



**University of  
South Australia**

**Exploring effective, sustainable strategies in teaching Learning  
English: Achievement and Proficiency (LEAP) levels**

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# Context

Preservice (PST) and postgraduate (PG) students

- TESOL in Practice: Preservice teachers, students - all or most of their prior learning experiences in Australia
- TESOL Approaches and Strategies course: PG-students all or most of their prior learning in a linguistic and cultural environment that was not of their primary socialisation, from e.g., China, India, Vietnam, Brazil, Pakistan
- LEAP levelling instrument

<https://www.education.sa.gov.au/schools-and-educators/curriculum-and-teaching/curriculum-programs/english-additional-language-or-dialect-program>

# Challenge

- Explore and identify effective, sustainable strategies and resources to teach the LEAP (Learning English: Achievement and Proficiency) assessment tool to undergraduate and postgraduate students.

The base:

In South Australia, teachers are required to use LEAP assessment tool to:

- Identify the needs of English as Additional Language or dialect (EALD)
- Support the English Literacy development of EALD students in primary and secondary schools
- Analyse written texts

PSTs need a strong knowledge about language (KAL) from an SFG perspective

# **KAL (Knowledge about Language) is central to using LEAP**

“ [preservice] Teachers need knowledge about language and tools to analyse language to understand the demands their subject matter poses to students, to support their students’ literacy development and to critically approach the texts they use” (Achugar, Schleppegrell, and Otei'za 2007, p. 8).

“For teachers, a metalanguage for talking about how knowledge is constructed... in their subject is a prerequisite for making the link between the “content” and the language through which it is construed” (Achugar, Schleppegrell, and Otei'za 2007, p. 11).

## ACARA clearly identifies PSTs need to have KAL, in the language strand of the Curriculum: English Foundation to Year 10,

- “students develop their knowledge of the English language and how it works... They discover the patterns and purposes of English usage, including spelling, grammar and punctuation at the levels of the word, sentence and extended text, and they study the connections between these levels.
- By developing a body of knowledge about these patterns and their connections, students learn to communicate effectively through coherent, well-structured sentences and texts. They gain a consistent way of understanding and talking about language, language in use and language as system, so they can reflect on their own speaking and writing and discuss these productively with others” (ACARA 2012).

## Further...

- Not sole responsibility of language specialists to identify needs of and support the English literacy development of EALD learners in primary and secondary schools
- This is the responsibility of all teachers across all learning areas
- This “implies that initial teacher education (ITE) programs need to equip pre-service teachers (PSTs) with core knowledge about not only the nature of language but also about how that language is best supported within key learning areas [ACARA], 2012)”

(Ollerhead S, 2018, p.257).

# From KAL to Pedagogical Language Knowledge (PLK)

Based on the work of Galguera (2011), Bunch (2013, p.298 ) argues

- all teachers [and I maintain all PSTs] have “pedagogical language knowledge(PLK) ....knowledge of language directly related to discipline[es]...in the particular (and multiple) contexts in which teaching and learning take[s] place.”

## Equity

“This attention to the language and literacy demands of core curriculum content is a vital component of pedagogical content knowledge, **and is essential for ensuring accessible and equitable education for EAL students...**

**[and]...**

...if EAL students do not possess the linguistic skills required to engage in the discussion necessary for scientific enquiry, for example, they will consequently struggle with academic reasoning in the Science classroom” (Ollerhead, S p257/258 in Echevarria, Vogt, and Short, 2004).



## 5- week intervention: Underpinned by turnaround pedagogies

Weekly: Explicit teaching - SFG and student reflections

**Introduction to  
SFL  
Genre Field  
Tenor Mode**

**Pre-  
intervention  
test  
SFG**

**Video 1  
Demonstration  
assigning of a  
LEAP level**

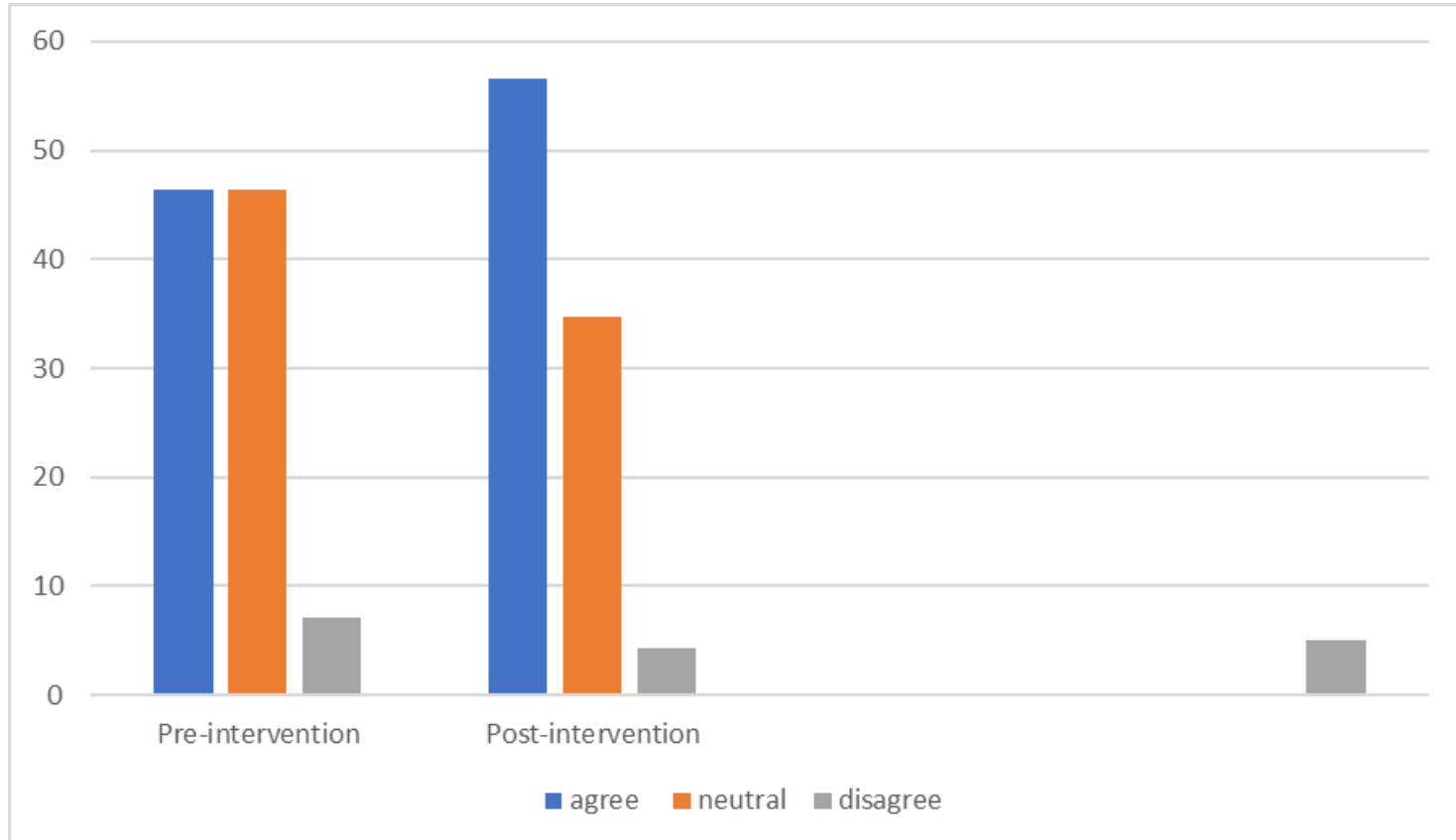
**In class  
Practice  
levelling**

**Video 2  
Teaching  
focal points  
Targeted  
Strategies**

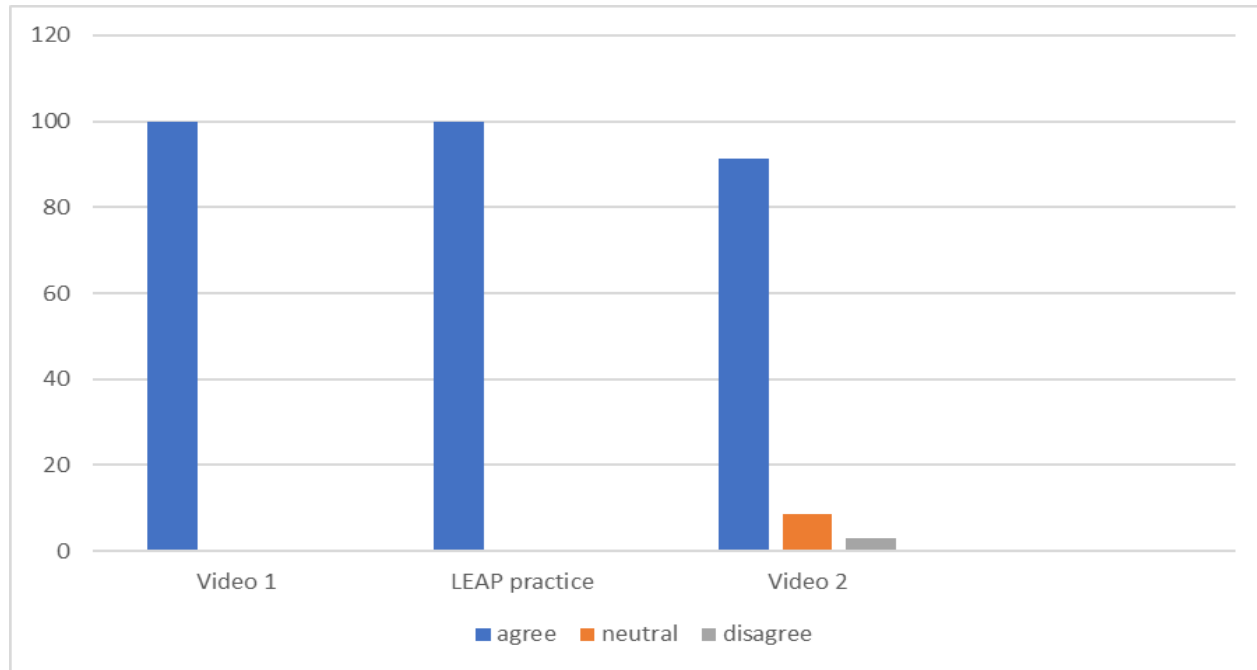
## Data collection

- Pre-intervention survey: n= 28
- Post video one survey: n=24
- Post LEAP levelling practice session survey: n=15
- Post video 2 and Post intervention survey (the final survey:n=23)

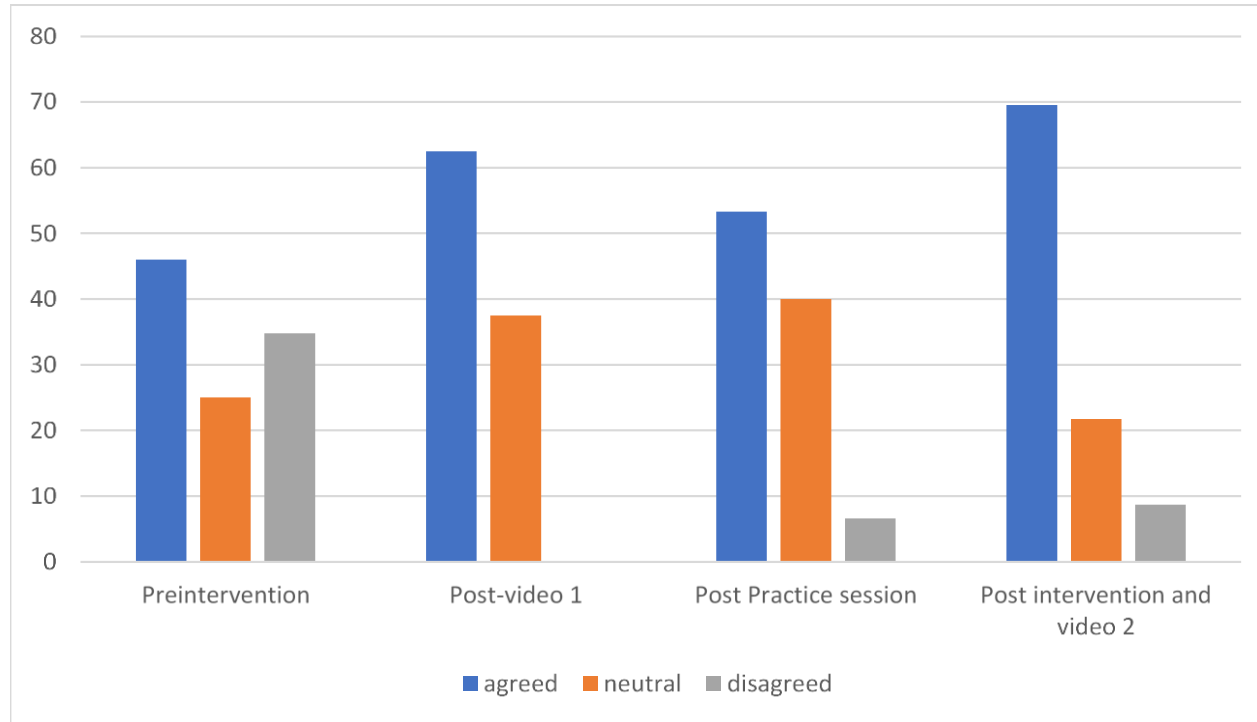
## *I have a strong understanding of SFG*



## Usefulness of resources/strategy to students' learning about how to use LEAP levels ...was useful to my learning about how to use LEAP levels

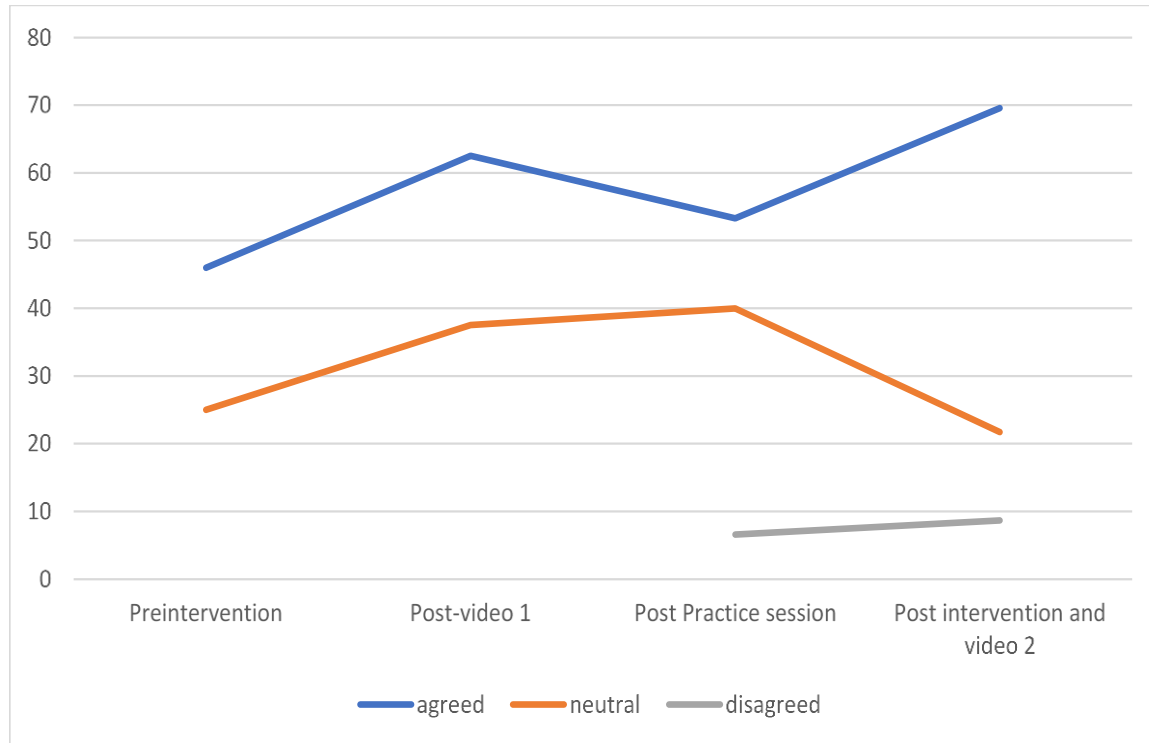


# Confidence level in using LEAP after each change in teaching strategy and resource

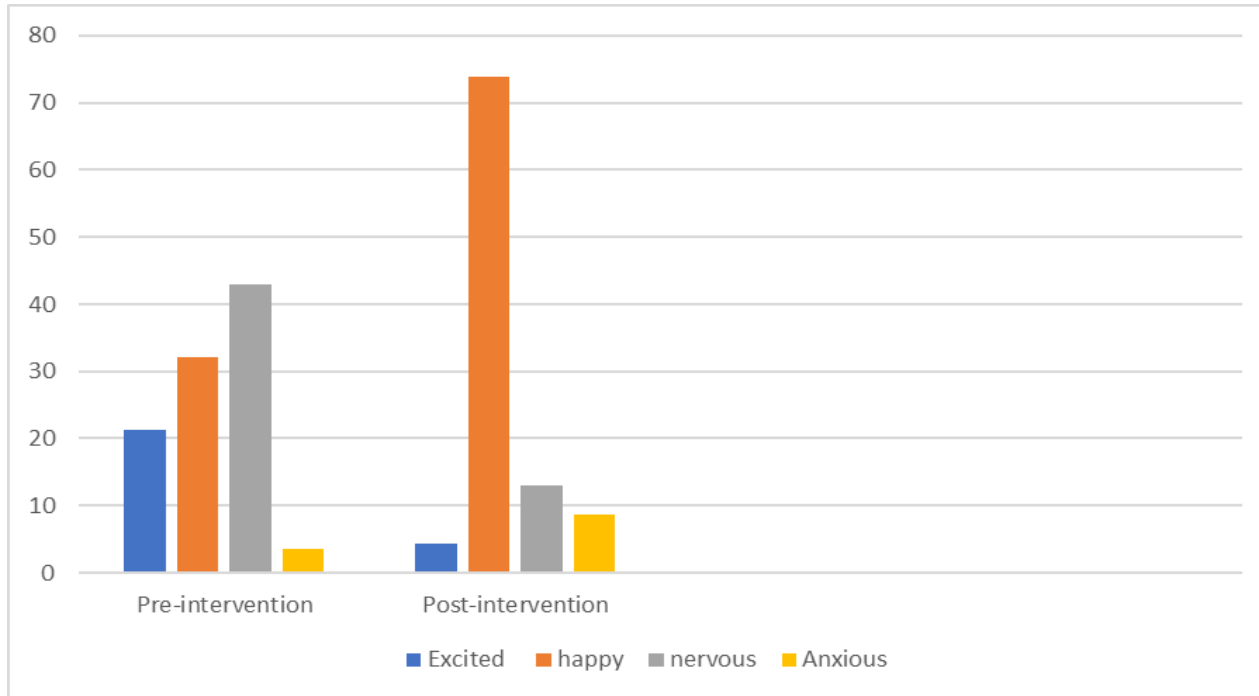


# Usefulness of resources/strategy to students' learning about how to use LEAP levels

....was useful to my learning about how to use LEAP levels



# Currently I feel (students):



## Discussion

- Improvement in students' understanding of SFG
- New teaching strategies and resources useful to student learning
- Increased confidence in using LEAP

Hattam R (2021) "Are they confident enough to have a go?"

- Survey instruments work, no ambiguity or double barrelling
- This resulted in increased confidence to use LEAP.
- I have a strong understanding of SFG



## Implications for teaching practice

- **About my students?**

Diversity of students' experiences of prior learning - cannot assume anything about students' KAL. If you do, it's an issue of equity, because it directly impacts the learning of EALD students' and their access to ACARA is highly at risk. Priority to return to the data to identify the specific needs of PG and UG students

- **About my pedagogy?**

Flexibility to include reflection and feedback

Can create a space for dialogue (e.g. weekly reflections and feedback on feedback)

Listen with intent to students as they are learning, continuous feedback from them and what is happening for them to

- **About collaborative action research?**

Engaging in AR was a very stimulating experience. Feedback from fellow experienced AR was motivating within the limited time available for this study

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