



# The New Zealand Curriculum Learning Languages

## Novice and Emergent

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## Purpose statement

*Ko tōu reo, ko Tōku reo, te tuakiri tangata. Tihei uriuri, tihei nakonako.  
Your voice and my voice are expressions of identity. May our descendents live on,  
and our hopes be fulfilled.*

The Learning Languages learning area equips students with the linguistic, cultural, and sociolinguistic knowledge that enables them to communicate within their own cultural communities (heritage language learners) and across different cultures (additional language learners). It fosters intercultural understanding and appreciation for diverse worldviews.

Through the study of an additional language, students are taught how to interpret meaning and adapt their communication to suit different audiences and situations. As students learn how to speak, write, read, listen, sign, and interact in their target language, they start to communicate more authentically and purposefully in increasingly complex contexts.

The Learning Languages learning area exposes students to new ways of thinking about themselves and their world and can increase their understanding of their first languages. It can also contribute to the vitality of a language and strengthen cultural connections.

As students progress through the Learning Languages curriculum, they deepen their understanding of the cultural and social contexts in which languages are used and begin to recognise that language reflects and upholds the values, stories, and practices of different communities and cultures. By learning how to communicate in an additional language, students are empowered to engage confidently with others and contribute meaningfully to our diverse society and increasingly interconnected world.

# Learning area structure

The Learning Languages teaching sequence lays out the knowledge and practices to be taught during Novice and Emergent. In Learning Languages teaching is structured around two strands:

- **Linguistic knowledge** focuses on how language works. It develops student understanding of pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, and spelling.
- **Cultural and sociolinguistic knowledge** focuses on how language is shaped by culture and context. It develops student understanding of cultural practices, values, beliefs, and social norms, and supports the development of intercultural communicative competence.

Students learn through five modes of communication:

- signing, watching, and interacting in New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL)
- listening, speaking, reading, writing, and interacting in all other languages

The curriculum supports 13 languages: Te Reo Māori, New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL), Gagana Sāmoa, Gagana Tokelau, Lea Faka-Tonga, Te Reo Māori Kūki 'Āirani, Vagahau Niue, French, German, Spanish, Chinese (Mandarin), Japanese, and Korean. These are grouped into five categories: Te Reo Māori, NZSL, Pacific Languages, Asian Languages, and European Languages.

Students may begin learning a language at different year levels and with varied prior knowledge. The curriculum supports flexible entry points through the following sequences: Novice 1, Novice 2, Emergent 1, and Emergent 2.

These sequences, organised through strands and elements, set out what is to be taught. Their enactment is shaped by teachers, who design learning in response to their learners, adjusting the order and emphasis, and adding contexts as appropriate.

# Language group introductions

## Te Reo Māori introduction

[Link to te reo Māori subject page in development]

Learning te reo Māori during the Novice and Emergent sequences supports students to connect with identity and culture, while deepening their understanding of tikanga mātauranga Māori, and the Māori worldview. As the indigenous language of New Zealand, and an official language, te reo Māori is a taonga. The vitality of te reo Māori plays an integral role in honouring Te Tiriti o Waitangi and strengthening connections with whānau, community, and mana whenua. For Māori, learning can be a deeply empowering experience of reclaiming their heritage, culture, and language. For non-Māori, it offers a pathway to shared cultural understanding and respect, thereby strengthening New Zealand as a whole.

**In Novice 1 and 2**, teachers play a central role in supporting students to build a strong connection between te reo Māori and the cultural values carried within the language. Teachers guide students to notice how language varies across iwi and how values like manaakitanga and whanaungatanga shape behaviour and relationships. By weaving cultural knowledge into everyday learning, Teachers help students see te reo Māori as a living expression of identity, community, and connection. While all five modes—speaking, listening, reading, writing, and interacting—are taught, oral language is the foundation for communication in the Novice teaching sequence.

**In Emergent 1 and 2**, Teachers guide students to use pepeha and/or mihi to express identity and share whakapapa and connections to whenua, in both formal and informal contexts. Teachers show students how kupu whakarite and whakataukī enrich and enhance language and meaning, and that communication reflects collective values and respect for others' perspectives. Students learn how to use kīwaha to reflect cultural values, humour, emotion, and social norms, and to enrich everyday conversations. Teachers engage with the maramataka and local

mātauranga Māori to create meaningful experiences for students and help deepen their understanding of Māori worldview knowledge.

The Learning Languages area prepares students with the knowledge and practices to access related Curriculum Subjects for Years 11–13, such as **Te Reo Māori**.

## New Zealand Sign Language introduction

[Link to New Zealand Sign Language subject page in development]

Learning New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL) during the Novice and Emergent sequences supports students to communicate visually, connect with Deaf culture, and contribute to a more inclusive society. As an official language and valued taonga of New Zealand, NZSL affirms the identity of Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and Māori Turi communities and fosters respectful engagement amongst diverse learners.

**In Novice 1 and 2**, teachers introduce essential knowledge to establish etiquette for NZSL classrooms, where students use their face, hands, and body to convey meaning rather than voice. Teachers support students to use the five foundational parameters to correctly form each sign, including Māori concept signs for Māori Turi. These parameters underpin signed greetings, basic introductions, politeness conventions appropriate to Deaf culture, and one-to-one signed conversations. Teachers create a safe and respectful learning environment where students begin to understand NZSL as a visual language shaped by culture and community.

**In Emergent 1 and 2**, students enhance their understanding of Deaf culture as signed interactions develop from one-to-one and small group conversations to larger group presentations. This allows them to develop confidence and fluency in their use of more complex NZSL signs and Māori concept signs across a wider range of contexts. Students develop further understanding of politeness conventions, such as turn-taking and pacing. Students also become more aware of sign variations that exist across regions.

The Learning Languages area prepares students with the knowledge and practices to access related Curriculum Subjects for Years 11–13, such as **New Zealand Sign Language**.

## Pacific Languages introduction

[Links to Te Reo Māori Kuki 'Āirani, Gagana Tokelau, Vagahau Niue, Lea Faka-Tonga, and Gagana Sāmoa subject pages in development]

Learning Te Reo Māori Kuki 'Āirani, Gagana Tokelau, Vagahau Niue, Lea Faka-Tonga, and Gagana Sāmoa during the Novice and Emergent sequences supports students to connect with identity, culture, and community. These languages are central to the wellbeing of Pacific peoples and help preserve New Zealand's linguistic diversity, with teaching grounded in cultural values and respectful communication.

**In Novice 1 and 2**, teachers introduce students to foundational language patterns such as greetings, introductions, and simple sentences that reflect core cultural values like respect, family, and identity. Students establish a culturally grounded communicative base, learning respectful conventions and sociolinguistic norms in familiar contexts such as family, school, and celebrations. As students progress, teachers guide them to deepen their understanding of sentence structure, pronouns, and possessives, while developing strategies for effective communication. This ensures that language learning is meaningful, authentic, and connected to lived experience from the beginning.

**In Emergent 1 and 2**, teachers support students to expand from formulaic expressions to connected sentences that describe routines, preferences, and past events. Students begin to sustain conversations and contribute meaningfully to group activities. Teachers guide students to use respectful language in a range of settings important to Pacific communities, and to experiment with more complex sentence structures and broader vocabulary. Students develop sociolinguistic awareness of bilingual contexts and ceremonial language, and are encouraged to engage with cultural perspectives and intergenerational knowledge.

The Learning Languages area prepares students with the knowledge and practices to access related Curriculum Subjects for Years 11–13, such as **Te Reo Māori Kuki 'Āirani, Gagana Tokelau, Vagahau Niue, Lea Faka-Tonga, and Gagana Sāmoa**.

## Asian Languages introduction

[Links to Chinese (Mandarin), Japanese, and Korean subject pages in development]

Learning Chinese (Mandarin), Japanese, and Korean during the Novice and Emergent sequences immerses students in rich linguistic and cultural exploration. Students build cognitive flexibility and visual literacy as they engage with languages that use character-based or syllabic writing systems and develop intercultural understanding through respectful communication and cultural practices.

**In Novice 1 and 2**, teachers support students to build foundational skills through everyday communication and classroom routines. Students learn to listen for familiar expressions, respond with short formulaic phrases, and participate in simple interactions. Teachers introduce the writing system of the target language and guide students to recognise visual patterns, stroke order, and syllable blocks. Cultural knowledge is embedded throughout, with students learning how language reflects social relationships, respect, and identity—for example, through honorifics, bowing, or respectful forms. As students progress, they begin to connect spoken and written language with cultural context and notice how greetings, family terms, and routines vary across languages.

**In Emergent 1 and 2**, teachers guide students to engage in short conversations and write simple texts using the writing system of the language studied. Students begin to infer meaning from features such as radicals in Chinese, particles in Japanese, or syllable blocks in Korean. Teachers support students to deepen their understanding of how politeness and respect are expressed through honorifics, speech levels, and forms of address. Students build confidence using the language in authentic contexts and prepare to engage with more complex texts, conversations, and cultural perspectives in the next stage of learning.

The Learning Languages area prepares students with the knowledge and practices to access related Curriculum Subjects for Years 11–13, such as **Chinese (Mandarin), Japanese, and Korean**.

## European Languages introduction

[Links to French, German, and Spanish subject pages in development]

Learning French, German, and Spanish during the Novice and Emergent sequences immerses students in rich linguistic and cultural exploration and global connection. These languages use alphabetic writing systems and share linguistic similarities with English, making them more accessible and often quicker to acquire for English-speaking learners.

**In Novice 1 and 2**, teachers introduce students to everyday expressions, phrases, and key linguistic features of the target language that enable them to begin communicating across all modes—speaking, listening, writing, reading, and interacting. Teaching focuses on greetings and introductions, and on communicating simple personal details about themselves, their families, and their immediate surroundings in the present tense. Students begin to express likes and dislikes and immediate needs of a concrete type, as well as language to enable classroom interaction. Teachers also guide students to understand and use basic cultural norms and politeness conventions, creating an authentic language learning environment.

**In Emergent 1 and 2**, teachers focus on developing a broader and more flexible repertoire of language so students can locate, describe, and compare their immediate surroundings (e.g. home, school, hometown, people) and communicate about activities and routines. Students learn to express opinions, wants, needs, and obligations, and to give and seek permission. Teachers guide students to comprehend and produce simple, connected text across all modes on topics of personal interest, spanning the past, present, and future. Students engage respectfully in transactional communication, including making arrangements with others and interacting in everyday settings like shops, restaurants, and public transport. Teachers encourage students to demonstrate curiosity about other cultures by asking questions and listening to other perspectives.

The Learning Languages area prepares students with the knowledge and practices to access related Curriculum Subjects for Years 11–13, such as **French, German, and Spanish**.