

Teacher positioning of their practice for linguistically and culturally diverse learners

Karen Ashton & Grace Yue Qi

To cite this article: Karen Ashton & Grace Yue Qi (05 Jun 2025): Teacher positioning of their practice for linguistically and culturally diverse learners, *Pedagogy, Culture & Society*, DOI: [10.1080/14681366.2025.2516471](https://doi.org/10.1080/14681366.2025.2516471)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/14681366.2025.2516471>



© 2025 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group.



Published online: 05 Jun 2025.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 90





View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)

Teacher positioning of their practice for linguistically and culturally diverse learners

Karen Ashton  and Grace Yue Qi 

School of Humanities, Media and Creative Communication, Massey University, Palmerston North, New Zealand

ABSTRACT

This article draws on open-response survey data ($n = 86$) to qualitatively explore New Zealand language teachers' positioning of their pedagogical practice for linguistically and culturally diverse learners. Positioning can create inequities in learning opportunities, making this an important research concern, particularly as New Zealand teachers are expected to 'support the needs and abilities of all learners' (Education Council 2017, 10). Drawing on positioning theory as our analytical framework, we found that teachers generally perceive language classrooms to be 'safe' spaces. However, alongside this, they find it challenging to teach students with different levels of target language proficiency, highlighting this as an urgent professional development need. In particular, the presence of background learners, broadly defined as learners with a linguistic and/or cultural background in the language they are learning, is positioned as a significant pedagogical challenge. We argue that this positioning stems from an education system and learning provision which, despite positive rhetoric, erodes diversity. Our study will be of relevance to others navigating these challenges in different contexts.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 18 July 2024

Accepted 1 June 2025

KEYWORDS

Differentiation; language teachers; language teaching; linguistic and cultural diversity; linguistically and culturally diverse learners; positioning

Introduction

In New Zealand, the terms 'diversity' and 'superdiversity' are often used to signal a dramatic change in the population due to migration and increased educational mobility. As East (2021) notes, 30 years ago, New Zealand was one of the most linguistically homogenous countries in the world. However, New Zealand is now home to over 200 ethnicities and 160 languages and is considered to be linguistically and culturally 'super-diverse' with the 2018 census showing that over a quarter of the population counted were born outside of New Zealand (Stats 2020). New Zealand is forecast to continue this trajectory of growth in the future, with recent projections showing that by 2043, over a quarter of students within the school system will identify as Asian (Education Review Office 2023). As a consequence, the ethnic, cultural and linguistic composition of students

CONTACT Karen Ashton  k.ashton@massey.ac.nz  School of Humanities, Media and Creative Communication, Massey University, New Zealand, Private Bag 11 222 Palmerston North 4442, New Zealand

© 2025 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group.

This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited. The terms on which this article has been published allow the posting of the Accepted Manuscript in a repository by the author(s) or with their consent.

in New Zealand secondary schools will continue to change (Chen 2015; Terruhn and Spoonley 2020).

In acknowledgement of these demographic changes, the official New Zealand Code of Professional Responsibility and Standards for the Teaching Profession sets out a range of expectations for teachers including 'respecting the diversity of the heritage, language, identity and culture of all learners' and 'promoting inclusive practices to support the needs and abilities of all learners' (Education Council 2017, 10). As part of their professional learning, New Zealand teachers are expected to keep up-to-date with research on best practice for supporting diverse learners (Alton-Lee 2005; Education Council 2017), a focus in line with international trends (Ryan et al. 2020). While New Zealand has made some progress towards accommodating the needs of diverse learners, Chen (2015) claims that there is further work to be done to ensure that students' identities, languages, and abilities are recognised and affirmed and that their learning needs are addressed.

In this article, we draw on positioning theory as our analytical framework. We outline our approach in further detail below, but in brief, we see positioning as the discursive process through which roles, rights and duties are assigned to oneself or others (Davies and Harré 1990; Kayi-Aydar and Miller 2018). We also expand this definition with a focus on understanding not only the ways in which teachers position themselves and their students but also the ways in which they position their *teaching practice* in relation to linguistically and culturally diverse learners. This helps us to elucidate a key requirement of the role of New Zealand teachers and allows us to capture additional nuance and depth in our analysis, and these two aspects in relation to one another. Understanding more about how teachers position themselves and their students and the challenges they experience within their teaching is important as positioning can impact student access to learning opportunities (Kayi-Aydar 2019; Szelei, Pinho, and Tinoca 2021; Tait-McCutcheon and Loveridge 2016). While the importance of responding to diversity features prominently in educational policy, currently little is known about teachers' positioning of their teaching for linguistically and culturally diverse learners, and of their perceived capability to meet their diverse learning needs. The studies that have been undertaken suggest that teachers struggle to meet the demands of diverse learners and classrooms and are in need of further professional development and support (Adebayo and Heinz 2024; Ashton 2018; Orton and Scrimgeour 2019; Rovai and Pflingsthorst 2022). Through a focus on positioning, this study aims to add to our understanding of the current situation and the professional development and support needs of New Zealand language teachers.

Literature review

Linguistic and cultural diversity in language teaching

A review of the literature found a paucity of research on linguistic and cultural diversity from the perspective of teaching and learning an additional language within the secondary school sector. While diversity is a constant feature of language learning classes, it has been argued that 'language teachers have been slow to recognize the depth of diversity in their classrooms' (Liu and Nelson 2017, 1). Traditionally, it was expected that the majority of learners would start their school language learning experience with similar

levels of proficiency and progress fairly uniformly (Carr 2005). Krish, Hussin, and Sivapuniam (2010) claim that 'uniformity continues to dominate' (93) and that despite the strong rhetoric about diversity, educational systems and policies do not always support it in practice. For example, while acknowledging the linguistic and cultural diversity of learner cohorts, language curriculum and assessment targets, and as a consequence classroom teaching, tend to continue to assume homogeneity with a common pathway and learning goals for all students (Carreira and Hitchins Chik 2018; Carreira and Kagan 2011; Orton and Scrimgeour 2019; Scarino 2021).

Two types of increased linguistic and cultural diversity of New Zealand language learning cohorts have garnered attention in recent literature. The first is the increased number of Japanese and Chinese background learners in secondary school language classes (de Kretser and Spence-Brown 2010; McGee et al. 2013; Orton and Scrimgeour 2019). We use the term background learners to refer to learners who have a background in the language and/or culture of the language they are learning, because as we outline in further detail below, this term has broad application in capturing the diversity of experiences learners bring with them (Hashimoto 2024). Although not widely researched in New Zealand, studies from the Australian context highlight that while most learners of Chinese have no prior background in the language, classes are becoming increasingly diverse and that 'it is now common to find learners who speak Chinese at home, learners with some Chinese heritage but little active use of Chinese, as well as new learners with no prior identification or experience with Chinese' (Orton and Scrimgeour 2019, 101). Thus, characterisations of background language learners as first language or 'native' speakers can be unhelpful as in reality a continuum of proficiency levels exist (Stratilaki-Klein 2021). Acknowledging this diversity is important as the position of background language learners between first language speakers and non-background learners is 'both emotionally and practically vulnerable' (Kagan et al. 2021, 156).

It has been suggested that students who have a background in the language are not 'catered for adequately in mainstream schooling, and as the numbers in each school are small, it is difficult to do so' (de Kretser and Spence-Brown 2010, 9). Language teachers are therefore faced with teaching learners with very different needs in the same classroom. Carreira and Hitchins Chik (2018) detail how the 'growing presence' of background language learners alongside non-background learners can create challenges for teachers as they are forced to deal 'with a range of issues that traditional foreign language teaching methods were not designed to address' (372). This is an area that is under-researched in the New Zealand context. Unlike in other countries, e.g., Australia, which have language-specific curriculum documents and different provisions for background and non-background learners (Oriyama 2017; Willoughby 2014), in New Zealand there is currently a single generic curriculum framework designed to work across all languages, and all learners of a language (Ministry of Education 2007). While the intention is to allow language teachers autonomy in their planning, a lack of prescription can also place additional workload demands and pressure on teachers (Ashton 2020). This also goes against recommendations in the literature that tailored curriculum and instruction within mainstream education are needed to support the maintenance of a language for background learners (Hancock and Hancock 2021; Jiang et al. 2024; Oriyama 2017; Weekly 2020; Willoughby 2014). As a consequence, it has been argued that in New Zealand schools, language programmes are designed to predominately cater for the needs of non-

background learners with no clear pathway for background learners to maintain or progress their language learning to higher levels of proficiency (Tang 2022).

The second area which has attracted recent attention in New Zealand is that of multi-level classes. This is an increasing trend where due to declining numbers of students choosing to learn a language in the senior school (years 11, 12 and 13 - the final 3 years of secondary school), learners at different curriculum and year levels are combined into a single class (Ashton 2018). As teachers are required to support learners working at different curriculum levels and towards different assessments in the same classroom, it has been found that multi-level classes are unpopular and pose a significant challenge for teachers (Ashton 2018; Badenhorst and East 2015).

Inclusive learning environments

Increases in linguistic and cultural diversity have prompted calls for a stronger focus on inclusive education and pedagogies aimed at ensuring the rights, and accommodating the needs, of all learners in mainstream classrooms (Adebayo and Heinz 2024; Knight et al. 2022; Oriyama 2017). As Rovai and Pflingsthorst (2022) state, teachers play a crucial role in establishing inclusive learning environments. Positive teacher attitudes, open-mindedness and acceptance of differences and diversity have been cited as important attributes for inclusive environments (Adebayo and Heinz 2024). However, alongside this, studies have found that when teachers talk about tolerance as a general or abstract value, it can promote the idea that tolerance is acceptance of a 'situation which is sub-optimal' (Knight et al. 2022, 12; Pasamonk 2004; Verkuyten and Kollar 2021), thus reproducing notions of diverse learners as the source of the problem (Hummelstedt et al. 2021). This can contribute to what Knight et al. (2022, 18–9) refer to as a 'medicalised approach to education' with deficit views of diverse learners and attempts to 'normalise' them. Thus, discourse about tolerance and diversity can unintentionally 'perpetuate deficit thinking' (Cabiles 2024, 3), contributing to the (further) marginalisation of learners and to essentialising group differences (Collier 2015; Hummelstedt et al. 2021).

Differentiation

Differentiation is frequently cited as a pedagogical approach to support teachers in responding to linguistic and cultural diversity (Carreira and Hitchins Chik 2018). Differentiation refers to the way in which the needs of different learners in the same classroom are accommodated through the adaptation of curriculum, teaching materials, learning goals or expectations, assessment targets, pedagogical approach, etc. (Ashton 2019; Carr 2005; Martin-Beltrán, Guzman, and Chen 2017; Tomlinson 2015). Without the provision of differentiated curricula and materials for different groups of learners such as background and non-background learners, as is the case in New Zealand, the role falls to teachers to determine the different needs of their learners and to use this knowledge to adapt their teaching practice and materials to support and maximise individual learner growth and progress (Ashton 2019; Tomlinson 2015). Due to aspects such as limited teacher time, heavy workloads, a lack of resources, a lack of professional development, and a lack of understanding about how to differentiate, it has been suggested that very little differentiation actually occurs in practice (Ashton 2019; Carr 2005; Martin-Beltrán,

Guzman, and Chen 2017; Orton and Scrimgeour 2019; Rovai and Pfingsthorn 2022; Valiandes and Neophytou 2018). While Valiandes and Neophytou (2018) acknowledge that differentiation does not provide a simple solution to the challenge of teaching linguistically diverse learners, their study illustrates how a tailored professional development programme led to increased teacher confidence with differentiated instruction and positively impacted student achievement. However, mirroring the concerns detailed above on inclusive learning environments, differentiation when misunderstood or poorly applied has the potential to contribute to linguistic and cultural essentialism and to reinforce static group membership, ignoring that learners are dynamic beings and more than a representative of a particular aspect of diversity (Orton and Scrimgeour 2019; Qi, Sun, and Carvalho 2023). Eikeland and Ohna (2022, 166) further criticise the lack of conceptual clarity of differentiation, particularly its 'lack of emphasis on the idea that every student should be a valuable member of the class community *regardless* of their individual differences, an aspect that is essential to inclusion' (emphasis in original).

Positioning theory as an analytical framework

By drawing on positioning theory as an analytical tool, our particular focus is on how teachers position their teaching of linguistically and culturally diverse learners, and themselves and students in relation to this teaching. As Kayi-Aydar and Miller (2018, 81) state, it is through the process of positioning 'that people assign certain positions to themselves and others, and along with each position comes a set of rights, duties and/or obligations'. We engage with the work of Harré and colleagues (Davies and Harré 1990; Harré and Moghaddam 2003) in looking particularly at two types of positioning; reflexive positioning which refers to positions assigned to oneself, in this case the teacher, and interactive positioning which refers to positions assigned to others, here particularly students but also other key stakeholders.

In line with Shah (2023), we acknowledge that teachers are not neutral actors in the classroom. Analysing teacher positioning is critical as positioning can highlight potential 'inequities in how teachers view students and form expectations, distribute learning opportunities, and develop teaching practices' (Cabiles 2024; Szelei, Pinho, and Tinoca 2021, 5; Tait-McCutcheon and Loveridge 2016). Studies have even found that teacher positioning has more impact on student learning than the resources used (Tait-McCutcheon and Loveridge 2016). Teacher positioning can create the sense that the majority cohort is the 'norm' with diversity othered (Adams 2024; Stahl et al. 2020). For example, Szelei, Pinho, and Tinoca (2021, 4) found that 'foreign students' were frequently discussed as posing pedagogical and communication challenges for teachers, and how positioning these students as a 'burden' may unintentionally limit their learning opportunities, participation in classroom interactions and even socialisation with other students. Such positioning can also render the teacher as agentless in responding to the challenges identified (Segal 2022). Over time, if positioning becomes normalised and entrenched, students may 'develop static identities' making it difficult to re-position themselves (Kayi-Aydar and Miller 2018, 89), or to 'develop a positive sense of themselves as learners' (Yoon 2008, 499). It is important to acknowledge that positioning may be unintentional and that teachers may not realise the impact on students' learning opportunities (Kayi-Aydar and Miller 2018; Segal 2022). The literature also reminds us that

positionality is contextually situated (Adams 2024) and that individuals may adopt different and potentially conflicting positionalities (Cabiles 2024).

In this study, we approach positioning as stated by teachers, rather than negotiated through interaction with students. While this focus is helpful for our theoretical goal of exploring positioning from the perspective of teachers (Blasco, Kjærgaard, and Thomsen 2020; Stahl et al. 2020), we acknowledge that as a consequence, our analysis is partial and that we are not able to ascertain the reality of what occurs in the classroom and whether those positioned accept, reject or renegotiate the positions assigned to them. However, given the impact teachers have on student learning opportunities, this study contributes to our understanding of how teachers perceive this increasingly important aspect of their teaching role (Blasco, Kjærgaard, and Thomsen 2020; Segal 2022; Stahl et al. 2020).

Methods

An online survey containing predominantly qualitative open-ended questions was developed to explore the ways in which New Zealand secondary school language teachers position their teaching of linguistically and culturally diverse learners, the challenges and benefits experienced, and the support needed. As Bridges and Searle (2011) state ‘teachers need to be given the opportunity to describe their realities of the teaching world, and how it impacts on them’ (415), and in this study we wanted to give voice to teachers so that we could gain a deeper understanding of their experiences and positionality.

The following key research question was posed: How do teachers position their teaching of linguistically and culturally diverse learners, and the challenges associated with their teaching practice for these learners?

Survey

The survey (see [Appendix A](#) for sample topics) was administered online through the Qualtrics platform and comprised three parts: 1) demographic data on teacher participants (closed questions), 2) student language background (closed questions), and the key focus of this article, 3) teachers’ perceptions and positioning of teaching linguistically and culturally diverse learners, the challenges and benefits, and the support needed (open-ended responses). For the open-ended questions, no prompts were provided with teachers free to describe things in their own words. In developing the survey, a wide range of literature was drawn on including the studies cited earlier in the literature review. The work of Orton and Scrimgeour (2019) and Carr (2005) was used to inform questions regarding the language background and experience of learners, noting the potential diversity of experiences of background language learners. The survey was piloted with six New Zealand secondary school language teachers. Following this process, teacher feedback was reviewed, and the wording of several questions refined.

Teaching context

In New Zealand secondary schools, language learning opportunities focus primarily on Chinese (Mandarin), French, German, Japanese, Spanish, te reo Māori and Pacific languages, with the first five of these traditionally taught as ‘foreign languages’

(East 2021; Liddicoat 2022). New Zealand has 5 years of secondary education, from years nine to 13 (year 9 typically represents the first year of formal language learning for students who choose to learn a language). While New Zealand schools are required to offer students the opportunity to learn a language, taking up this opportunity is optional for students (Ward and East 2016). Individual schools do have the discretion to make learning a language compulsory, and where this occurs, this is typically for students in the lower year levels of secondary school, e.g., years nine and/or 10.

Teacher participants

There is no national database of New Zealand language teachers, but teachers are encouraged to join language teaching networks. After obtaining ethical approval from the researchers' institution, language teachers currently teaching any of the languages mentioned above in New Zealand secondary schools were invited to respond to the survey. Teachers were contacted via teaching networks, and messages were also placed in online and hard copies of the Education Gazette, a magazine commonly found in school staffrooms (Ministry of Education 2020). Thus, a convenience sampling procedure was used, with voluntary participation. Riazi (2016) notes that this approach is common in qualitative applied linguistics research while also urging caution when making claims about the data as the sample may not be representative of the broader population.

One hundred New Zealand secondary school language teachers completed the online survey: Japanese, $n = 47$; Spanish, $n = 15$; Mandarin Chinese, $n = 14$; French, $n = 11$; te reo Māori, $n = 8$; German, $n = 4$, Samoan, $n = 1$. Eighty-six teachers responded to the open response items in the survey. Participants were generally very experienced language teachers with over 50% having taught the language for 12 years or more, and over 70% for seven or more years.

Student language background

Teachers across languages reported that the classroom was the primary place for formal language learning for their students. For example, they reported that the majority of students had not used the language before attending secondary school, did not use the language with their parents, and did not formally learn the language outside of school. A slightly different picture was reported for Chinese with 3 of the 14 of Chinese teachers indicating that 'around half', 'many or all' of their learners had used the language before attending secondary school and used the language with one or both parents. Among the 14 Chinese and 47 Japanese teachers, one teacher of Chinese and one teacher of Japanese indicated that 'around half', 'many or all' of their learners formally learned the language outside of school. This is likely to be through private tutoring or community language school provision (generally weekend or after school classes). This suggests that within Chinese, and to a lesser extent Japanese, language classes, there are a higher proportion of students who are background language learners than for other languages. Teachers also reported that a higher proportion of students learning Chinese in the senior school, i.e., years 11, 12 and 13, had a background in the language which suggests that

some background learners of Chinese commence their formal language learning in the senior year levels, either due to their prior background, or due to newly joining the school.

Data analysis

For the teacher and student demographic data outlined above, descriptive statistics extracted from the Qualtrics survey tool, such as frequency counts and percentages, were used to summarise the data (Salkind 2000). The 86 teachers who responded to the open-ended questions provided much longer and more detailed responses than we had originally anticipated and therefore we decided to undertake two stages of inductive qualitative analysis. In the first stage, data were coded following the process outlined by Punch (2013) and Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), e.g., a significant amount of time was spent on the data familiarisation phase before a preliminary coding of the data was undertaken, followed by an iterative process of reviewing and revising the codes before grouping the codes by pattern and theme. Once this process was complete, we commenced the second stage, an extensive analysis of reflexive and interactive positioning (Davies and Harré 1990; Harré and Moghaddam 2003). As illustrated in Appendix B, we looked particularly at the positions that teachers assigned to themselves (reflexive positioning) and to students (interactive positioning) as well as the roles, rights and duties associated with positioning (Kayi-Aydar and Miller 2018, 81). As most open response data related to the challenges and benefits experienced and to the support needed, these two stages of analysis allowed us to determine teacher positioning in relation to particular challenges as well as the ability to trace teacher positioning across the data.

Results

We present our results under two key themes: 1) *diversity is natural, rewarding and a shared role between teachers and learners*; 2) *having a wide range of ability levels in a class is a significant challenge*.

Diversity is natural, rewarding and a shared role between teachers and learners

Over 95% of teachers ($n = 86$) emphasised a general valuing of linguistic and cultural diversity, with just under 70% expanding on these views positioning language classrooms as 'safe' spaces, stating that language teachers tend to be open-minded and naturally welcoming of diversity. This perspective is evident in these comments by a Japanese teacher: 'I believe that language classrooms, generally, are safe diverse spaces where diversity is welcomed because most language teachers already have a multicultural worldview and an understanding about diversity'. Diversity was viewed as a natural part of their role, e.g., 'It's part of being open minded and accepting of others which we can do in the language classroom really easily' (Spanish teacher), and as a strength they had over teachers of other subjects: 'As a language teacher we are far more empathetic and able to deal with this diversity than others because it interests us' (French teacher).

Similarly, students who chose to learn a language were viewed as 'open to making connections with others and/or having curiosity about the familiarity and differences that exist' (Japanese teacher). Learning a common language was seen as a way of unifying

students: 'No matter how different the students are, they try to communicate in the language they are learning in class. The language unites the students who have a different background' (Japanese teacher). This sense of unity and social cohesion was particularly important for teachers, with 45% of all teachers positioning their enjoyment of teaching diverse classes in terms of students working collaboratively and learning from one another:

I love being in an environment where the language and culture are being shared without any direction from me. I think a diverse environment can better promote a student-centred classroom [where students] step up to help, share and inform others in whatever way they can. (Spanish teacher)

This illustrates that these teachers positioned responding to diversity as a shared role and responsibility with students. Enhanced cultural understanding and broadening of worldviews deriving from student discussions was something they particularly valued. For example, one Chinese teacher stated that her 'students gain [a] deeper understanding of not only language but cultural aspects' and that they 'support each other and help each other to see things differently'. Similarly, one Japanese teacher marvelled at 'the variety of worldviews and cultural richness when things are discussed together' which was seen as supporting a deeper level of transformation in worldviews than would be possible with input solely from the teacher. In this way, these teachers positioned their role and responsibility as extending beyond transmitting language and cultural knowledge, to providing a safe space for students to develop tolerance and understanding. For example, one Japanese teacher stated: 'It makes NZ students more aware of the world outside of NZ and have more empathy for others', while one French teacher perceived that class discussions helped students 'to become more tolerant . . . and to understand why others may do things differently'. Expanding on these views, another teacher found it particularly rewarding when her students 'discover how other people live, without criticism or feelings of superiority' (French teacher). The role of a language teacher was positioned as a 'teacher of life' by 20% of all teachers with one Spanish teacher claiming that for her 'the most rewarding aspect is contributing positively to the skill set [of students] in a way that enhances their ability to interact constructively in any community they live and/or work in/with'.

Having a wide range of ability levels in a class is a significant challenge

Supporting students with differing ability levels in the target language within the same class was positioned as the most challenging aspect of their teaching by over 70% of teachers. Thus, for a significant number of teachers, this challenge is acknowledged alongside a general valuing of linguistic and cultural diversity and positioning of language classrooms as 'safe' spaces where diversity is viewed as a natural part of their role. This teaching challenge might occur because within a single year level, teachers perceived there to be a range of abilities, or because some students have a background in the target language and/or culture, or due to multi-level classes where teachers are required to teach students at more than one year level within the same class. This situation most typically arose in the senior school, i.e., Years 11, 12 and 13. In this excerpt, a Japanese teacher discusses the challenge she faces:

The challenge is to use the huge range of experiences of the target language the children bring, from native speakers (with the variety of proficiencies in listening, speaking, reading, writing that brings), to those who have had no contact with the language, who may have visited the country, who have studied the language for two years at Intermediate, whose mother is a fluent speaker.

These teachers positioned this challenge as adding complexity to their role, expressing that they felt unable to meet everyone's needs. For example, they commented that it was particularly challenging to prepare lessons and activities that respond adequately to the needs of learners at either end of the 'spectrum', so that they could extend those with more advanced ability and 'avoid the bore' (French teacher) while providing additional support for those who needed it. For one French teacher, she felt that as a result she 'wasn't meeting anyone's needs'.

It was common for teachers who mentioned this challenge to position their teaching as unsuccessful, which was typically judged in terms of perceived impact on students. For example, one Samoan teacher felt that 'opportunities for learners are limited' and that 'students are either let down or disappointed because they don't achieve to their potential', whereas one Japanese teacher stated that this 'leads to frustration and lower exam outcomes'.

The emotional impact was clear with most negative feelings mentioned by teachers attributed to this teaching challenge. It was common for teachers to feel 'pulled in different directions' (te reo Māori teacher), and as a result, frustrated, tired or exhausted or a combination of these emotions. One teacher described the particularly strong impact this had on her: 'Most of the time I feel stressed and burnt out, resulting in a tempting need to move away from teaching' (Samoan teacher).

While teachers found this aspect of their teaching complex, some discussed feeling rewarded when there were 'small student successes' (Japanese teacher). Student improvement was seen as evidence that 'everyone can learn a language' (Japanese teacher) and was particularly rewarding when 'students who have struggled right throughout the year have a breakthrough and get something' (Japanese teacher). For other teachers it was seeing the realisation of students themselves of 'how far they have come' (Japanese teacher) and of 'proving' to themselves 'that they do know a little' (Spanish teacher).

Reinforcing the significance of this challenge, when discussing the support needed, 70% of teachers mentioned pedagogy and activities for learners at diverse ability levels. This was typically positioned reflexively, focusing on developing their own knowledge and skills. For example, one French teacher commented that she would like to develop a 'deeper understanding about differentiation and how to make it work effectively' while a Japanese teacher wanted to learn more about how to 'differentiate content' and to develop 'scaffolded and extended activities at both ends of the spectrum'. This illustrates that despite the challenge, many of these teachers saw it as part of their role and responsibility to seek solutions and improve their teaching.

A particularly significant challenge for some teachers of Japanese and Chinese

Here, we examine data from a small but noticeable number (8) of all (86) teachers surveyed as a sub-set of this theme to explore in more depth the considerable challenge Chinese and Japanese teachers reported teaching students with a background in the

language alongside non-background students. While some of these teachers emphasised a general valuing of linguistic and cultural diversity when discussing their understanding and views of diversity, none were part of the approximately 70% of teachers in theme one positioning teaching for linguistically and culturally diverse learners as a natural part of their role.

In the following cases, teachers noted the significant challenge of teaching background language learners with low levels of English language proficiency: 'for students with no knowledge of English, I am unable to give clear instructions' (Chinese teacher), 'the biggest challenge is differing English levels of the Japanese nationals so when you explain things in English they do not understand (Japanese teacher).

Teaching classes with both background and non-background students was further positioned as challenging and as contributing negatively to classroom dynamics due to the reported lack of willingness of background learners to engage with the New Zealand students, 'the kiwis': 'the biggest challenge is [the] Japanese nationals are not willing to talk to the kiwis' (Japanese teacher), and 'there is a distinct divide between the heritage speakers, and those from non-Japanese speaking backgrounds. It creates a negative tension in the class' (Japanese teacher).

As seen earlier, students working collaboratively together was perceived positively by teachers, and this was also evident here, particularly where this resolved the main challenge experienced, students with differing ability levels in the target language in the same class. For example, several teachers commented that they found it rewarding when background language students supported students with less proficiency in the target language, e.g.: 'When the heritage/native speakers engage with the non-Japanese speaking background students in a way that scaffolds their learning' (Japanese teacher).

On some occasions, however, teachers questioned whether these students should even be in their classes, e.g.: 'I question if it is appropriate for these students to be doing courses that are designed for students with no/little background in the language (Japanese teacher). This finding aligns with the data on the support needed, where teachers in this group expressed a desire to have separate classes for so-called 'native' and 'non-native' speakers, e.g.: 'If Chinese teachers could teach Chinese native speakers and non-Chinese speakers separately, in different classes, it would be much easier for teachers to prepare lessons' (Chinese teacher). There were no examples in our data for this group of teachers of reflexive positioning where their own professional development needs to support their teaching for non-background learners were identified. This group of teachers clearly felt unsupported and looked to others for a solution to this challenge (interactive positioning).

In this way, these teachers were positioning themselves as teachers for the typical 'kiwi' students, i.e., the dominant English-speaking students who have little background or experience in the language outside of the language learning classroom, and positioning students who do not fit this as the 'other'. While, as we discuss below, this is likely to be a consequence of confused national policy together with the significant challenge of teaching learners at very different ability levels within the same class, this positioning privileges the traditional non-background 'kiwi' students over background language learners, who are positioned as not really fitting in unless they fulfill the role of being 'good' collaborative members of the class by engaging socially with other students and taking on the role of 'teaching' the non-background students.

A further concern is that this positioning may reinforce dichotomies of learners, e.g., heritage and non-heritage, nationals and non-nationals, native speakers and non-native speakers, invoking attributes to the group, ignoring the diverse backgrounds or learning experiences individual learners have and their own unique learning needs. We identified only one instance where the learning needs of these students were recognised, although here again the teaching challenge was highlighted, and attributes were assigned at group rather than learner level: 'The heritage language speakers at times were particularly challenging to motivate. Often, they were very good orally but had noticeable weaknesses in kanji recognition' (Japanese teacher).

Discussion

Diversity is highly valued except when it causes challenges in teaching

Our findings highlight that overall teachers placed strong value on linguistic and cultural diversity. They saw themselves and students who chose to learn a language as naturally open-minded and valuing of diversity, positioning this as an inherent and natural part of their role. A number of teachers saw their role as going beyond simply teaching language and culture to providing an environment and space where tolerance and understanding for others is promoted, stating that these skills are beneficial for students in their future lives. As Adebayo and Heinz (2024) claim, having a positive mindset towards diversity is an important teacher attribute in establishing an inclusive learning environment. However, we also see glimpses in our data of diversity positioned as something in need of acceptance or tolerance, which has the potential to convey that it is 'sub-optimal' (Knight et al. 2022, 12; Pasamonk 2004; Verkuyten and Kollar 2021). Despite good intentions, such positioning may inadvertently situate the diverse 'other' as the source of the problem in need of 'normalising', contributing to the marginalisation of diverse learners and to essentialising group differences (Collier 2015; Hummelstedt et al. 2021; Knight et al. 2022). This finding highlights the need for increased teacher awareness about how to approach discussions about diversity and diverse learners.

As Szelei, Pinho, and Tinoca (2021, 16) note, diversity can be positioned as 'a pedagogical problem', and we also found instances of this in our study. Teachers found it particularly challenging to support students with differing backgrounds or proficiency in the target language in the same class. In such cases, we saw evidence of teachers positioning their teaching as unsuccessful, which had a significant emotional impact. For many teachers, we saw evidence of this positioning alongside, and as a contrast to, a general valuing of linguistic and cultural diversity, highlighting that positionality is contextual and that individuals may adopt multiple positionalities (Adams 2024; Cabiles 2024).

That teachers find teaching students with differing ability levels in the same classroom particularly complex aligns with the findings in the literature (Ashton 2018; Carr 2005; Orton and Scrimgeour 2019). Our study adds to these findings and extends them by exemplifying how even a small number of students with different language backgrounds and proficiency levels can pose a significant challenge for teachers. As our demographic overview illustrates, most learners, particularly for languages other than Chinese, and to a lesser extent Japanese, do not have experience of the language outside the classroom or

before starting secondary school. Our findings highlight strong teacher awareness of this perceived gap in their pedagogy as this was predominantly the area where teachers specifically stated that they needed additional support, typically positioning this reflexively as part of their role and responsibility and as an area where they wanted to develop.

Our findings suggest that pedagogy has not been able to keep pace with demographic changes in student cohorts. Traditionally, language classrooms were seen as ‘one-size-fits-all’ with students progressing uniformly through the same curriculum and material as it was expected that the majority of learners would have no background in the language (Carr 2005; Carreira and Kagan 2011). As teachers in our study positioned their enjoyment of teaching interactively, that is in the observable learning success of their students, it is not surprising that their emotional wellbeing was impacted when they encountered challenges and that as a consequence, they perceived their teaching to be unsuccessful.

Our findings also provide us with some hope for the future. Although our study echoes concerns in the literature about a lack of professional development and resources to adequately respond to linguistic and cultural diversity (Ashton 2019; Carr 2005; Martin-Beltrán, Guzman, and Chen 2017), teachers were generally clear about the gaps in their knowledge. This suggests that targeted professional development responding to these needs could have a significant positive impact for these teachers, both in further developing their pedagogy (Valiandes and Neophytou 2018) and also on their enjoyment of teaching and wellbeing if subsequent improvements are seen in student learning. However, here we also echo cautions in the literature that professional development support must focus on ensuring that each and every learner feels included and valued as a member of the class and does not perpetuate deficit perceptions of diverse learners and inadvertently lead to linguistic and/or cultural essentialism and static group membership (Collier 2015; Hummelstedt et al. 2021; Orton and Scrimgeour 2019; Qi, Sun, and Carvalho 2023). We also agree with Eikeland and Ohna (2022) that there is a need for clearer conceptualisation of differentiation in line with the intentions of inclusive education.

Who is the language classroom for?

Here, we consider the issue of who the language classroom is for. We do not consider the positioning we observed in relation to teaching background and non-background learners in the same class as necessarily indicative of teachers’ beliefs about background learners’ rights to learn the language. Alternatively, we suggest that the more extreme a teaching challenge is perceived, the less likely a teacher is to position responding to the challenge reflexively, as something that is part of their role and responsibility and manageable with further professional development.

We also suggest that the positioning we observed was primarily due to structural issues and a consequence of the standardising effect the education system has on learner diversity (Krish, Hussin, and Sivapuniam 2010). As others have noted, diversity can be unintentionally eroded when the same curriculum, teaching content, and assessments are used for all learners (Krish, Hussin, and Sivapuniam 2010, 93; Orton and Scrimgeour 2019; Scarino 2021), and this is particularly the case in the senior school where assessment demands create additional pressure on teachers (Scarino 2021). We see evidence in our data that the language learning provision in New Zealand secondary schools is primarily developed with the normative learner in mind, the English-speaking New Zealand learner

with little or no background in the language outside the classroom. This view is supported by the following quotes in an online article about learning Chinese: 'our purpose is to encourage New Zealanders to learn Chinese' and to 'assist Kiwis to learn Chinese' (Tang 2022). This highlights tensions in the language learning provision in New Zealand, and concerns over who is labelled as a 'kiwi' and as deserving of this language learning opportunity.

Thus, teachers in our study who found teaching background learners and non-background learners in the same class a substantial challenge and consequently positioned their teaching as not designed for background learners were simply echoing broader messages. The implications of this, however, are problematic. As Kayi-Aydar and Miller (2018) note, positioning of students as not belonging is likely to impact the learning opportunities these students have, the interactions that teachers have with these learners, and potentially also on their ability to succeed in the learning environment. Inequities are created as the normative group, the so-called 'kiwi' students, are positioned as the 'deserving' students, while those not part of this group are inadvertently positioned as less deserving of quality teaching and of even belonging in these language classrooms in the first place (Szelei, Pinho, and Tinoca 2021).

Furthermore, this positioning can create and reinforce unhelpful divisions between groups of learners. Dichotomous labels, as we saw used by the teachers in our study, can invoke attributes of the group to individuals, ignoring and erasing the vast and increasing linguistic diversity of background language learners (Stratilaki-Klein 2021). Over time, this kind of positioning can result in students being seen as having 'static identities' (Kayi-Aydar and Miller 2018, 89) with little acknowledgement of their individuality or unique language learning needs (Carreira and Kagan 2011).

Our findings reinforce suggestions in the literature that learners with a background in the language are not well catered for in mainstream education (de Kretser and Spence-Brown 2010). Our study contributes to broader international debates around the role of mainstream education in supporting language development and maintenance for background language learners (Weekly 2020). We caution, as others have noted that, for languages to be maintained, support including tailored curriculum and instruction within mainstream education is needed (Hancock and Hancock 2021; Jiang et al. 2024; Oriyama 2017; Weekly 2020). In the New Zealand context, we argue that there is a serious disconnect between the positive rhetoric on diversity in policy and the reality of an educational system and learning provision which does not currently support diversity in target language ability. This goes against the explicitly stated objectives of 'respecting the diversity of the heritage, language, identity and culture of all learners' and 'promoting inclusive practices to support the needs and abilities of all learners' (Education Council 2017, 10).

Conclusions

In this article, we used positioning analysis to examine the ways in which teachers positioned their teaching practice of linguistically and culturally diverse learners. Our findings shed further light on earlier research and illustrate that language teachers generally view linguistic and cultural diversity positively, with some positioning it as a shared and co-constructed role and responsibility with students that expands beyond

simply teaching language and culture to also promoting empathy, tolerance and understanding for students' future lives. However, we saw signs of teachers' positioning diversity as something in need of acceptance and tolerance, which is at odds with the intentions of inclusive education.

While teachers found it challenging to teach classes with students with different levels of proficiency in the target language, many also saw this as a gap in their current pedagogical knowledge stating that they would like to learn more about differentiation and how to differentiate activities and resources. Our study therefore extends earlier research by highlighting the specific professional development concerns of teachers. While we see professional development as an urgent need given the current impact on teacher self-efficacy and wellbeing, we reiterate the need for support to focus on ensuring that each and every learner is included and valued as a member of the class and seen as a dynamic being rather than as a member of a category of diversity. Finally, we also argue that there are incongruities between policy promoting and supporting inclusivity of all learners and their learning needs and an education system and language learning provision which erodes linguistic diversity. We suggest that the positioning of background language learners observed in our study was a direct consequence of this issue. If policy makers truly want to embrace linguistic and cultural diversity so that all learners feel a sense of belonging and that their learning needs will be attended to, then additional support is needed for teachers through tailored curriculum and resources. Given the current projections for demographic growth in the future, this is an increasingly important imperative.

Given the number of respondents, sampling approach used, and proportionately higher number of Japanese teachers in the sample, our findings cannot be said to be generalisable. We also recognise the limitation of examining positioning solely from the perspective of teachers. However, despite this, our study makes an important contribution. Expanding our focus and examining the ways in which teachers position their teaching of linguistically and culturally diverse learners has enabled us to take broader perspective of the challenges encountered and to avoid situating the teacher as responsible for creating or resolving the teaching challenges reported. While this study was undertaken with language teachers in New Zealand, we hope it will be of relevance to teachers and teacher educators who are navigating these challenges elsewhere.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

ORCID

Karen Ashton  <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-6419-8720>

Grace Yue Qi  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-5757-4203>

References

- Ministry of Education. 2007. *The New Zealand curriculum*. New Zealand: Learning Media Limited. <https://newzealandcurriculum.tahurangi.education.govt.nz/new-zealand-curriculum/5637175326.p>.
- Adams, P. 2024. "Pedagogy and Positioning Theory: Relationships and the Formation of Context." *Pedagogy Culture & Society*: 1–21. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14681366.2024.2357207>.
- Adebayo, S. B., and M. Heinz. 2024. "Teachers Should Put Themselves in Their Students' Shoes': Perspectives of Parents from minority-Ethnic Backgrounds on Schooling in Ireland." *International Journal of Inclusive Education* 28 (13): 3124–3142. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2023.2175269>.
- Alton-Lee, A. 2005. *Using Best Evidence Synthesis to Assist in Making a Bigger Difference for Diverse Learners*. Wellington: Ministry of Education.
- Ashton, K. 2018. "Exploring Teacher Views of multi-Level Language Classes in New Zealand Secondary Schools." *Teaching & Teacher Education* 69:104–118. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2017.10.002>.
- Ashton, K. 2019. "Approaches to Teaching in the multi-Level Language Classroom." *Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching* 13 (2): 162–177. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17501229.2017.1397158>.
- Ashton, K. 2020. "Novice Teacher Agency in the multi-Level Language Classroom." *Language, Culture & Curriculum*: 242–256. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07908318.2020.1818766>.
- Badenhorst, G., and M. East. 2015. "Hybrid Learning in a multi-Level German Class: Making the Most of the Reality of Combined Classes." *The New Zealand Language Teacher* 41:64–77.
- Blasco, M., A. Kjærgaard, and T. U. Thomsen. 2020. "Situationally Orchestrated Pedagogy: Teacher Reflections on Positioning as Expert, facilitator, and Caregiver." *Management Learning* 52 (1): 26–46. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1350507620925627>.
- Bridges, S., and A. Searle. 2011. "Changing Workloads of Primary School Teachers: 'I Seem to Live on the Edge of Chaos.'" *School Leadership and Management* 31 (5): 413–433. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13632434.2011.614943>.
- Cabiles, B. S. 2024. "Internalised Deficit Perspectives: Positionality in Culturally Responsive Pedagogical Frameworks." *Pedagogy Culture & Society*. 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14681366.2024.2326004>.
- Carr, J. 2005. "More Thoughts on the Usefulness of Tasks in the multi-Level Language Classroom." *Babel* 39 (3): 31–38.
- Carreira, M., and C. Hitchins Chik. 2018. "Differentiated Teaching: A Primer for Heritage and Mixed Classes." In *The Routledge Handbook of Spanish as a Heritage Language*, edited by K. Potowski, 359–374. Oxon: Routledge.
- Carreira, M., and O. Kagan. 2011. "The Results of the National Heritage Language Survey: Implications for Teaching, Curriculum Design, and Professional Development." *Foreign Language Annals* 44 (1): 40–64. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1944-9720.2010.01118.x>.
- Chen, M. 2015. *Superdiversity Stocktake: Implications for Business, Government and New Zealand*. Wellington: Superdiversity Centre for Law Policy and Business.
- Collier, M. J. 2015. "Intercultural Communication Competence: Continuing Challenges and Critical Directions." *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 48:9–11. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2015.03.003>.
- Davies, B., and R. Harré. 1990. "Positioning: The Discursive Production of Selves." *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour* 20 (1): 43–63. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-5914.1990.tb00174.x>.
- de Kretser, A., and R. Spence-Brown. 2010. *The Current State of Japanese Language Education in Australian Schools*. Melbourne: Education Services Australia.
- East, M. 2021. "Language Learning in New Zealand's Schools: Enticing Opportunities and Enduring Constraints." In *Language Learning in Anglophone Countries: Challenges, Practices, Ways Forward*, edited by U. Lanvers, S. T. Amy, and M. East, 19–36. Cham: Springer International Publishing.
- Education Council. 2017. *Our Code Our Standards: Code of Professional Responsibility and Standards for the Teaching Profession*. Wellington: Education Council.

- Education Review Office. 2023. *Education for All Our Children: Embracing Diverse Ethnicities*. Wellington: Education Review Office.
- Eikeland, I., and S. E. Ohna. 2022. "Differentiation in Education: A Configurative Review." *Nordic Journal of Studies in Educational Policy* 8 (3): 157–170. <https://doi.org/10.1080/20020317.2022.2039351>.
- Hancock, A., and J. Hancock. 2021. "On the Outside, Looking In: Learning Community Languages and Scotland's 1 + 2 Language Strategy." *Current Issues in Language Planning* 22 (3): 328–347. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14664208.2020.1867415>.
- Harré, R., and F. Moghaddam. 2003. *The Self and Others: Positioning Individuals and Groups in Personal, Political, and Cultural Contexts*. Westport, CT: Praeger.
- Hashimoto, K. 2024. "Introduction: Rethinking the Asian Language Learning Paradigm in Australia." In *Rethinking the Asian Language Learning Paradigm in Australia*, edited by K. Hashimoto, 1–15. Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland.
- Hummelstedt, I. P., G. I. M. Holm, F. J. Sahlström, and H. A. C. Zilliacus. 2021. "Diversity as the New Normal and Persistent Constructions of the Immigrant Other – Discourses on Multicultural Education Among Teacher Educators." *Teaching & Teacher Education* 108:103510. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2021.103510>.
- Jiang, W., A. Cook, C. Shen, A. Mikhaylova, and H. Richards. 2024. "Mission Impossible for L2 Learners: Teachers' Perspectives on Teaching and Learning Chinese in Queensland Secondary Schools." In *Rethinking the Asian Language Learning Paradigm in Australia*, edited by K. Hashimoto, 73–97. Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland.
- Kagan, O., M. Minkov, E. Protassova, and M. Schwartz. 2021. "What Kind of Speakers are These? Placing Heritage Speakers of Russian on a Continuum." In *The Changing Face of the "Native Speaker": Perspectives from Multilingualism and Globalization*, edited by N. Slavkov, S. Melo-Pfeifer, and N. Kerschhofer-Puhalo, 155–178. Boston: De Gruyter Mouton.
- Kayi-Aydar, H. 2019. *Positioning Theory in Applied Linguistics: Research Design and Applications*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Kayi-Aydar, H., and E. R. Miller. 2018. "Positioning in Classroom Discourse Studies: A state-Of-The-Art Review." *Classroom Discourse* 9 (2): 79–94. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19463014.2018.1450275>.
- Knight, C., Z. Clegg, C. Conn, M. Hutt, and T. Crick. 2022. "Aspiring to Include versus Implicit 'Othering': Teachers' Perceptions of Inclusive Education in Wales." *British Journal of Special Education* 49 (1): 6–23. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8578.12394>.
- Krish, P., S. Hussin, and N. Sivapuniam. 2010. "Learner Diversity Among Esl Learners in the Online Forum." *Procedia - Social & Behavioral Sciences* 7:92–96. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2010.10.014>.
- Liddicoat, A. 2022. "Language Planning for Diversity in Foreign Language Education." *Current Issues in Language Planning* 23 (5): 457–465. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14664208.2022.2088968>.
- Liu, D., and R. Nelson. 2017. "Diversity in the Classroom." In *The TESOL Encyclopedia of English Language Teaching*, edited by J. Liantas, 1–6. New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Martin-Beltrán, M., N. L. Guzman, and P. J. Chen. 2017. "'Let's Think About it Together': How Teachers Differentiate Discourse to Mediate Collaboration Among Linguistically Diverse Students." *Language Awareness* 26 (1): 41–58. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09658416.2016.1278221>.
- McGee, A., K. Ashton, K. Dunn, and T. Taniwaki. 2013. *Japanese Language Education in New Zealand: An Evaluative Literature Review of the Decline in Students Since 2005*. Palmerston North: IPC Tertiary Institution, Sasakawa Fellowship Fund for Japanese Language Education.
- Miles, M., A. M. Huberman, and J. Saldaña. 2014. *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook*. 3rd ed. Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications.
- Ministry of Education. 2020. *Aotearoa New Zealand Education Gazette*. New Zealand: Ministry of Education. <https://gazette.education.govt.nz/>.
- Oriyama, K. 2017. "Reforming Australian Policy for Chinese, Indonesian, Japanese, and Korean Heritage Languages." In *The Routledge Handbook of Heritage Language Education: From Innovation to Program Building*, edited by O. Kagan, M. Carreira, and C. H. Chik, 265–281. New York: Routledge.

- Orton, J., and A. Scrimgeour. 2019. *Teaching Chinese as a Second Language: The Way of the Learner*. New York: Routledge.
- Pasamonk, B. 2004. "The Paradoxes of Tolerance." *The Social Studies* 95 (5): 206–210. <https://doi.org/10.3200/TSSS.95.5.206-210>.
- Punch, K. F. 2013. *Introduction to Social Research: Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches*. London: Sage.
- Qi, G. Y., S. Y. H. Sun, and L. Carvalho. 2023. "Designing for Diversity in Aotearoa/New Zealand Chinese Language Classrooms." *Language Teaching Research* (0). <https://doi.org/10.1177/13621688231167933>.
- Riazi, A. M. 2016. *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Research Methods in Applied Linguistics*. Oxon: Routledge.
- Rovai, A., and J. Pflingsthor. 2022. "'Good Foreign Language Teachers Pay Attention to Heterogeneity': Conceptualizations of Differentiation and Effective Teaching Practice in Inclusive Efl Classrooms by German pre-Service Teachers." *Languages* 7 (3): 1–19.
- Ryan, M., L. Rowan, J. Lunn Brownlee, T. Bourke, L. L'Estrange, S. Walker, and P. Churchward. 2020. "Teacher Education and Teaching for Diversity: A Call to Action." *Teaching Education*: 1–20. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10476210.2020.1844178>.
- Salkind, N. J. 2000. *Statistics for People Who (think They) Hate Statistics*. Thousand Oaks; London: Sage.
- Scarino, A. 2021. "Language Teacher Education in Diversity: A Consideration of the Mediating Role of Languages and Cultures in Student Learning." *Language and Education*: 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09500782.2021.1991370>.
- Segal, A. 2022. "When the Student is the 'Problem' And the Teacher is Not the Solution: Teacher Professional Identity in an Era of Accountability and Personalized Instruction." *Learning, Culture & Social Interaction* 32:100597. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lcsi.2021.100597>.
- Shah, W. A. 2023. "Privileged Discourses, Teacher Agency and Alternative Subjectivities: Analyzing janus-Faced Character of English Language Pedagogy." *Learning, Culture & Social Interaction* 43:1–14. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lcsi.2023.100772>.
- Stahl, G., C. H. Brock, J. Young, D. Caldwell, E. Sharplin, and F. B. Boyd. 2020. "Dispositions Towards Diversity: Two pre-Service Teachers' Experiences of Living and Teaching in a Remote Indigenous Community." *Pedagogy Culture & Society* 28 (4): 525–542. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14681366.2019.1665090>.
- Stats, N. Z. 2020. "2018 Census Data Allows Users to Dive Deep into New Zealand's Diversity". New Zealand: Stats NZ. <https://www.stats.govt.nz/news/2018-census-data-allows-users-to-dive-deep-into-new-zealands-diversity>.
- Stratilaki-Klein, S. 2021. "The out-Of-Sight of "Native Speaker": A Critical Journey Through Models of Social Representations of Plurilingual Identities." In *The Changing Face of the "Native Speaker": Perspectives from Multilingualism and Globalization*, edited by S. Nikolay, S. Melo-Pfeifer, and N. Kerschhofer-Puhalo, 179–208. Boston: De Gruyter Mouton.
- Szelei, N., A. S. Pinho, and L. Tinoca. 2021. "'Foreigners in Our Schools': Cultural Diversity, Othering, and the Desire for Justice in Schools." *Urban Education*: 1–31. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00420859211058420>.
- Tait-McCutcheon, S. L., and J. Loveridge. 2016. "Examining Equity of Opportunities for Learning Mathematics Through Positioning Theory." *Mathematics Education Research Journal* 28 (2): 327–348. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13394-016-0169-z>.
- Tang, E. 2022. "'This is Gonna Be Cringe': Chinese Language Week Falls Flat for Chinese Kiwis." *Stuff News*. <https://www.stuff.co.nz/pou-tiaki/129948822/this-is-gonna-be-criinge-chinese-language-week-falls-flat-for-chinese-kiwis>.
- Terruhn, J., and P. Spoonley. 2020. "Multilingual realities/Monolingual Ideologies: Connecting the Dots Between Schools' Language Practices and International Student well-Being." *Transitions: Journal of Transient Migration* 4 (2): 183–201. https://doi.org/10.1386/tjtm_00021_1.
- Tomlinson, C. A. 2015. "Teaching for Excellence in Academically Diverse Classrooms." *The Society* 52 (3): 203–209. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12115-015-9888-0>.

- Valiandes, S., and L. Neophytou. 2018. "Teachers' Professional Development for Differentiated Instruction in mixed-Ability Classrooms: Investigating the Impact of a Development Program on Teachers' Professional Learning and on Students' Achievement." *Teacher Development* 22 (1): 123–138. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13664530.2017.1338196>.
- Verkuyten, M., and R. Kollar. 2021. "Tolerance and Intolerance: Cultural Meanings and Discursive Usage." *Culture & Psychology* 27 (1): 172–186. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354067X20984356>.
- Ward, D., and M. East. 2016. "Is Language Learning Languishing? Stakeholders' Perspectives on the Provision of Secondary School Foreign Language Programmes in New Zealand." *The New Zealand Language Teacher* 42:44–62.
- Weekly, R. 2020. "Attitudes, Beliefs and Responsibility for Heritage Language Maintenance in the UK." *Current Issues in Language Planning* 21 (1): 45–66. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14664208.2018.1554324>.
- Willoughby, L. 2014. "Meeting the Challenges of Heritage Language Education: Lessons from One School Community." *Current Issues in Language Planning* 15 (3): 265–281. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14664208.2014.915457>.
- Yoon, B. 2008. "Uninvited Guests: The Influence of Teachers' Roles and Pedagogies on the Positioning of English Language Learners in the Regular Classroom." *American Educational Research Journal* 45 (2): 495–522. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831208316200>.

Appendix A: Sample topics covered in survey

1) Teacher demographic data (closed questions)

- Teacher status
- Language(s) taught
- Teaching experience
- Year groups taught, numbers of students in each year group

2) Student language background (closed questions)

- Student use of language before attending secondary school
- Student use of language with family
- Formal learning of language outside of school

3) Perceptions and positioning of linguistic and cultural diversity (open questions)

- Aspects of diversity experienced
- What does teaching linguistically and culturally diverse learners and classes mean to you?
- Approaches for teaching linguistically and culturally diverse learners and classes
- Feelings about teaching linguistically and culturally diverse learners and classes
- Most challenging aspects teaching linguistically and culturally diverse learners and classes
- Most rewarding aspects teaching linguistically and culturally diverse learners and classes
- Support needed for teaching linguistically and culturally diverse learners and classes
- Other comments

Appendix B: Sample positioning analysis

Extracted snippets of teacher quotes	Positioning
I would like to be given a range of activities that target a variety of learners that are easy to differentiate for different levels.	Interactive positioning: resources (role of other to provide)
I'd like to develop a deeper understanding about differentiation and how to make it work effectively in the context of the classroom.	Reflexive positioning: pedagogy
Not having sufficient material available to extend the bilingual students is the biggest challenge for me. However, I question if it is appropriate for these students to be doing courses that are designed for students with no/little background in the language.	Interactive positioning: resources, structural
I love it. Cultural diversity often means students are more interested in intercultural discussions as they have more to offer.	Sense of community/sharing of responsibility