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# **LANGUAGE TEACHING IN NEW ZEALAND- NAVIGATING TEACHING MANDARIN AS A PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHER**

### **Abstract:**

The study is set in New Zealand where primary school teachers are not trained in teaching foreign languages or ESOL in their classrooms, but where those teachers find themselves in increasingly diverse linguistic and cultural teaching contexts. A growing number of schools also introduce languages for younger learners, especially after the Ministry of Education launched a contestable fund to support Asian language learning in schools.

The four teachers selected for this paper are at a primary school where the decision was made to introduce Mandarin to all 9-12 year olds. The teachers (n=12) were asked to include Mandarin in their teaching and relied on self-study, language assistants and native-speaker students for language learning, and a year-long professional development pedagogy programme based on communicative and task-based language teaching tailored to their needs and to their context.

Alongside the pedagogy, the teachers created learning portfolios based on an inquiry into their teaching practice, including reflections, student and classroom evidence and peer observation.

The two male and two female teachers were selected to show the extreme variety within the teaching cohort. With no language teaching qualifications, they range from being experienced teachers to being a beginning teacher. The project reports on the teachers' journey of becoming language teachers. It follows their development over time taking into account the effects of the professional development, their approaches to language teaching, their beliefs, attitudes and self-perception as teachers, challenges they face and their struggle to juggle several identities (Kano & Stuart 2011). The project uses a qualitative approach based on written documentation of the participants' teaching inquiry portfolio, interviews and lesson observations.

The four journeys are quite different showing open-minded attitudes and approaches to language teaching to anxiety transforming into enjoyment and to initial resistance moving into acceptance.

### **Keywords:**

Mandarin, language teaching, primary school, New Zealand