



NEW ZEALAND

SIGN LANGUAGE

TUTORS ASSOCIATION

nga kaiako reo-a-ringa o aotearoa

FACT SHEET

BRITISH SIGN LANGUAGE AND NEW ZEALAND SIGN LANGUAGE

According to the last New Zealand Census, there are approximately 27,285 people in New Zealand who use New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL), making it the third most used language in the country.

The “birth” of NZSL can be traced back to the first school for the Deaf in New Zealand, founded near Christchurch. The school is now known as “Van Asch Deaf Education Centre”.

Traces of similarities can be found between British Sign Language (BSL) and NZSL, as well as Australian Sign Language (Auslan). This is due to the close location between New Zealand and Australia. The similarities found between NZSL and Auslan with BSL is due to the high number of Britain immigrants, which has brought their influence. Some people like to believe that BSL is the “mother language” of NZSL and Auslan.

A research conducted by scholars at the Victoria University of Wellington discovered that 62.5% of NZSL signs are same as BSL. Auslan and NZSL hold a higher similarity rate, at 65.5% while American Sign Language has the least similarity of all four languages – 33%.

However, despite the high percentage of similar signs, New Zealand Sign Language is still a different language from British Sign Language. NZSL has its own vocabulary, grammar rules, structures, and manner of signing. Fluent BSL users will still need time to adjust to a new language NZSL and New Zealand English, as well as New Zealand culture.

Tutors / teachers of Sign Language will need to obtain the correct qualifications before they can teach either NZSL or BSL. For further information, contact New Zealand Sign Language Tutors Association (NZSLTA). **Certificate in Deaf Studies: Teaching NZSL** is the minimum teaching qualification. For further information on the certificate, contact Rachel McKee, Programme Co-ordinator, Deaf Studies, School of Linguistics and Applied Language Studies, Victoria University of Wellington at rachel.mckee@vuw.ac.nz.

For further information on interpreter training programme, **Diploma in Sign Language Interpreting** and **Certificate in NZSL and Deaf Studies** are provided. Contact Shizue Sameshima, the Programme Co-ordinator of Visual Languages Section, Auckland University of Technology at shizue.sameshima@aut.ac.nz.

For further information on working in New Zealand as a NZSL interpreter, refer to Sign Language Interpreters Association of New Zealand (SLIANZ) www.slianz.org.nz.

INFORMATION PROVIDED BY
NEW ZEALAND SIGN LANGUAGE TUTORS ASSOCIATION (INC)

www.nzslta.org.nz

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