



Enrolment Assessment Tool for workers from non-English speaking backgrounds in agriculture

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PROJECT REPORT FOR:
***ENROLMENT ASSESSMENT TOOL FOR WORKERS FROM NON-
ENGLISH SPEAKING BACKGROUNDS IN AGRICULTURE
INDUSTRY TRAINING.***

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This project was a collaborative partnership between Agribusiness Training, English Language Partners, and the Agricultural Industry Training Organisation (AgITO). The purpose was to develop, trial and evaluate a quick Enrolment Assessment Tool for guiding the suitable qualification level for migrant dairy farm workers who are undertaking formal industry training (trainees).

Migrant workers not from English speaking backgrounds (NESB) are at a disadvantage in their initial work and training, although they are literate in their own language. This can put their productivity, safety and employment relations at risk. Migrant workers have a low completion rate in training for NZQA qualifications, particularly at levels 3 and 4. Initial investigation suggested that the main problems perceived by AgITO trainees are spoken New Zealand English and the terminology used in dairy farming.

Training enrolment usually takes place at the farm's kitchen table, with about an hour available to cover everything. Participants are pressed for time and none want the interview and enrolling process to be longer than absolutely necessary as it is time away from work. Those involved do not have specific education or ESOL expertise. Therefore, a viable diagnostic enrolment tool must be low-tech, quick, simple, and not seem an intimidating "test".

These specific requirements meant that traditional approaches to language testing were not appropriate. A good deal of research is available on preparing and testing NESB students for academic programmes in English, but there is none on entry level requirements for NESB vocational trainees. Although a large number of assessment tools are available in the adult ESOL sector, there appears to be no industry-specific entry assessment tool for migrant trainees in New Zealand or overseas.

The development team settled on a vocabulary-based tool, there being a body of research linking vocabulary size to successful language use (e.g. Nation 2004). Vocabulary items were chosen for frequency of occurrence across general language, colloquial speech and dairy farming in Southland. Sources used included the *Glossary of Farming Terms* (Dairy NZ, 2009), *The first 1,000 word list* (Nation, 2004), along with input from Agribusiness Training and Southland AgITO personnel for subject knowledge and English Language Partners for ESOL knowledge (including two Southland tutors who are also farmers).

Migrant trainees need to be confident in dealing with the many words in English that have more than one meaning. Newcomers to New Zealand, to farming, or to English may know words such as *race*, *empty*, *shut up*, or *cup* without recognising that a quite different meaning is used in a farming context. The first portion of the Enrolment Assessment Tool developed used recognition of vocabulary, including words with multiple meanings. The latter portion used evidence of listening and speaking difficulty and confidence in communication reported by the trainee, the Ag ITO Training Advisor and the farmer. These two components resulted in a tool that took 15 minutes per trainee, and which covered a reasonable balance of relevant language skills, was easy to implement and score, and above all fast.

Several drafts were circulated and changes made to the selection of vocabulary items, the format and the wording of the instructions. After the first trials with migrant trainees, the

AgITO team suggested sequencing the vocabulary items on difficulty to ensure trainees succeeded with the easiest initial words. The re-ordering was done using Agribusiness Training and AgITO subject knowledge and experience from working with migrant trainees.

Observations from tutoring staff and trainees' assessment completion rates suggest that trainees enrolled using the Enrolment Assessment Tool are more likely to complete their level 2 or level 4 training successfully. The Tool needs more trialling and possibly refining to demonstrate similar reliability for level 3 training. This would reduce the effect of Training Advisors adjusting to something new; identify factors impacting on the recommendation or it being followed; and enable refining of the Tool or its analysis instructions if required.

The results were not as clear as anticipated due to the low number of migrant trainees enrolled using the Tool. Obtaining more definite results was not possible, and so the project team could not draw more robust conclusions from the information collected. Controlling variables was unexpectedly difficult in this industry environment: working across a wide geographic area; a number of people involved in trialling the tool; communication difficulties in the rural working context; and those involved working to differing priorities and deadlines. It demonstrated the challenges of introducing changes to a busy working environment as opposed to an academic context.

Other industries with large numbers of NESB migrant workers needing training could easily adapt and use the Enrolment Assessment Tool, replacing the vocabulary in it with the equivalent from that industry. Training those assessing with the Tool to ensure they understand its construction and use, and support while they become familiar with it would be important. Planning how to fit the Tool into normal interviewing processes would help overcome time pressures or logistical issues like managing more than one student at a time.

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

Over the last 15 years, the rapid growth of dairy farming, particularly in the South Island, has led to a corresponding demand for dairy farm workers. As this couldn't be met from within New Zealand, workers from countries like the Philippines, Argentina, Uruguay, Eastern Europe and Nepal have been increasingly employed in these roles. Migrant dairy farm workers are literate in their own language, may have learned English in their home country, but are unfamiliar with New Zealand terminology, idiomatic language, and farming terms when they arrive.

The agriculture industry has a culture of enrolling its employees in industry training (most commonly level 2 – 4 national certificates), to ensure they have the skills and knowledge to operate safely and productively on farms. Thirty per cent of dairy farming staff are involved in training, with around half of these in the Canterbury, Otago and Southland regions being migrant workers (approximately 500 trainees). A team of AgITO Training Advisors meet with farmers and their employees to discuss training options, and sign up trainees. These discussions occur at the kitchen table or out on the farm, with about an hour available to cover everything.

Training Advisors are not tutors or experts in gauging how English language skill relates to training demands, and so are not equipped to determine which level of training best suits non-English speaking (NESB) employees. The trainees are new to the language, the culture and the conditions. This means trainees have often been enrolled in training for which they have insufficient English language skills, and fail to succeed. All those involved would benefit from students being enrolled in courses for which they have a reasonable chance of success.

To be viable an enrolment diagnostic tool needs to be low-tech, quick, simple, and not appear as an intimidating “test”. This project focussed on developing such a tool that would support Training Advisors in their enrolment decision-making.

RATIONALE

The training materials used in AgITO courses have not been adjusted to cater for NESB trainees. Theory training is delivered part time within a tight course content schedule, so there is little opportunity for developmental work with these students in class. Feedback from migrant workers and their tutors indicates that NESB trainees face different challenges from those experienced by their English speaking classmates. The disadvantage appears as below average course and qualification completion rates for NESB dairy trainees (especially at Level 4), less participation and understanding in class, and more difficulty understanding instructions and tasks on the farm.

The best way to support migrant trainees is by ensuring they are enrolled in a course for which they have sufficient English language skills, enabling a reasonable chance of success. As support for NESB students is a specialist field, AgITO Training Advisors do not have this expertise. With no formal methods available for determining this, it leaves only gut feeling to gauge the level of training that fits with a NESB worker's English language skills. The involvement of both the AgITO and Agribusiness Training in this project will increase their understanding of what language features indicate a person's English skill relative to training

demands. It will also give them a workable tool with which to better gauge which course best suits a NESB student.

A review of literature and research in America, Britain, Australia and New Zealand showed that no work had been done around the needs of NESB learners within industry training. Virtually all research relates to either literacy and numeracy or the teaching of English as a second language in an educational context. This project does not relate to either, it looked at the skills migrant workers need to complete New Zealand industry training.

Professor Paul Nation at Victoria University Language Institute leads research into the place of vocabulary in language competence. It explores aspects such as the “dimensions of vocabulary knowledge”, identifying that control, fluency and speed of recall are all important in vocabulary knowledge (*Laufer & Nation, 2001, p. 8*). Following the research of Nation and others on the relationship between vocabulary size and independent use of language (*Nation & Waring, 1997, p. 9*), this project based the assessment tool on recognition of key vocabulary items. Nation’s Vocabulary Size Tests were also used in the background preparation and research for development of the assessment tool.

A large number of assessment tools are available in the adult ESOL sector. There is nothing comparable to what these NESB trainees need in either New Zealand or overseas - an assessment tool identifying the ESOL level in a specific industry context. Lengthy formal summative assessment tools are not practicable or appropriate. What is needed is a quick tool that can be used without specialist analytical knowledge. The Australian Migrant and Education Service (AMES) has produced a placement assessment kit for adult ESOL students, amongst which are a number of tasks appropriate to a vocational context (English Language and Literacy Assessment (ELLA) kit, Ames, 2010). This kit informed the development of the tool in this project.

The Enrolment Assessment Tool was constructed around discussing a selection of agricultural terms, some of which have several different meanings. This selection was designed to expose NESB trainees’ flexibility in using English, not as a comprehensive test of their vocabulary. Flexibility is key to confident use of language, and is required to understand and be successful in formal training.

The kind of English we use varies according to the context, the purpose, and the region. While many migrant dairy workers are quite fluent in American-style English, they find it difficult to understand and be understood in a rural New Zealand context. Known vocabulary often has a different meaning in New Zealand farming (for example *concentrate, race*). Many idioms are particular to New Zealand or to farming (for example *he doesn’t know his arse from his elbow*). New Zealand spoken communication is less formal than that of many other countries, sometimes making it hard for new migrants to identify the purpose or degree of formality of language. One example is the use of apparently insulting or uncomplimentary language as an indication of camaraderie (for example *get outa here*). In order to gain real understanding of what is being communicated, new migrants need to be able to identify “problem” language and ask for clarification using only the English they have – hence the need for flexibility.

The *English Language and Literacy Assessment Kit* (AMES 2010) provided a useful reference point around balancing different language skills (listening, speaking, reading and

writing). This placement assessment kit for adult ESOL students contains a number of tasks appropriate to a vocational context. It has been designed to suit a range of language and literacy assessment contexts and competence levels of learners, and includes a number of tasks that are appropriate for a vocational context. It was not feasible to include writing or a significant amount of reading in the Assessment Tool because it needed to be quick to use and suit a simple scoring system.

To gauge a trainee's confidence and competence with language vocabulary items were used instead of connected text. These are quick, straightforward, easy for a non language specialist to assess and a valid testing item. This choice is based largely on Professor Paul Nation's work, which includes the process of "knowing" a word, word frequency levels in spoken and written English and the link between vocabulary size and independent language use (Nation & Waring, 1997). It explores the importance for second-language learners of both knowing a word and controlling the use of that word – moving from vocabulary learning to a person's flexibility in using the language. The vocabulary items used in the Assessment Tool were selected from a variety of sources: initially Dairy NZ's (2009) *Glossary of Farming Terms* and Nation's (2004) *1,000 and 2,000 word lists* (subsequently restricted to the first 1,000 most frequently occurring words). There was deliberate inclusion of common words which have a different meaning in an agricultural context (e.g. *concentrate*).

The other portion of the Tool is an assessment of communicative English language skills, with input from the AgITO Training Advisor, the migrant trainee and the employer farmer. This provides a balance of different views on accuracy of communication with the trainee. This is an important feature because communication involves many more features than language knowledge alone, including confidence, non verbal communication and cultural elements.

METHODOLOGY

English Language Partners developed a draft Enrolment Assessment Tool containing two word discussion sections, and a section for observations of the trainee's communication skills. Developers analysed the language requirements of the training materials used in courses of NZQA levels 2, 3, and 4, to link those levels to an appropriate score on the Tool.

- Part A had 10 words for which there are different meanings in different contexts. The trainee needed to give two definitions for each word, for example *break* (a fracture, time off work, or a strip of grazing).
- Part B had 10 words for which the trainee needed to give one definition for example *silage*.
- Part C questioned the trainee around the language demands of their workplace and how easily they understand.
- Part D captured the Training Advisor's observations of the trainee's communication skills.

The Tool was produced in different versions for the trainee and Training Advisor to look at. The Training Advisor's version had definitions supplied as a reference, and quick colour-coded analysis after each section: yellow for level 2; blue for level 3; and red for level 4. Analysis results were collated at the end of the assessment, resulting in a recommended level of training for that person.

The Tool was laminated so that Training Advisors could write on it with erasable pen if this assisted them to use the tool, and so it would survive any damp or muddy conditions encountered on the farm.

A recording sheet was developed for Training Advisors to use as they moved through the assessment. This would subsequently be given to administration staff for capturing the results in a spreadsheet.

Three Training Advisors and the Territory Manager from the AgITO's Southland office were trained by English Language Partners to use the Enrolment Assessment Tool. A fourth Training Advisor joining the team after this point in the project was briefed by colleagues. The training session covered a brief explanation of the development and purpose of the Tool, with a demonstration of how to use it with a migrant trainee and time for discussion of any questions arising for the Training Advisors. (See Appendix 5: Training to use the Enrolment Assessment Tool).

Training Advisors trialled the Tool with nine NESB migrant workers they encountered in their normal round of farm visits, and then discussed their impressions of using it with the project team through a videoconference.

The Enrolment Assessment Tool was modified based on Training Advisor feedback. Modifications were made to make it quicker to use, to order the words on difficulty, and to clarify misunderstandings about how it should be used:

- Part A and Part B were swapped so that the easier one-definition section came first. The Training Advisor's version had instructions added to abandon the assessment after the first section if a trainee had struggled, as they were clearly level 2 candidates.
- The number of words in each section was reduced, as an indication of English skill could be gained with fewer than this.
- The order of one-definition words was altered to move from easiest to hardest. This would reduce trainee anxiety by starting them with the most familiar words. It would also enable Training Advisors to abandon the assessment if the words became too difficult.
- Part C was abandoned. It didn't add useful information to the analysis, particularly for NESB trainees from cultures where answering in a pleasing way is a sign of respect.
- The final section had the employer's observation on communication skills added to it, as this was a more useful indicator than asking the trainee.
- More detailed instructions were added to the Training Advisor version. These reinforced that the Tool is not a comprehensive vocabulary test, should be worked through quickly without prompting trainees, and encouraged them to note any observations on the Recording Sheet. Labouring over the meaning of individual words was not important, as if trainees needed help or considerable thinking time to describe the terms in the Tool this demonstrated that they had insufficient English manipulation skills to manage the demands of the classroom. (See Appendices 2 and 3: Enrolment Assessment Tool – trainee and Training Advisor versions).
- The Recording Sheet was altered to make it easier to capture all the comments the project team was looking for. (See Appendix 4: Recording Sheet).

Training Advisors trialled the revised Tool with 19 trainees prior to enrolling them in training, and with 7 whose training was already underway. The project abandoned formally sampling trainees on whom the Tool was tested to control variables like the time of year training commenced; only working with migrants enrolling in their first training, or trialling a mix of

nationalities. It became more important to trial it as widely as possible within what was achievable for the Training Advisor team.

Two more videoconferences were held to discuss progress and gain feedback from Training Advisors. The impediments to trialling the Tool with the anticipated numbers continued, and so the project term was extended up until calving time on the farming calendar, when all training ceases for several months. This enabled the Tool to be trialled with more trainees, but meant the majority would not complete their training courses by the end of the project.

A control group of 26 NESB trainees enrolled without using the Tool was identified, so their classroom performance could be compared with those trialling the Tool. This group was similar in that they were predominantly Filipino, worked on dairy farms in the same region and so were experiencing similar climate and farming practices to the trial group. Formal sampling to identify the trainees in both groups did not occur due to the challenges in having sufficient numbers to work with.

The time lag required to collect qualification completion data for trainees meant this could not be measured during the term of the project, and so data of their success with individual unit standards was measured instead. These accumulate through a training course, and so are similarly accurate to qualification completions as a measure of success. Unit standard completion data was collected for both the trial and control groups. This measured how many assessments were successfully completed out of those given to each student. This measure accommodated the different portions of the total training course each had completed, which varied depending on when in the project their training commenced.

Feedback was collected from Agribusiness Training's Southland tutors at the end of the trial. They were asked for their observations about the appropriateness of the course for trainees in both the trial and control groups.

RESULTS

USING THE ENROLMENT ASSESSMENT TOOL

Adjustments made to the Tool improved the discussion flow when working through it, and made it quicker to use. This final version took 10 – 15 minutes.

To non-ESOL experts the small sample of vocabulary tested in the Tool appeared as an incomplete test with other words and slang omitted. The test mechanics of using a selection of words to indicate English skill rather than testing the extent of someone's vocabulary needed to be explained more clearly to Training Advisors, who felt concerned that it was not fairly judging someone's farming vocabulary.

Some Training Advisors focused too closely on recognition of the actual words in the Tool, including assisting and prompting. The words themselves are almost incidental to the language processing skill displayed, intended to indicate how easily trainees can move between contexts and use English in different ways. The training given to Training Advisors was insufficient preparation for them to understand the purpose behind the questions the Tool contained and be comfortable taking the quick and light approach required. This was most noticeable for a fourth Training Advisor who joined the project part-way through and missed the initial training.

It was a challenge for Training Advisors to incorporate the Enrolment Assessment Tool into their farm meeting agenda, as there were a lot of other things to cover in the hour available, and no allowance was made for adding in this extra task. Once more familiar with the Tool, there was a tendency for some Training Advisors to truncate the assessment process to save time, considering only Part C of the Tool (observed ease of communicating). While a natural response to time pressure, it does not give a reliable result as language flexibility has been omitted from the assessment, which is an essential skill trainees need to be successful in training.

Trainees from cultures like the Philippines bring with them a respect for those in authority, which includes their employer and the AgITO Training Advisor. This adds a level of complexity to using the Enrolment Assessment Tool as for these workers there is underlying pressure to give “right answers”, making it stressful no matter how well the Training Advisor has set the scene. If unable to find the second meanings in Part B, they preferred to rephrase what they had already said rather than say they didn’t know. On one occasion the assessment had to be abandoned as the person was so stressed from having their employer hear them struggle with the answers.

A challenge not resolved in this project was managing the dynamics of assessing several migrant workers on one farm within the limited meeting time. One Training Advisor declined to trial the Tool for this reason, even though they had the greatest opportunity for using it. This combined with the pattern of potential NESB trainees not being evenly spread across Southland resulted in the trial being predominantly done by only two of the Training Advisor team. It also meant that significantly fewer trainees than expected were assessed with the Tool, which limited the scope for collecting data and feedback about its validity.

With the time pressure Training Advisors were under, they did not always complete all sections of the recording sheet, nor pass it on for collating its information. Both of these issues required follow up, to get as complete a record as possible.

One farmer observing the Tool in action thought it would give him a better indication of potential employees’ English language skill when interviewing for new staff. He was given a copy of the Enrolment Assessment Tool to use in this way.

RESULTING TRAINEE ENROLMENTS

At the first videoconference the Training Advisors’ confidence in using “gut instinct” along with the aspirations of farmers and workers for making training decisions had changed. Even after using the Tool with only a few people, the team had concluded that a level 2 course was nearly always the appropriate place for a NESB worker to start their training and that a level 4 course was hardly ever appropriate. Discussion in later videoconferences showed that this new awareness remained, even when not using the Tool. Training Advisors thought the Tool might provide useful leverage for them when trying to convince farmers or workers of the most appropriate course.

Enrolment patterns did not reflect this shift in thinking, with the majority of trainees still enrolled into level 3 qualifications and similar into level 4 and level 2. This enrolment pattern was similar to that of the Control group who were enrolled without using the Tool. Many of the students enrolled at levels 3 and 4 in both groups struggled with the demands of the

course. This reinforced the need to place trainees in courses where they are likely to succeed, which is what this project was aiming to support.

Control Group Enrolments (23 trainees): 26% at level 2; 57% at level 3; 17% at level 4.

Trial Group Enrolments (29 trainees): 24% at level 2; 52% at level 3; 24% at level 4.

The course level recommended by the Tool was in many cases different to what trainees were eventually enrolled into. Some individuals were placed in a higher level course and others a lower level course from what the Tool recommended.

Tool Recommendations: 30% at level 2; 44% at level 3; 15% at level 3 / 4; 11% at level 4.

Trial Group Enrolments: 24% at level 2; 52% at level 3; 24% at level 4.

A number of factors are likely to have caused this enrolment pattern, although their influence was not tested. Possibilities include: a lack of places available on level 2 courses so trainees are put into a level 3 course instead; farmer preference for training in higher level skills over-riding the Tool result; Training Advisors' preferring their gut instinct rather than the Tool's result; signals like hesitance not being mentioned in the Tool instructions and so being ignored in the analysis; courses at other levels needing more enrolments to be viable over-riding the Tool result; and trainee demand for a higher level qualification as there is a strong driver for migrants to gain a level 4 qualification to meet Immigration NZ's standard for residence. More extensive trialling of the Tool would be needed to identify which of these are important, which disappear as the experience of the Training Advisor grows, and which can be addressed by refining the Tool or its analysis instructions.

One option in the Tool analysis recommended either level 3 or 4 training, with the Training Advisor to decide which was more suitable. This flexibility appeared to work as anticipated for trainees in this category, as the same Training Advisor decided on different training depending on their situation for example, farmer input influenced the decision in one case, and ignoring the immigration driver influenced another.

Although some patterns were evident in the results collected, with the unexpectedly small numbers of trainees involved in the trial this is not a robust indication of the Enrolment Assessment Tool's reliability. (See Appendix 1: Enrolment Assessment Tool Data).

ENROLMENT SUITABILITY OBSERVATIONS

- The success of trainees in level 3 and 4 courses varies widely from passing no assessments to passing all of them. With this pattern across such a small sample size, an average percentage would not be meaningful.
- Trainees enrolled in a level 2 course do well regardless of whether this decision was made with or without the Enrolment Assessment Tool. This may be due to the larger practical component of these courses making the theory easier to assimilate.
- The results indicate that trainees with a level 2 Tool recommendation will struggle in a level 3 course. One trainee was an exception to this, with their assessment results and tutor observations indicating they were more suited to a level 3 course. This case was the first attempt with the Tool for one Training Advisor, and so is likely to reflect its newness. Continued trialling of the Tool would better indicate the frequency of such an occurrence and whether any adjustment to the Tool's analysis parameters is required to avoid it.

- The Tool reliably indicated when a student was suitable for level 4 training. Those where level 4 was recommended, or where the Training Advisor judged this appropriate from a level 3/4 recommendation were successful.
- The Control Group performed better at level 3 than those for whom the Tool recommended this level of training. Tutor observations suggest that many trainees enrolled at this level 3 did not actually have sufficient English skills to manage the training. Continued trialing of the Tool is needed to determine if this mismatch was due to inexperience in using it, or whether some refinement of the analysis parameters is needed.
- Some Training Advisors' comments show that they noticed signals of limited English flexibility, but that the trainee was still recommended for a level 3 course eg "*slow and deliberate in speech*" or "*very hesitant before answering could tell he was processing what was being asked*" suggest someone would struggle with the language demands at level 3. Being able to look back from the eventual success of each trainee would better equip Training Advisors to recognise and interpret these sorts of signals. The analysis portion of the Tool may need to identify and consider such signals.
- Through the course of the project Training Advisors acquired an understanding of the need to move quickly through the assessment rather than more slowly extracting all knowledge from trainees. The latter approach would give an artificially high result, and is likely to have contributed to some of the inappropriate level 3 recommendations.
- English language ability is not the only factor determining success in the classroom. The inability of some cultures to ask questions hinders their understanding and progress, while those from other cultures who do ask questions are better able to compensate for their limited English.

FLOW-ON RESULTS

The tools and findings of this project have already been discussed with a number of organisations and individuals who have an interest in the assimilation and success of migrants:

- The Office of Ethnic Affairs' Intercultural Advisory team has taken a copy of the Enrolment Assessment Tool. They have discussed the challenges for migrant workers in industry training with the AgITO. They are intending to meet with other key industry stakeholders to offer support and explore options for a wider approach to working with migrant dairy farm employees.
- Immigration New Zealand has a project preparing a toolkit for dairy farmers who employ migrant workers. The Project Co-ordinator and Rural Women New Zealand's representative have taken copies of the Enrolment Assessment Tool, in case an adapted version for fathers was useful.
- Rural Women New Zealand is considering how they can use the tools and information from this project to equip farmers to support their NESB employees, including training them to operate safely on farm.
- An overview of this project has been given to DairyNZ who represent dairy farmers.
- A copy of the Enrolment Assessment Tool has been given to a Lincoln PhD student about to commence research in the area of dairy farms using migrant labour.

A short trial is about to commence, using two current training groups in Invercargill and Ashburton. The Enrolment Assessment Tool will be used with all migrants in these classes, and those with any result other than level 4 will be given support in and out of class by

English Language Partners. The impact of this extra support will be noted at the end of the training course, and used to consider the ongoing viability of this sort of intervention.

CONCLUSIONS

1. Those with direct responsibility for NESB migrants in an industry must want to change how they are working with them, otherwise the extra activity required to trial new options will not be completed. The enthusiasm of other involved parties cannot compensate for this.
2. The final version of the Enrolment Assessment Tool takes the desired 10 – 15 minutes, and is usable by assessors who are neither education nor ESOL experts.
3. Preparation of Training Advisors to use the Tool needs to give them an understanding of how it works, how to use it, and that it is not a comprehensive test of vocabulary.
4. Other barriers or drivers can affect the use of the Tool and the application of its results. Immigration NZ's level 4 qualification benchmark for New Zealand residence is a strong driver which impacts on NESB workers' attitude towards different levels of training, operating outside the expected factors of industry and language knowledge.
5. The Enrolment Assessment Tool provides a framework beyond "gut feeling" for considering the suitability of NESB migrant workers for different levels of training.
6. Challenges with trialing the Enrolment Assessment Tool sufficiently mean that only tentative conclusions about its accuracy and usefulness could be reached in this project. This does not detract from the potential usefulness of the Tool for agricultural industry training, but further trialing is needed to validate and refine these conclusions.
7. The Tool reliably indicated when a trainee should be enrolled in Level 2 or Level 4 training. Those enrolled following this recommendation were succeeding in their training.
8. The Tool needs more trialing and possibly refining to demonstrate similar reliability for level 3 training.
9. English language ability is not the only factor determining success in the classroom. The inability of some cultures to ask questions hinders their understanding and progress, compared with those who do ask questions in spite of having limited English skills.

RECOMMENDATIONS

FOR THE AGRICULTURE INDUSTRY

While the Enrolment Assessment Tool appears to give a useful indication of suitable training for a NESB trainee, this was not demonstrated sufficiently in this project. To do so AgITO Training Advisors would need to continue trialling the Tool. This would enable linking back the eventual study success of trainees to how they performed with the Enrolment Assessment Tool. The accuracy of the Tool's recommendation and its impact on trainees' success may also increase with Training Advisors' growing skill and confidence to translate their assessment observations into a training choice.

The AgITO will consider making the Enrolment Assessment Tool available to their other branches and Training Advisors. If the AgITO decides to further trial or adopt this Tool, they will need to resolve how to accommodate it within farm visits along with the other tasks to be completed. This discussion would need to include managing dynamics when there are several NESB workers to be assessed, and the increased discomfort that can result from the farmer being present during the assessment.

Training for Training Advisors needs to ensure they understand how the Enrolment Assessment Tool has been constructed and how each section contributes to a picture of someone's English language skills. They also need to be confident to use the Tool quickly and lightly. This may require things like role plays or direct support when first using the Tool, to overcome the inclination to focus on the actual vocabulary.

The Enrolment Assessment Tool may continue to be used as an indicator of language support intervention requirements, beyond the trial of this commencing in two classes.

The Enrolment Assessment Tool could easily be adapted for farmers to identify the English language skills of their NESB staff. This variant of the Tool would use colour coded results to indicate the level of support an employee would require to understand and communicate effectively. Support and language development suggestions could be part of the training package available to farmers using such a Tool.

Agribusiness Training could use this Tool when enrolling NESB students into its own training, although it has very few international students at present.

FOR OTHER INDUSTRIES

The Enrolment Assessment Tool produced and information learned from this project will be applicable to any other industry with a significant NESB migrant workforce. The same issues with English language flexibility impacting on training success, and the pressure for qualifications to meet immigration requirements or employer needs will exist. The Tool could easily be adapted for use in another industry, replacing the vocabulary in it with the equivalent type of words relevant to that industry.

To successfully adopt the Enrolment Assessment Tool in a different industry, some findings of this project would be important:

- Training of the Training Advisors who will use the Tool is critical to ensure they understand why it is constructed as it is, and that it is not a comprehensive vocabulary test.
- Training Advisors need support when they begin using the Tool, as it can seem counter-intuitive to glide quickly through the assessment rather than exploring individual words with trainees.
- Consider the logistics of using the Enrolment Assessment Tool in meetings with employers and their staff. Eg how it will be fitted in along with other demands, how it will be managed with several NESB employees at one site, and how to overcome anxiety when someone's employer is present.

The Enrolment Assessment Tool could easily be adapted into an interviewing tool for employers in any industry, helping them to better support their NESB migrant workers. The Tool vocabulary would need to be replaced with the equivalent type of words relevant to the industry involved.

APPENDICES

1. APPENDIX 1: Enrolment Assessment Tool Data

ENROLMENT ASSESSMENT TOOL DATA

TOOL USED PRE-ENROLMENT

Qualification level trainees enrolled in		Qualification level Tool recommended		Successful unit standards completion (%)	Tutor observations
Level	Trainee numbers	Level	Trainee numbers		
Level 2	4	Level 2	3	1 @ 100%	Two trainees' courses have just started, so they have not yet been assessed. The other is doing very well.
		Level 3	1	1 @ 100%	This trainee is doing very well.
Level 3	11	Level 2	3	1 @ 100% 1 @ 33% 1 @ 0%	One trainee is at the right level in a level 3 course, and is completing everything. The other two have poor English and are struggling.
		Level 3	6	1 @ 100% 6 @ 0%	Most of these trainees have very little English and would struggle even in a level 2 course, or some have reasonable English but don't ask for help.
		Level 3/4	2	1 @ 100% 1 @ 0%	One trainee is completing everything successfully. Their English is not so good, but they ask for help. The other has the goal of finishing a level 4 qualification, but they are struggling with level 3.
Level 4	5	Level 3	2	1 @ 50% 1 @ 0%	Trainees are really struggling. One has erratic attendance and has completed no assessments.
		Level 3/4	2	1 @ 100%	One trainee's course has just started, and so they have not been assessed yet. The other is studying by distance, passing everything, and will definitely complete the qualification.

		Level 4	1	1 @ 60%	At the right level, understands well and helps other students.
None	7	One trainee delayed enrolment. One trainee waiting for a visa. Two trainees enrolled in short courses with another training provider. Three trainees with no explanation.			
27 Total					

TOOL USED POST-ENROLMENT

Qualification level trainees enrolled in		Qualification level Tool recommended		Successful unit standards completion (%)	Tutor observations
Level	Trainee numbers	Level	Trainee numbers		
Level 3	4	Level 2	2	1 @ 17% 1 @ 0%	Really struggling, and should be in a level 2 course instead. Resits of assessments show no improvement of understanding.
		Level 3	2	1 @ 33% 1 @ 0%	One trainee is asking a lot of questions in class, but has limited farming knowledge to help them with their studies. The other is struggling, but doesn't ask for help.
Level 4	2	Level 3	1	1 @ 60%	Requires a lot of help from other students and the tutor to pass assessments, gets confused in class.
		Level 4	1	1 @ 100%	This trainee is doing well.
6 Total					

TOOL NOT USED (CONTROL)

Qualification level trainees enrolled in		Successful unit standards completion (%)	Tutor observations
Level	Trainee numbers		
Level 2	6	6 @ 100%	Trainees are doing well, with the practical nature of this training enabling them to better understand theory training.
Level 3	13	5 @ 100% 1 @ 75% 1 @ 50% 3 @ 33% 3 @ 0%	Non-Filipino trainees ask questions in class which enables them to do better in spite of their limited English. Three trainees had cheated and were unable to replicate the assessments orally, failing the course.
Level 4	4	1 @ 100% 1 @ 43% 2 @ 0%	Two trainees withdrew, one is struggling, and one is doing extremely well. The successful trainee does not have good English, but asks lots of questions.
	23 Total		

2. APPENDIX 2: Enrolment Assessment Tool – Trainee Copy

ENROLMENT ASSESSMENT TOOL

for dairy farm trainees

This exercise is not an English test. It is to help you, your farmer and the Training Advisor find the training level where you will be able to study successfully.

If you are enrolled in a level that is too difficult, you will not get the qualification.

Go through each of the questions and tell your Training Advisor the answer.

If you don't know the answer, don't worry. Just continue to the next word.

Part A

How many of these words do you understand?	Tell the Training Advisor the meaning
1. Antibiotic	
2. Drench	
3. Clover	
4. Effluent	
5. In-calf	
6. Pasture cover	
7. Silage	
8. Forecast	

Part B

These words have two <i>different</i> meanings in New Zealand English.	Tell the Training Advisor two different meanings
1. Concentrate	
2. Shut up	
3. Skin	
4. Cups	
5. Break	
6. Empty	
7. Slip	

3. APPENDIX 3: Enrolment Assessment Tool – Training Advisor Copy

ENROLMENT ASSESSMENT TOOL

AgITO Training Advisor copy

This tool does not test the extent of a trainee's English vocabulary, but gives information on their competence in using English flexibly. This covers skills like describing in their own words, recognising words with more than one meaning and moving words between different contexts, all of which trainees will need to succeed in formal training.

Do not prompt trainees to help them find answers, as their English processing is just as important as the word itself. If they can't get started on an answer in 10 seconds or so, just gently move on to the next word. The "processing speed" will give you information about the trainee's fluency in English.

Observe the trainee as they answer the questions, and describe anything you notice in the Comments section of the recording sheet.

Part A

If you have time, get the trainee to tell you their answer. If not, ask them to indicate Yes/No to their understanding of each of the words, and keep a score in your head.

How many of these words do you understand? Tell the Training Advisor the meaning	<i>One point per word.</i> <i>Accept any definition that you judge to be clear and accurate.</i>
9. Antibiotic	Medicine to cure infections
10. Drench	Liquid medication given to animals
11. Clover	A common pasture plant
12. Effluent	Liquid animal waste
13. In-calf	Pregnant
14. Pasture cover	Amount of feed/grass in the paddock
15. Silage	Pickled grass stored in plastic covered bales or stacks.
16. Forecast	Future prediction e.g. the weather or payouts
Total out of 8 for Part A	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Part B

If the trainee scored **less than four** in Part A, **skip this section**.

(Part A has already indicated that their English skill is probably in the yellow band).

<p>These words have two different meanings in New Zealand English.</p> <p>Tell the Training Advisor two meanings</p>	<p><i>One point per word.</i></p> <p><i>Accept any definition that you judge to be clear and accurate.</i></p>
<p>8. Concentrate</p>	<p>Think hard</p> <p>Cereal –based high energy feed</p> <p>Strong form of a liquid or powder (e.g. medication or herbicide)</p>
<p>9. Shut up</p>	<p>Enclose</p> <p>Be quiet</p> <p>Keep a paddock for hay or silage</p>
<p>10. Skin</p>	<p>Covers the body</p> <p>To take the skin off</p>
<p>11. Cups</p>	<p>For drinking out of</p> <p>For milking</p>
<p>12. Break</p>	<p>A fracture</p> <p>Time off work</p> <p>A fenced off strip of feed</p>
<p>13. Empty</p>	<p>To pour out the contents</p> <p>Contains nothing</p> <p>A cow that is not pregnant</p>
<p>14. Slip</p>	<p>To slide on a smooth surface</p> <p>A fallen section of a hill</p> <p>To abort a calf</p>
<p>Total out of 7 for Part B</p>	<p>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</p>

Part C

Consider how you found communicating with this trainee, and also ask the boss how easily the trainee deals with conversation and instructions.

1. This trainee understands what I say with no problems **Yes** **so so** **no**
2. I have no trouble understanding this trainee **Yes** **so so** **no**
3. The farmer indicates the trainee easily understands spoken language and instructions **Yes** **so so** **no**

SUM UP:

Part A (out of 8) **1 2 3 4** **5 6** **7 8**

Part B (out of 7) **1 2** **3 4 5** **6 7**

Part C one colour score for each question (3 questions)

PLACEMENT RECOMMENDATION:

- 4 or 5 subtotals in the **red** band? **LEVEL 4**
- 2 **blue** subtotals, 3 **red** subtotals? *Use your judgement.* **LEVEL 3** or **LEVEL 4**
- 3 **blue** subtotals, 2 **red** subtotals? **LEVEL 3**
- 4 or 5 subtotals in the **blue** band? **LEVEL 3**
- 2 or more subtotals in the **yellow** band? **LEVEL 2**

Last updated 6-4-2011 Charlotte Heather, and Dorothy Thwaite

4. APPENDIX 4: Tool Use Recording Sheet

ENROLMENT ASSESSMENT TOOL RECORDING SHEET

Trainee Name				
Part A (8 words, 1 meaning)				
Part B (7 words, 2 meanings)				
Part C1 They understand me				
Part C2 I understand them				
Part C3 Farmer understands them				
Tool qualification level				
Qualification enrolled in				
Course Code				
Comments:				

5. APPENDIX 5: Training to use the Enrolment Assessment Tool

USING THE ENROLMENT ASSESSMENT TOOL: TRAINING OUTLINE

Outcomes

Those who complete the training will:

1. Be familiar with the background and rationale for the assessment tool.
2. Be familiar with the sections and purpose of the assessment tool.
3. Understand the marking schedule.
4. Be confident to appropriately use the assessment tool in various situations.
5. Understand the system for recording results of the assessment tool.
6. Be able to explain to trainees and employers why this tool is useful (if required).

Format for a training session (face to face, video conference, or Skype)

1. Ensure each participant has two copies of the Enrolment Assessment Tool: the trainee's version and the Training Advisor's version with the marking schedule. Outline the reason for developing this tool, which is to improve accurate placement of trainees in levels 2, 3, or 4 of training, to get a quick but reasonably accurate measure of the trainee's confidence in English.
2. Discuss how the content has been constructed, that the tool is largely based on vocabulary recognition and knowledge. This is a quick way of predicting with reasonable accuracy a person's independence in language. The selected words are from two different word lists: the most frequently occurring words in general English; and the most frequently occurring words in NZ dairy farming. Trainees need some knowledge of both types of language if they are to have a reasonable chance of success in their qualifications. Reinforce that this is not a comprehensive vocabulary test, but that the Tool uses a sample of words as indicators of English language skill.
3. Look through the vocabulary sections and make sure Training Advisors are happy with the definitions and marking. Trainees can just give a synonym or very brief explanation, it doesn't have to be a whole sentence. No writing is involved as this will take too long - the assessment shouldn't take more than ten minutes.
4. Discuss how to conduct the assessment – gliding quickly over words the trainee doesn't know, not continuing to the second vocabulary section if they are having difficulty, and not assisting them to find answers for words even if they seem obvious.
5. Discuss the section on Communication - how to make a professional judgement based on a brief interaction with the trainee, on observations of how they tackled the assessment questions, and the employer's observations. Take nervousness into account, but remember that a nervous trainee will have more chance of succeeding if training for a lower level qualification, at least initially.

6. Discuss ways of keeping score and recording the result. There is a paper recording sheet that some Training Advisors find useful, while others prefer to use a notebook.
7. Share thoughts on time pressure – the assessment is a balance of not putting too much pressure on the trainee while not allowing it to take more than 10-15 minutes. A trainee who needs longer than this also needs to be enrolled in training for a lower level qualification.
8. Wind up by checking if there are any questions, and have Training Advisors practice taking each other through the Tool. This enables reinforcement of the approach when conducting an assessment.

Offer ongoing contact/discussion/support via email.

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