

An Chomhairle  
Mhúinteoireachta

**The Teaching Council**



**Title:** Irish Research Network in Childhood Bilingualism and Multilingualism

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**Relevant key words:** Bilingualism; Bilingual Language Acquisition; Bilingual Education; Cross-Disciplinary Research; Education; Intercultural Education

**Summary:**

The Irish Research Network in Childhood Bilingualism and Multilingualism aims to bring together researchers, teachers and other professionals interested in learning more about bilingualism and fostering cross-disciplinary collaborations in this area. Since the start of the project in January 2018 more than 500 people, including many teachers, have taken part in the meetings, which take place 3 times a year (January – May – September). These have included a world café on bilingualism in May 2018 and a Language Explorers workshop in September 2018.

Each meeting involved the following:

- A talk by an international speaker
- Participation in a working group
- A public panel or an event for teachers

The meetings took place in Trinity College, in the Trinity Long Room Hub and lasted between 5 and 8 hours. Participants had the opportunity to join a working group and work collaboratively on a research theme or a project over the 12 months. Each working group, comprising 5 to 8 people, included at least one teacher/principal.

Working groups focused on the following themes:

- Bilingual/multilingual language acquisition
- Language impairment in bilingual/multilingual children Bilingual education
- Teaching children from diverse linguistic backgrounds; EAL; socio-cultural aspects of bilingualism; family language policy

The outcomes of the project include:

- Participants learned about research on bilingualism in various contexts (from Wales to India) from international speakers
- Some participants have started to work on joint research projects and have established new collaborations and met new colleagues

Participants took part in a survey, which showed that the meetings were beneficial. The most frequent comment made by participants is that this was a unique opportunity to meet professionals from various backgrounds (from speech therapy to early childhood education) which they would not meet otherwise, and having the opportunity to ask each other questions and share experiences and expertise. A short report and a presentation are available on the website at:

[https://childbilingualismresearch.com/report/.](https://childbilingualismresearch.com/report/)

The website also includes a link to undergraduate research on participants' experiences of the network. That research found that a majority reported that what they learned would impact on their assessment of bilingual/multilingual children.