



NEW ZEALAND ASSOCIATION OF LANGUAGE TEACHERS
TE ROPU KAIWHAKAAKO REO O AOTEAROA

Patron

Her Excellency The Hon Dame Silvia Cartwright, PCNZM, DBE
Governor-General of New Zealand

5 April 2005

Dear SLA President

Top Scholar Award - Criteria for first-language speaker

Thank you for providing feedback from your language association in October 2004.

This letter is to keep you informed of the next step in the process and ask for your support to help in further re-defining the criteria.

What happened after the consultation process in October 2004?

- Feedback from participating specific language associations (SLA) was very diverse. It was clear that the current definition was no longer widely accepted. However the feedback did not provide evidence for a clear definitive decision. Not all SLA sectors responded.
- The status quo remained in place for the 2004 scholarship exam.
- NZALT Exec worked with NZQA to draft a more thorough questionnaire which was sent to schools in November 2004 for first-language speakers to complete.
- The new criteria (see below) is now out for public consultation through links with language associations, NZALT website and through regional officers' newsletters.

What is the new proposed criteria?

A first-language speaker is a student who has spent **three years or more** of his/her formal education in a school system in which the language studied was the medium of instruction and **that these three years fall within the six years up to and including the year of exam entry.**

For Chinese, a first-language speaker is someone who has **two or more years** of formal education in a school system in which Chinese was the language of instruction. In this context, 'Chinese' includes all dialects of Chinese.

As Presidents of your SLA, how can you assist?

1. Can you please provide a forum where your members can give feedback on the proposal? (e.g. Do they support it or not. If not, what criteria would be more appropriate?)
2. Please collate feedback and forward to the NZALT web master by the 30 September.
(David Hall: dadolyem@paradise.net.nz)

What is being asked of NZALT Regional Officers?

1. Please provide an opportunity at regional Langsems where language teachers can discuss the new proposal.
 - a. Auckland 26 & 27 May
 - b. Waikato 9 September

- c. Massey 30 & 31 August
 - d. Wellington 29 July
 - e. Christchurch 5 August
 - f. Otago/Southland At regional meetings terms 2 & 3
2. Collate feedback and forward to the NZALT web master by 30 September.

Issues to consider

- It is important to acknowledge that first-language speakers have the right to sit the scholarship exam. Many such students will be aiming to gain three scholarship passes, only one of which might be in languages. Our only issue is that they should not be eligible for the Top Subject Scholar award.
- More language students are from families who have had the advantage of living overseas for an extended period of time. This is the rationale behind reducing the timeframe from six to three years of formal education in a school system in which the language being studied was the medium of instruction.
- The issue really is what is an unfair advantage over a natural advantage. e.g. If the parent of a maths student is a University lecturer in maths, the student is not excluded from gaining Top Scholar Award in maths.
- The results in the 2004 Scholarship exam revealed that it is not just the level of language proficiency that is essential but the ability to synthesize and articulate ideas.

Timeframe for the process in 2005

April	Consultation process starts through SLA and NZALT networks
May – September	LangSems and forum discussions held
October	NZALT Executive makes final proposal to NZQA

Thank you for your participation in this important process. We look forward to receiving your feedback.

Yours sincerely

Noeline Grant
President NZALT
On behalf of NZALT Exec