

LANGUAGE LEARNING FOR NEW ZEALAND'S FUTURE

17 JULY 2025 LANGUAGE FORUM



THE PROGRAMME - Venue: Regatta Conference Rooms A & D, Lower Ground Floor, Pullman Hotel

8:00 Registration

8:30 **Mihi Whakatau** - Dale Stephens, **Welcome** - Jo Coughlan, and **Opening Remarks** - Erik Lithander, Deputy Vice-Chancellor Strategic Engagement, University of Auckland

8:45 **Keynote: Language Learning in the 21st Century**
This panel highlights international policy frameworks, strategy, and what NZ can learn from other systems, with a focus on key themes around equity, multilingualism, and national identity.

Joseph Lo Bianco

9:30 **Keynote 2: What Language Learners Know About Learning (That Neuroscience Just Figured Out)**
We discuss the cognitive science behind language learning, broader educational benefits, and links to workforce readiness.

Barbara Oakley

10:30 Morning Tea

10:45 **Panel 1: Why Second Language Learning Matters**
The lens is widened to consider the full value proposition of second-language learning in Aotearoa: not only cognitive, but also economic, social, and cultural. We ask what's at stake—nationally and globally—if New Zealand continues on its current trajectory of declining second-language enrolments.

John McKinnon, Ivan Kinsella, Dale Stephens and Suzannah Jessep (moderator)

11:30 **Panel 2: The Case for Teaching Languages at New Zealand Schools**
Featuring school leaders from primary and secondary sectors championing second-language learning in diverse school contexts across Aotearoa. Highlighting why they continue to invest in language education, what structural and policy barriers they face, and what kinds of support or partnerships are needed to help language learning flourish more widely.

James Bentley, Anna Wilson, Andrew King and Juliet Kennedy (moderator)

12:15 Lunch & Networking

1:15 **Panel 3: Curriculum and Teaching**

Hear how curriculum design, teacher capability, and innovative, future-oriented strategies can be leveraged to strengthen language education. At a time when language learning faces both challenges and opportunities, we explore how to reimagine our approach — from system-level curriculum reform to on-the-ground professional support and the emerging role of AI in multilingual education.

Martin East, Stephanie Mortimore, Danping Wang and Juliet Kennedy (moderator)

2:00 **Curriculum Review: Making a Case for Language Learning**

This short, forward-looking session will offer reflections on how the forthcoming curriculum review can help lay a stronger foundation for the future of second-language learning in New Zealand.

Juliet Kennedy and Constanza Tolosa

2:30 Afternoon Tea

2:45 **Case Study: Teaching Chinese in New Zealand Schools and Universities**
With enrolments in decline, Chinese still remains one of the most taught second languages in New Zealand. This session provides an inside look at the lived realities of Chinese language teaching—what's working, what's not, what we can learn from local success stories, and where support is needed.

Laura Deng, Yatchun Wong, Fu Jiwei and Professor Paul Clark (moderator)

3:30 **Panel 4: Youth Voices - Why We Learn Languages**

Personal stories from students and young professionals on the value of language learning in life, work and identity. These voices showcase the importance of maintaining support for languages from early learning through to tertiary education and beyond.

Telesia Tanoa'i, Kate Storer and Luka Yelash (moderator)

4:15 Closing Remarks - Tony Browne

4:30 Networking Reception

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THE SPEAKERS

Jo Coughlan: Chair of NZ Chinese Language Week, Jo is a seasoned director and communications strategist with leadership experience across business, government, and international relations. She is also a former Wellington City Councillor and Managing Director of Silvereye Communications.

Joseph Lo Bianco: Emeritus Professor at the University of Melbourne, Joseph is a global expert on language policy, multilingual education, and language rights, advising governments and international bodies worldwide.

Barbara Oakley: Barbara is a globally recognised education expert, New York Times best selling author and creator of the "Learning How to Learn" course, combining neuroscience and engineering to transform how we understand learning.

John McKinnon: Chair of the NZ China Council and former Ambassador to China, John McKinnon has held senior leadership roles in the Ministry of Defence and Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, and continues to contribute to strategic policy and international relations.

Suzannah Jessep: CEO of the Asia New Zealand Foundation, Suzannah is a former diplomat and leading voice on New Zealand's engagement with Asia across trade, education, and policy.

Dale Stephens: Chair of NZ Māori Tourism, Dale is a senior executive and board director with deep expertise in public policy, Māori development, and Asia-Pacific engagement.

James Bentley: Headmaster of St Peter's College, James is a leader in international education and school sport, and has championed Chinese language learning through the Confucius Classroom initiative.

Anna Wilson: Acting Principal at Wellington East Girls' College, Anna is a school leader and co-Chair of the national association for secondary school deputies.

Andrew King: Principal of Ōropi School, Andrew advocates for global citizenship through language education and leads New Zealand's Rural Schools Leadership Association.

Paul Clark: Emeritus Professor of Chinese at the University of Auckland, Paul is a pioneer in NZ-China cultural exchange and an expert in Chinese cinema and urban history.

Ivan Kinsella: Ivan is Vice President of Corporate Affairs at Zespri China, leading government and regulatory engagement. He has a background in China business consulting and previously served as NZTE's Investment Counsellor in Beijing

Martin East: Professor of Language Education at the University of Auckland, Martin is a leading researcher in language teaching, learning, and assessment.

Danping Wang: Associate Professor and Director of Chinese Language Education and Advanced Research at the University of Auckland, Danping researches AI in multilingual education and advises on national language policy.

Stephanie Mortimore: Programme Manager for Languages at Tui Tuia, Stephanie supports language pathways in schools and is a former Head of Languages and Deaf education leader.

Constanza Tolosa: Senior Lecturer at the University of Auckland, Constanza researches language teaching innovation and intercultural competence in schools.

Juliet Kennedy: President of NZ Association of Language Teachers, Juliet is a secondary teacher and curriculum developer advocating for inclusive and diverse language education.

Laura Deng: President of NZCLTA, Laura is a Chinese language teacher at St Kentigern College and a contributor to NCEA curriculum development.

Yatchun Wong: Founder of Pistachio Mandarin, Yatchun is an accountant-turned-educator creating interactive, student-centred Chinese learning environments.

Fu Jiwei: Fu is New Zealand's National Chinese Language Advisor, with over 30 years of experience leading Confucius Institutes and curriculum work globally.

Luka Yelash: University of Auckland student Luka placed 5th globally in the 2024 Chinese Bridge Speech Competition and is passionate about language as cultural connection.

Telesia Tanoa'i: A filmmaker and Youth Ambassador, Telesia uses Mandarin to advocate for Pacific issues, with her film Telesia 2 the World screening internationally.

Kate Storer: Head of Chinese at Waitākere College, Kate has built a thriving school programme and led multiple student trips to China to foster cross-cultural learning.

Tony Browne: Tony is Executive Chair of the NZ Contemporary China Research Centre and a former Ambassador to China who played a key role in the NZ-China FTA.