

# Language Teaching Consolidation Programme

by Natalie Stone, Raumati Beach School, 2017

My language learning started at college, when I learnt German for 5 years and went on an intensive AFS programme to Germany when I was 16. When I started relief teaching in 2003 I would slot in a quick German lesson whenever I taught a Year 7 or 8 class. Near the end of 2015, I first heard of the ILEP Introduction Programme at a staff professional development session and participated in the programme in 2016, when I also started learning and teaching my Year 3 and 4 class Mandarin for the first time – I've always been one for new challenges. Later, our ALLiS facilitator told me about the Consolidation Programme, and I am now continuing my journey by participating in the Consolidation Programme in 2017. I signed up for the programme as I was hoping for a workshop again once a term, being exposed to new ideas, the support of a Mandarin Language Assistant and of the ALLiS facilitator. I thought it would be valuable to do exactly that – consolidate my learning from my first year and build on it.

During the course of the Consolidation Programme, I have picked up many new ideas for language teaching from the workshops and Moodle has also been a great source for those. My MLA and my ALLiS facilitator have been fantastic support. I have gained confidence in using new Mandarin learning (which I have been able to grow even further from my scholarship programme experience in Beijing) and can now recall more language, although it is still slow going. Participating in the programme has also given me the fantastic opportunity to apply for the scholarship programme to Beijing which was such an amazing experience!

My students have greatly benefited from the progress I have made. They really love learning something which they know is a challenge even for adults and teachers such as myself. They enjoy seeing me in videos during my time in Beijing stumbling over words and obviously finding it extremely challenging. I feel that we are all taking more risks with our learning now than we were last year. My students have also acquired a better understanding of differences; cultural or otherwise (the extent of which I am currently researching by conducting regular surveys). They also really enjoy the new games and activities which I am continually learning at the workshops and on Moodle.

Whenever our school principal comes into our class we greet him in Mandarin. He has asked the class to teach him how to reply back and how to say other phrases - the kids love it! One of my students last year was autistic. He found learning very hard, but he just loved all of the games and songs in Mandarin. Although he is no longer in my class this year, he still comes along to my Mandarin Club at lunch times. This is so great and his parents and siblings are still learning with him.

It is just wonderful to see the joy on my students' faces when they recall new Mandarin learning. I have had so many of their parents tell me how much they love it and how they are teaching their siblings and other family members. Currently I am organising a visit to the Kapiti College Mandarin class. Hopefully this will inspire my students to keep learning Mandarin and continue their language learning journey at college when they get there.

Personally, I would love to continue to teach and learn Mandarin and even German also if given the opportunity. Our school principal is waiting to hear if we will be able to accommodate Asian students at our school from next year. If so, I have mentioned to him that I would love to be a part of it in some way, shape or form if possible.

The Introduction and Consolidation Programmes are great for people who like new challenges. I would recommend them to any teachers who have a passion for language learning and learning about other cultures. The programmes help you to see the benefits for children and their families.

I feel so privileged to have had the opportunity to be a part of these programmes for nearly two years now. Not only have I learnt so much around language learning and teaching which can be transferred to teaching any language, but I have also met wonderful like-minded people and have been inspired by them. I really needed a new challenge last year when I embarked on this journey. I have always loved languages, learning about other cultures and travelling. This programme has allowed me to do all of them!



*Natalie with one of the BLCU teachers at the end of her scholarship in Beijing.*