

# Afrikaners' lament drifts round a corner of Auckland

**IMMIGRATION:** Afrikaans is now the second most heard language around North Shore bays

by Julie Middleton

In the affluent East Coast Bays of Auckland, Afrikaans is now the second most common language after English, Statistics New Zealand has revealed.

South African-born Nadia Vaughan said that meant immigrants cloaking their gossip in Afrikaans at the Browns Bay shops were not as clever as they thought.

New arrivals made the mistake at least once, said Vaughan, who has been in New Zealand five years. Her sheepish grin indicated she, too, had done the same.

The bays' growing cluster of Afrikaans speakers has resulted in a first for Auckland. Since April, East Coast Bays Library has become an Afrikaans language nest for half an hour on Wednesday mornings, when preschoolers can hear their language outside the home.

Teacher-turned-librarian Susan Kok, who wears a "Welkom by Storietyd" badge, has been in New Zealand four years.

To untutored ears, Afrikaans sounds like the Dutch from which it descended; Kok is from Cape Town, where the trilling rolled "r" puts the South Island equivalent in the shade.

She got on her hands and knees on the floor, enthusiastically smiling and singing for her three charges

with absorbed little faces, then translated an English-language story book, *The Gingerbread Man* — "Die Gemmerbroodman" — into Afrikaans on the hoof.

She gave each of them cut-out paper gingerbread men to decorate with crayons and "scarves" of crepe-paper strips.

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**'I expect Afrikaans will die out [in New Zealand] after this generation.'**

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The mothers who had turned up — numbers attending the group vary week by week — got homework: a recipe for making gingerbread men.

Afrikaans might be one of 11 official tongues in South Africa, but what is its use here?

When I mentioned the spat from several years back when some immigrants made news by urging that Afrikaans be taught in schools, all three women made faces that said "no thanks".

There was just no point, they said: once school started, English would encroach.

In the meantime, said Chantel Nieuwoudt, from Pretoria, Afrikaans allowed 2-year-old Monique to "keep

something of her origin". There was little English spoken at her place: "I don't want to confuse the kids."

Talana de Lange, from the Free State and in New Zealand for four years, also took a hard line: she did not allow "little Kiwi" Martin, aged 3, to speak any English at home.

"His [Afrikaans-speaking] grandparents are in South Africa still, all of them," she said, and the corollary was unspoken — what if the physical gulf between them became a linguistic one as well?

Afrikaans was the currency of her emotions: "It's what you feel at heart."

Vaughan, from Johannesburg, said the sessions allowed her 2-year-old daughter Elizabeth to see that Afrikaans existed outside the house.

It would be nice if she kept it up, said her mother wistfully, "but I don't see her teaching Afrikaans to her children".

"I suspect it will die out [in New Zealand] after this generation."

It is the classic lament of the migrant.

■ North Shore libraries also run stories in French (Glenfield Library, July 11 and 18 at 10am) and Mandarin (Glenfield, July 15 at 10.30am).

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