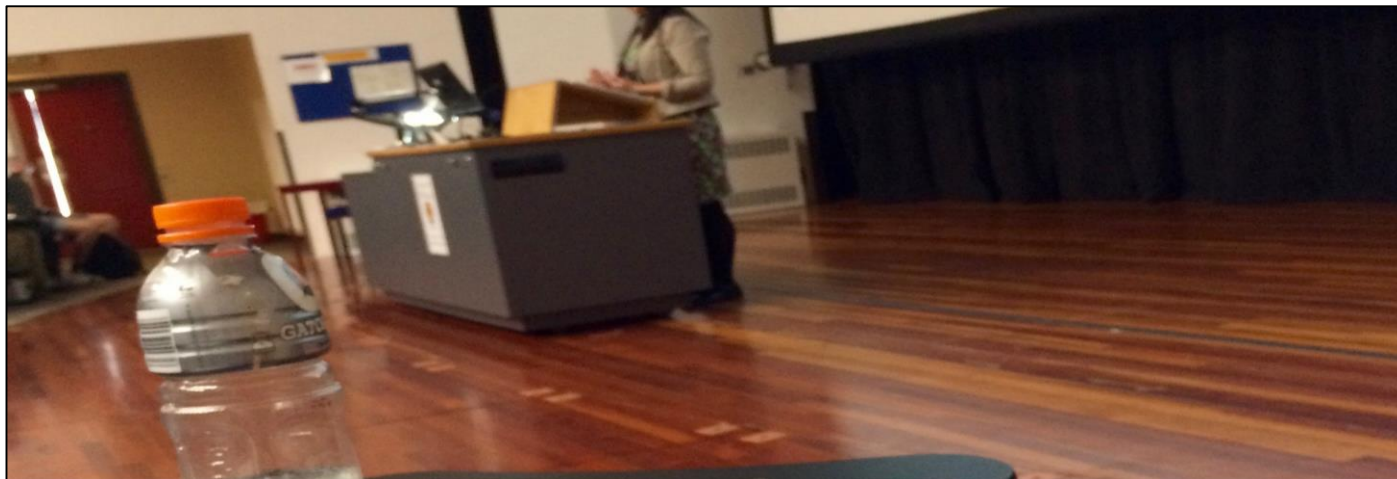


# What do 'good teaching' and 'effective learning' look like at university?

Insights from international (and other) students

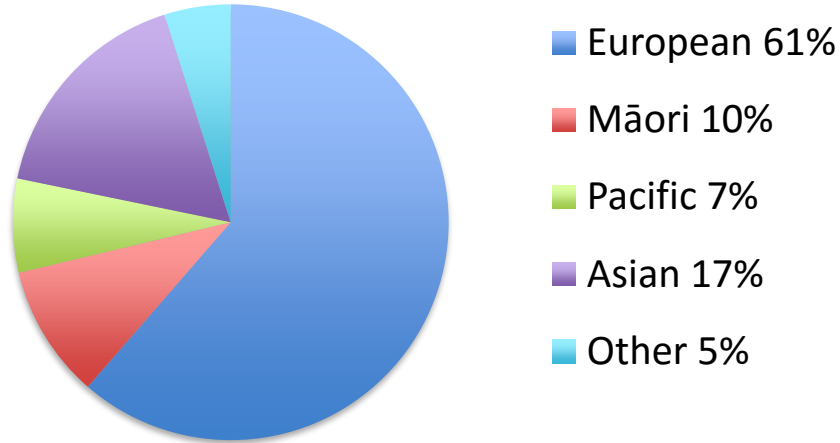


Vivienne Anderson, Ana Rangi, Esmay Eteuati, Rob Wass,  
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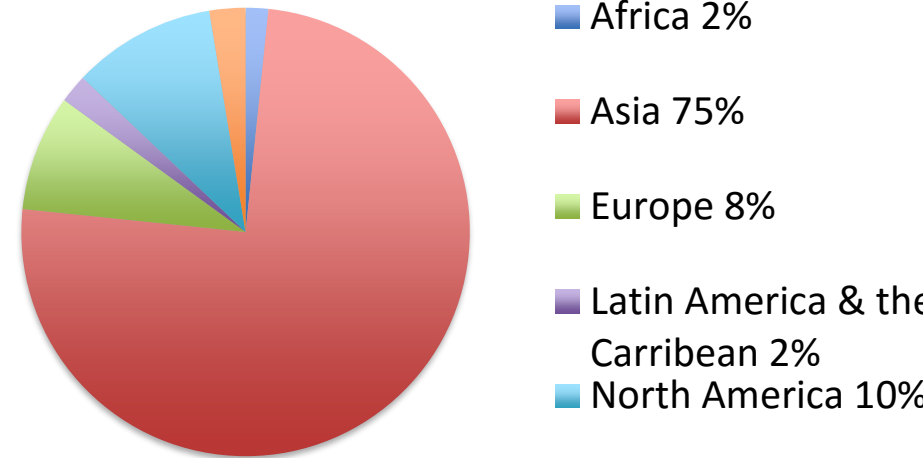
# The study context

'Local' university students  
in NZ 2015



(<https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/statistics/tertiary-education/participation>)

International students in NZ  
HE by region of citizenship  
2015



(<https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/statistics/tertiary-education/participation>)



# The Good Teaching project

## *What we did:*

a pilot project exploring 33 high-achieving Humanities students' conceptions of 'good teaching' and 'effective learning' at university

## *How we did it:*

2 focus group sessions, 1 week apart (4-7 students per group), using:

- open ended questions

- critical incident technique (Flanagan, 1954)

- 'photovoice' (Burris, 1997; Wang, 2006)

Participants recruited through Māori & Pacific student support networks, Student Learning, the International Office & departments

## 7 focus groups

- 7 Māori, 6 Pacific, 9 international, and 11 (other) local students

- 17 undergrad & 16 postgrad students

# The Good Teaching project

*Why we did it:*

1. to foreground diverse students' voices, recognising their complexity & fluidity, & remaining open to similarities & differences  
(Bullen & Kenway, 2003; Doherty & Singh, 2005; Madge, Raghuram & Noxolo, 2009)
2. to compare data collection approaches
3. to develop a staff-researcher network spanning student support & academic development profiles

# Photography task guide

(Adapted from Wang & Burris, 1997)

Your task is to take 4 photos over a week that you can then share with your focus group, which:

- represent what good teaching is for you (what you think of as good teaching in a university setting), AND/OR
- how you learn effectively at university, or what you think effective learning looks like.

You can focus on lectures, tutorials or both. You may take more than 4 photographs, but you can choose a maximum of 4 to share with your focus group.

As a photographer, you are a researcher. Here are some things to think about:

1. How might you use photographs of *things* or *places* to represent your ideas (not just people)?
2. If you want to photograph *people*, what is an acceptable way to approach them to take their picture?
3. Is it acceptable to include people in your photographs without asking their permission? (If so, when, and in what ways?)
4. How could you take photographs of people while maintaining their anonymity?
5. What criteria might you use to evaluate the photographs? (How might you choose which photographs to share?)

# The research team



Key findings (so far)

# *First focus group discussion*

## Good teachers are...

- approachable & easy to relate to
- passionate about their subject area – authoritative but humble
- enthusiastic & interested in students
- well prepared, but flexible
- open to students' diversity & students' ideas
- clear, coherent, & precise communicators
- explicit about their expectations & availability

# Good teachers support learning by...

- making an effort to get to know students
- challenging students to think critically
- having a clear 'storyline' that "takes students along with them"
- linking content to 'real world' experiences & examples, & to students' prior knowledge
- asking questions; eliciting & affirming students' participation
- proactively promoting discussion
- using humour appropriately & in a way that is genuine
- using a range of technologies to support their teaching

# International students: good teachers...

- are empathetic
- do not make assumptions about international students
- promote positive & respectful classroom (& group) relationships
- communicate clearly & constructively
  - structure questions in ways that allow students to answer them
  - avoid unnecessary repetition
  - avoid providing very negative feedback
  - avoid trying to cover too much content
  - avoid unnecessary jargon
  - ensure consistency between class content & the course outline
- provide opportunities for 1:1 student-teacher interaction
- provide access to materials that support students' independent study

# Photovoice

*Second focus group discussion*



# Good teaching & effective learning involve partnership

“It’s not a lonely process...I need to learn and he needs to teach or she needs to teach. It’s like teamwork.”

(International PG)

A pair of blue and black sneakers is shown from a top-down perspective, resting on a blue carpet. The sneakers have blue laces and a black toe cap. The background is a solid blue color.

Good teaching involves ‘putting yourself  
in the students’ shoes’

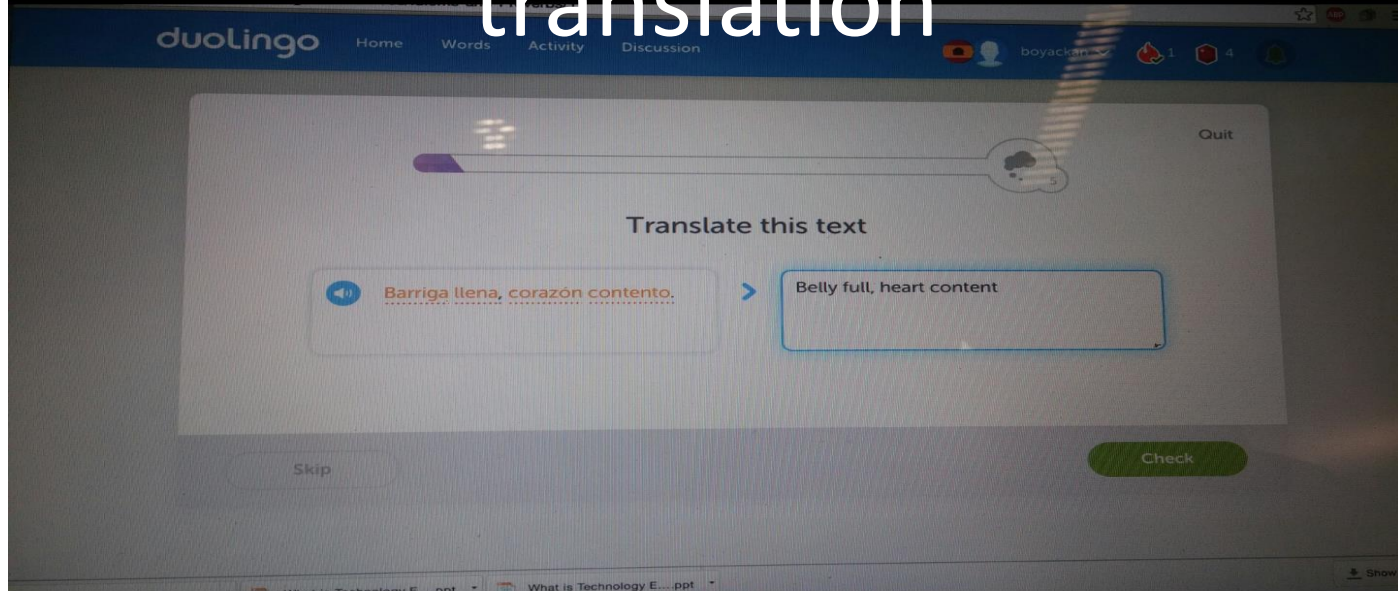
“Some things are...not easy to teach and [you] need...to be able, [to] put yourself into someone else’s shoes sometimes and even to have the same perspective the student has.... I think [being a lecturer] is a really privileged position...he has the power because he has the knowledge...” (International PG)

A close-up photograph of a dartboard mounted on a wooden wall. The dartboard is black with white, green, and red rings. The numbers 1 through 20 are visible around the perimeter. A single dart with a blue and red head is embedded in the center bullseye. The name 'MCRICKS' is written in gold on the black board. The background is a light-colored wooden wall.

Good teaching promotes new ways of seeing things

“There’s something about a lecturer who presents you with something and gives you space to observe it yourself but then actually teaches you and shows you...this is more important than what you originally thought...how a lecturer reshapes my focus.” (Local PG)

# Good teaching is a form of translation



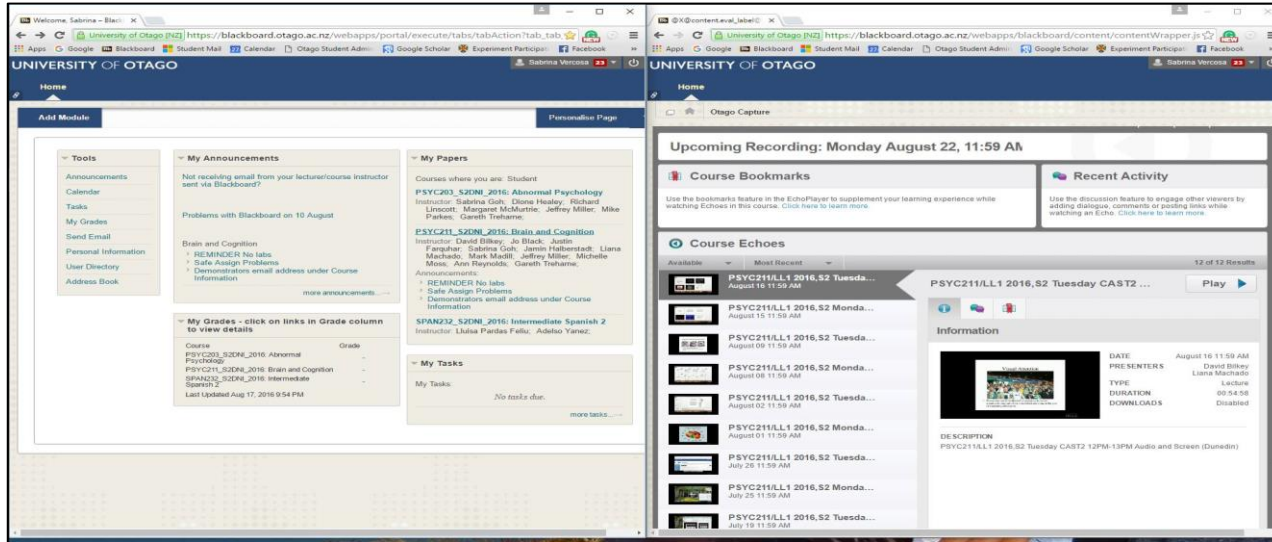
“...a good teacher knows how to talk your language, knows how to speak to you ... and then you can understand.” (Local UG)



Good teaching  
allows students  
time to understand  
before moving on

“It has to be taught in a way that you can understand it before moving on to other parts..... It’s like sitting on the information, because... once it’s new to you, you kind of need to like just sit there for a while.....I think of it as like marinating...for the flavour to be good, you can’t just chuck sauce on top of it and then eat it straight away. You’ve got to let it soak.” (Local UG)

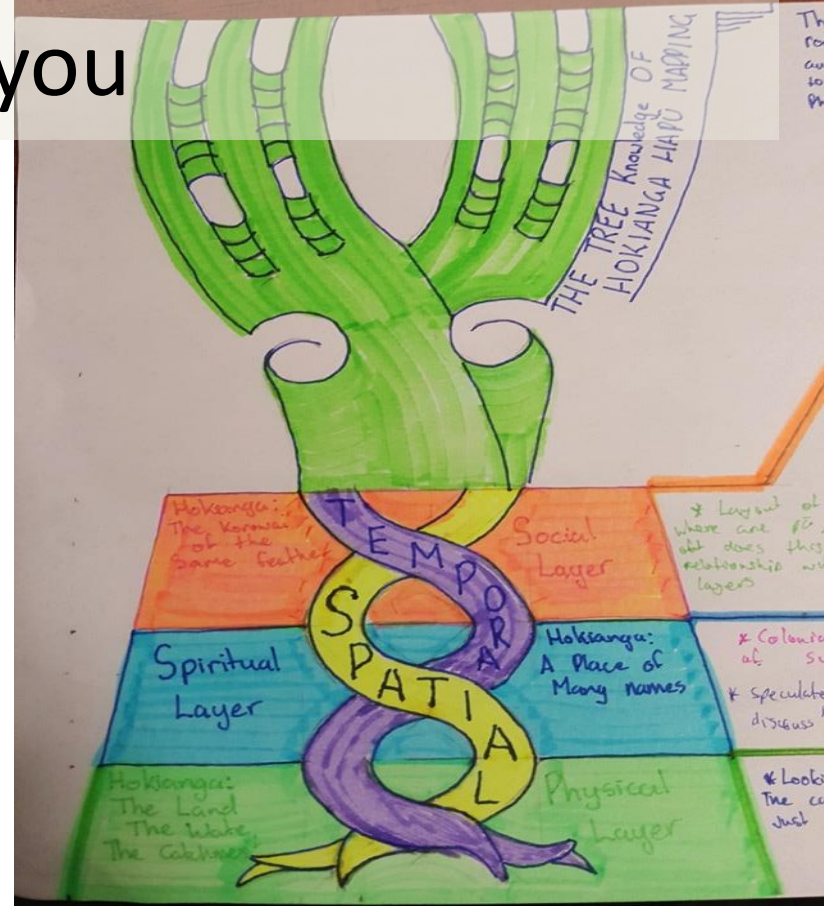
# Effective learning involves mitigating communication problems



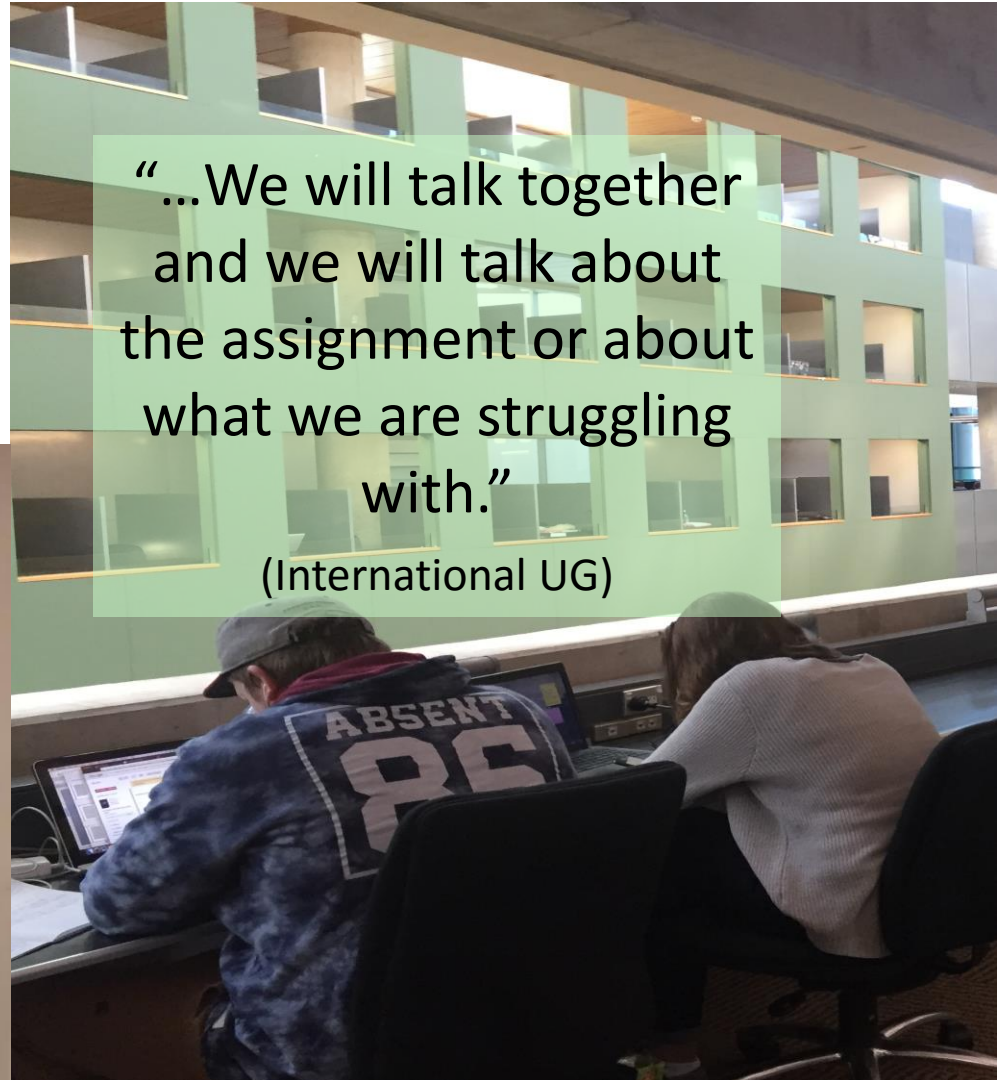
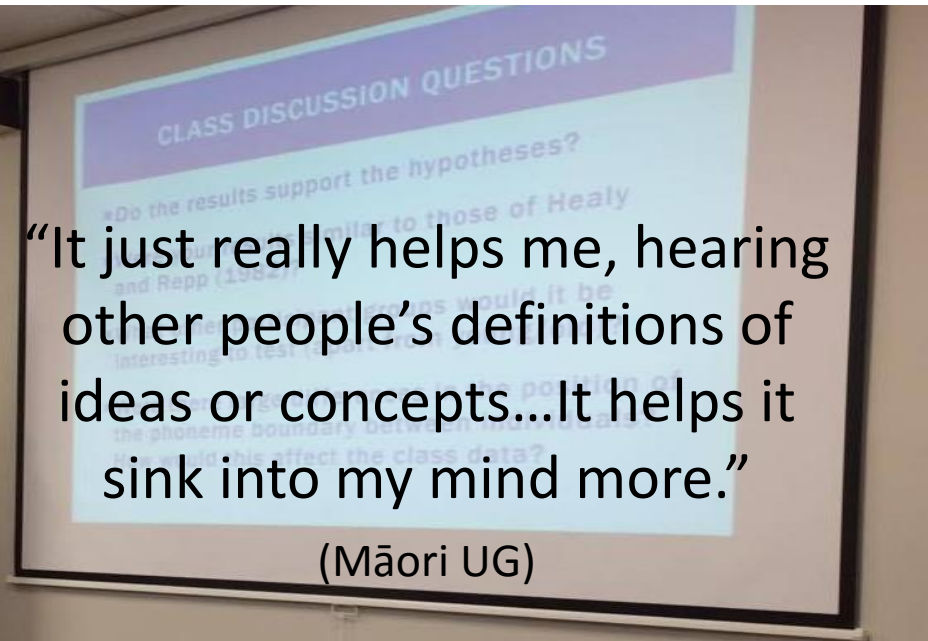
“[My lecturer is] on the go and...she changes the slides...really quickly and, and like I haven’t even read that slide. So podcast is amazing...I can pause it and I can go back on her voice.” (International PG)

# Effective learning involves knowing what works for you

“I’m...quite a visual person. I need to see things in order to learn...and also...the picture’s taken in a...safe place or more peaceful place .... I kind of went away from my office to work in a more comfortable area.” (Māori PG)



# Effective learning involves communicating with peers



# Effective learning involves pausing



(International UG)



(Pacific UG)

“I think that we get to a point that you just don’t learn any more, if you just keep going and going, you stop learning. So take a break and then go back fresh to it.” (International UG)

(International UG)

# Preliminary conclusions

- Good university teachers are good communicators who are committed to their subject area, teaching, & students
- Teaching approaches that help EAL & all students are:
  - ✓ modifying our pace
  - ✓ avoiding unnecessary jargon & unnecessary detail
  - ✓ being clear, precise & concise, in both verbal & written material
  - ✓ ensuring that spoken & written material aligns
  - ✓ facilitating discussion; asking & inviting questions (*listening well!*)
  - ✓ supporting students' access to revision tools
  - ✓ not making assumptions about students, or particular groups of students

“Please be direct and to the point. Don’t use too many words that are unnecessary words and...let us know what you expect we need to know because sometimes there is so much talking and talking and talking and talking and talking of irrelevant information that [is] not exactly things that we actually need to know and...it makes you confused”.

(International UG student, focus group 2)

# Preliminary conclusions

- Students' so-called language problems may indicate the presence of *teaching* problems (Anderson, 2014)
- Some things to reflect on:
  - ✓ how well do I communicate (*translate...listen...tell stories*)?
  - ✓ how might I build communicative opportunities into my teaching  
*(teacher:student, student:student)*
  - ✓ how can I build students' communicative confidence through my demeanour, teaching, course material, & feedback?
  - ✓ do I 'respect the pause'?

Questions?

A young child in a red hoodie is running on a grassy field. The child is in motion, and the background is slightly blurred, suggesting a shallow depth of field. The child's face is partially visible, looking towards the right. The overall scene is bright and outdoors.

# Thanks to...

- the research team
- our research participants
- Ako Aotearoa (funding provider)

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