application.

When approval has been given subject to conditions, full approval is not effective until *all* the concerns expressed in the conditions have been met to the satisfaction of the Committee. Data collection may not commence until full approval has been confirmed. Should these conditions not be satisfactorily met within six months, your application may be closed and you will need to submit a new application should you wish to continue with this research project.

When communicating with us about this application, we ask that you use the application number and study title to enable us to provide you with prompt service. Should you have any further enquiries regarding this matter, you are welcome to contact Charles Grinter, Ethics Coordinator, by email at [charles.grinter@aut.ac.nz](mailto:charles.grinter@aut.ac.nz) or by telephone on 921 9999 at extension 8860.

Yours sincerely



Madeline Banda

**Executive Secretary**

**Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee**

Cc: Karen Stacey, Heather Richards

## Ethics Approval 08/04 (February, 2008)



### MEMORANDUM Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC)

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To: Sharon Harvey  
From: **Madeline Banda** Executive Secretary, AUTEC  
Date: 25 February 2008  
Subject: Ethics Application Number 08/04 **Paraprofessional practice in ESOL programme Part B: Evaluation of paraprofessional English Language Assistants' (ELA) professional development programme.**

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Dear Sharon

Thank you for providing written evidence as requested. I am pleased to advise that it satisfies the points raised by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC) at their meeting on 21 January 2008 and that I have approved your ethics application. I have also approved a minor amendment allowing observation in a classroom. This delegated approval is made in accordance with section 5.3.2 of AUTEC's *Applying for Ethics Approval: Guidelines and Procedures* and is subject to endorsement at AUTEC's meeting on 10 March 2008.

Your ethics application is approved for a period of three years until 25 February 2011.

I advise that as part of the ethics approval process, you are required to submit the following to AUTEC:

- A brief annual progress report using form EA2, which is available online through <http://www.aut.ac.nz/about/ethics>. When necessary this form may also be used to request an extension of the approval at least one month prior to its expiry on 25 February 2011;
- A brief report on the status of the project using form EA3, which is available online through <http://www.aut.ac.nz/about/ethics>. This report is to be submitted either when the approval expires on 25 February 2011 or on completion of the project, whichever comes sooner;

It is a condition of approval that AUTEC is notified of any adverse events or if the research does not commence. AUTEC approval needs to be sought for any alteration to the research, including any alteration of or addition to any documents that are provided to participants. You are reminded that, as applicant, you are responsible for ensuring that research undertaken under this approval occurs within the parameters outlined in the approved application.

Please note that AUTEK grants ethical approval only. If you require management approval from an institution or organisation for your research, then you will need to make the arrangements necessary to obtain this.

When communicating with us about this application, we ask that you use the application number and study title to enable us to provide you with prompt service. Should you have any further enquiries regarding this matter, you are welcome to contact Charles Grinter, Ethics Coordinator, by email at [charles.grinter@aut.ac.nz](mailto:charles.grinter@aut.ac.nz) or by telephone on 921 9999 at extension 8860.

On behalf of the AUTEK and myself, I wish you success with your research and look forward to reading about it in your reports.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Banda', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Madeline Banda

**Executive Secretary**

**Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee**

Cc: Karen Stacey, Heather Richards

## Ethics Approval 08/04 (March, 2008)



### MEMORANDUM Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC)

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To: Sharon Harvey  
From: **Madeline Banda** Executive Secretary, AUTEC  
Date: 6 March 2008  
Subject: Ethics Application Number 08/04 **Paraprofessional practice in ESOL programme Part B: Evaluation of paraprofessional English Language Assistants' (ELA) professional development programme.**

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Dear Sharon

I am pleased to advise that as Executive Secretary of the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC) I have approved minor amendments to your ethics application altering the questionnaire. This delegated approval is made in accordance with section 5.3.2 of AUTEC's *Applying for Ethics Approval: Guidelines and Procedures* and is subject to endorsement at AUTEC's meeting on 14 April 2008.

I remind you that as part of the ethics approval process, you are required to submit the following to AUTEC:

- A brief annual progress report using form EA2, which is available online through <http://www.aut.ac.nz/about/ethics>. When necessary this form may also be used to request an extension of the approval at least one month prior to its expiry on 25 February 2011;
- A brief report on the status of the project using form EA3, which is available online through <http://www.aut.ac.nz/about/ethics>. This report is to be submitted either when the approval expires on 25 February 2011 or on completion of the project, whichever comes sooner;

It is a condition of approval that AUTEC is notified of any adverse events or if the research does not commence. AUTEC approval needs to be sought for any alteration to the research, including any alteration of or addition to any documents that are provided to participants. You are reminded that, as applicant, you are responsible for ensuring that research undertaken under this approval occurs within the parameters outlined in the approved application.

Please note that AUTEC grants ethical approval only. If you require management approval from an institution or organisation for your research, then you will need to make the arrangements necessary to obtain this.

When communicating with us about this application, we ask that you use the application number and study title to enable us to provide you with prompt service. Should you have any further enquiries regarding this matter, you are welcome to contact Charles Grinter, Ethics Coordinator, by email at [charles.grinter@aut.ac.nz](mailto:charles.grinter@aut.ac.nz) or by telephone on 921 9999 at extension 8860.

On behalf of the AUTEK and myself, I wish you success with your research and look forward to reading about it in your reports.

Yours sincerely



Madeline Banda  
**Executive Secretary**  
**Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee**  
Cc: Karen Stacey, Heather Richards

## Ethics Approval 08/04 (September, 2008)



### M E M O R A N D U M Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC)

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To: Sharon Harvey  
From: **Madeline Banda** Executive Secretary, AUTEC  
Date: 22 September 2008  
Subject: Ethics Application Number 08/04 **Paraprofessional practice in ESOL programme Part B: Evaluation of paraprofessional English Language Assistants' (ELA) professional development programme.**

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Dear Sharon

I am pleased to advise that as Executive Secretary of the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC) I have approved the subsequent stage of your research, allowing the final interviews of teachers and paraprofessionals. This delegated approval is made in accordance with section 5.3.2 of AUTEC's *Applying for Ethics Approval: Guidelines and Procedures* and is subject to endorsement at AUTEC's meeting on 13 October 2008.

I remind you that as part of the ethics approval process, you are required to submit the following to AUTEC:

- A brief annual progress report using form EA2, which is available online through <http://www.aut.ac.nz/about/ethics>. When necessary this form may also be used to request an extension of the approval at least one month prior to its expiry on 25 February 2011;
- A brief report on the status of the project using form EA3, which is available online through <http://www.aut.ac.nz/about/ethics>. This report is to be submitted either when the approval expires on 25 February 2011 or on completion of the project, whichever comes sooner;

It is a condition of approval that AUTEC is notified of any adverse events or if the research does not commence. AUTEC approval needs to be sought for any alteration to the research, including any alteration of or addition to any documents that are provided to participants. You are reminded that, as applicant, you are responsible for ensuring that research undertaken under this approval occurs within the parameters outlined in the approved application.

Please note that AUTEC grants ethical approval only. If you require management approval from an institution or organisation for your research, then you will need to make the arrangements necessary to obtain this. Also, if your research is undertaken within a jurisdiction outside New Zealand, you will need to make the arrangements necessary to meet the legal and ethical requirements that apply within that jurisdiction.

When communicating with us about this application, we ask that you use the application number and study title to enable us to provide you with prompt service. Should you have any further enquiries regarding this matter, you are welcome to contact Charles Grinter, Ethics Coordinator, by email at [charles.grinter@aut.ac.nz](mailto:charles.grinter@aut.ac.nz) or by telephone on 921 9999 at extension 8860.

On behalf of the AUTEK and myself, I wish you success with your research and look forward to reading about it in your reports.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Banda', with a small flourish at the end.

Madeline Banda  
**Executive Secretary**  
**Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee**  
Cc: Karen Stacey, Heather Richards