

1975  2025

Literacy Association of Ireland
Cumann Litearthachta na hÉireann

Conference Programme *Clár na Comhdhála*

50 Years of
Literacy Learning
*Celebrating the Past,
Inspiring the Future*

50 Bliain d'Fhoghlaim
na Litearthachta
*An t-am atá thart a cheiliúradh
agus an t-am atá le teacht a
spreagadh*



#LAICon25



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conference schedule



NAVIGATING THE CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

The programme is presented in **digital format**. Only the **Conference Overview** will be available in printed form on the day (including sessions, rooms, presenters, timetable). Use the hyperlinks in the Table of Contents below and throughout this PDF to learn about the many sessions taking place over Friday 7 and Saturday 8 of November. The purple box on the top right of each page will return you to the overall **conference schedule**.



NAVIGATING TO THE CONFERENCE

Location: DCU St Patrick's Campus, D09 YT18

The conference is taking place in the E Block of Dublin City University, St. Patrick's Campus. It is here, fifty years ago, that the first meeting of the then *Reading Association of Ireland* was convened. St Patrick's Campus is now home to the DCU Institute of Education, the largest and only faculty of education in Ireland. You will find a map of the campus, including car parks [here](#).

Arriving by Car

You can find the campus [here on Google Maps](#). The campus is accessed off the N1 / Drumcondra Road. There are car parks located around the campus.

Parking on campus is free after 3:30 p.m. and at the weekend. Note that the spaces in front of Drumcondra Education Centre require payment and clamping is in operation.

Arriving by Bus

There are several **bus stops** for the College along Drumcondra Road Upper. These serve routes 1, 11, 13, 16, 16C, 33, 33-N, 41, 41-A 41B, 41C, 44, 180, 740, 900, 901, 904, 910 and 980. **Drumcondra Railway station** is located 900m away.

WI-FI DETAILS

Please log in to **DCU Guest Wi-Fi**. You will be prompted to accept terms and conditions – no password needed.





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LAI EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE 2025

OFFICERS

President:	Patrick Burke
President Elect:	Sylvaine Ní Aogáin
Past President:	Clara Maria Fiorentini
Secretary:	Róisín Ní Mhulláin
Treasurer:	Miriam Colum

MEMBERS

Claire Dunne	Cillian O'Sullivan	Gene Mehigan
Máirín Wilson	Adrian Lohan	Susan Nic Réamoinn
Maureen Colleran	Alison Nulty	Amy McLoughlin
Emma Farragher	Aisling Cannon	Jacqueline de Brún

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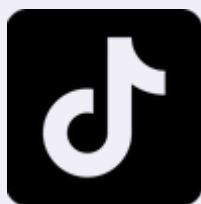
For general queries contact: info@literacyireland.com

To enquire about upcoming conferences:
conference@literacyireland.com

For membership queries: membership@literacyireland.com

Website: www.literacyireland.com

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MISSION STATEMENT

Literacy Association of Ireland

The Literacy Association of Ireland (LAI) aims to support and inform those concerned with the development of literacy nationally and internationally (teachers and educators at all levels and in a variety of formal and informal settings), encourage them in reflection and dialogue, challenge them in their practice and give public voice to their concerns through organising bilingual events such as conferences, seminars, workshops, courses, and webinars.

The International Reading Association, now International Literacy Association (ILA) was set up in 1956 in the USA to promote literacy worldwide. The Reading Association of Ireland (RAI) was established in 1975 by a group of educators interested in the broad area of reading. It became a national affiliate of the International Reading Association in 1978.

That original group comprised teachers, teacher educators, researchers, librarians and inspectors from the Department of Education. About 20 people attended this inaugural meeting and formed a committee to drive the work of this new association. Initially, the RAI was focused on developing an interest in reading, supporting reading and encouraging research in the area of reading.

In April 2015, the RAI was re-launched as the Literacy Association of Ireland (LAI), affiliated now to the International Literacy Association following approval of its membership. The LAI aims to support and inform all those concerned with the development of literacy (including teachers, lecturers, researchers, educators and parents) encourage them in reflection and dialogue, challenge them in their practice and give public voice to their concerns.

The aims of the Association are to:

- i) provide a coherent voice on the acquisition, teaching and learning of all aspects of literacy in English and Gaeilge;
- ii) encourage the development of literacy at all educational levels from early childhood through adolescence to adult level;
- iii) foster an interest in and love of reading in all its forms;
- iv) promote an interest in children's literacy at national and international levels;
- v) stimulate, promote and conduct research on literacy at national and local levels;
- vi) study the various factors that influence progress in literacy;
- vii) publish, where possible, the results of pertinent and significant investigations and practices in relation to literacy;
- viii) to assist or advise on the development of literacy-related module in teacher education programmes;
- ix) act as a clearing house for information related to literacy;
- x) disseminate knowledge helpful in the solution of problems related to literacy.

In our Mission Statement, literacy is defined as the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create and communicate, using visual, audible, print and digital texts associated with varying contexts. The association's membership includes teachers, students, teacher educators, librarians and parents, but any person interested in literacy or language development is welcome to join the association as the Association seeks to expand its membership.





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JOINING THE LITERACY ASSOCIATION OF IRELAND



**Become a member of the
Literacy Association of Ireland today!**

Membership includes:

Reduced rate at
conferences,
seminars, webinars
and workshops.

Priority booking at
conference.

Access to our
exclusive
'Members Only'
portal on our
website.

Copies of 'Literacy
News' - our
biannual
magazine.

Invitation to
literacy related
events organised
by LAI.

For more information about the LAI please visit:

www.literacyireland.com

For membership queries, please email:

membership@literacyireland.com





MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT OF LAI

Dr Patrick Burke

Tá fíorchaoín fáilte romhat! I am thrilled to welcome you to this special anniversary conference of the *Literacy Association of Ireland*.

It is a particular pleasure to welcome you to Dublin City University, St Patrick's Campus, home of the DCU Institute of Education. The LAI has a long association with this campus. Indeed, the first meeting of the *Reading Association of Ireland* was held here in September 1975. RAI/LAI made its mark on the global stage through conferences held on these grounds: the World Congress on Reading in 1982 and the 22nd European Conference on Literacy held here as recently as 2022. Whether this is your first visit or you are strolling the hallways for the umpteenth time, we are delighted to have you.



There is no doubting that literacy in 2025 is many times more complicated than it was in 1975. As Prof Catherine Snow's keynote will outline, we know a lot more about how children learn to read and write now than we did five decades ago. We have made massive progress in Ireland; arguably more than in other English-speaking jurisdictions. Today, we lead the reading league tables in international assessments such as PISA and PIRLS. Yet, the mission to ensure that all children, young people and adults achieve their full literacy potential is an ongoing one. National assessments make clear that children in disadvantaged settings continue to need more support. We have much to celebrate but we cannot rest on our laurels.

One of the most valuable features of the annual LAI conference is the *mix* of sessions. Throughout this programme, you will find examples of newly minted teachers presenting alongside leading national and international experts in the area. You will spot poster contributions based on research in one classroom juxtaposed with posters based on large scale national samples. You will move between sessions focused on literacy in English, Irish and other languages. Researchers, policy-makers and educators have a lot to learn from each other. All have a contribution to make. As we look to the next fifty years, I hope that we can continue this mix and avoid some of the polarisation of literacy approaches experienced in other parts of the English speaking world. I hope that we will also do more to forge our own path, as a country with a unique linguistic profile and an important story to tell. We can learn a lot from our many international colleagues, but we must also heed home-grown expertise.

Part of our job this weekend is to *inspire*. I have no doubt that the presentations and conversations over November 7 and 8 will achieve this goal.

Go mbaine sibh taitneamh agus tairbhe as an gcomhdháil!





CONFERENCE SCHEDULE AT A GLANCE

Click on the links below to be brought to the relevant section of the programme.

Friday 7 November

5:30 – 5:55 pm	REGISTRATION, REFRESHMENTS, POSTER PRESENTATIONS	E214 & E Block Atrium
6:00 – 6:15 pm	CONFERENCE OPENING	
6:15 – 6:45 pm	LITERACY IN 1975 AND LITERACY TODAY	
6:45 – 7:30 pm	LITERACY THROUGH THE DECADES	
7:30 – 8:15 pm	TEACHMEET/OIDEPHLÉ	
8:15 – 9:00 pm	RECEPTION AND RESEARCH/PRACTICE POSTERS	

Saturday 9 November

8:30 – 8:55 am	REGISTRATION	E Block Atrium
9:00 – 10:00 am	KEYNOTE – PROF CATHERINE SNOW	E214
10:15 – 11:45am	PARALLEL SESSIONS A	E Block
11:45 – 12:15 pm	BREAK – REFRESHMENTS	E Block Atrium
12:15 – 1:45 pm	PARALLEL SESSIONS B	Various Locations
1:45 – 2:45 pm	LUNCH (<i>Included in Ticket</i>)	Dining Hall
2:45 – 4:15 pm	PARALLEL SESSIONS C	E Block
4:20 - 5:00 pm	LAI BOOK AWARDS	E214
5:15 – 6:00 pm	ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING	E214



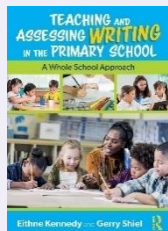


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FULL CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

FRIDAY EVENING, 7 NOVEMBER 2024



From 4:30PM - Pre-Conference Event: Book Launch (Room E205) ***Teaching and Assessing Writing in the Primary School - A Whole School Approach***

This new and innovative book focused on writing pedagogy is written by Prof. Eithne Kennedy (DCU) and Dr Gerry Shiel (ERC).

The book will be launched by Prof. Kathy Hall (UCC). [Register here.](#)

Time	Conference Events	Location
5:30 - 5:55 pm	Registration; Tea & Coffee – E Block Atrium	E214/E Block Atrium DCU St. Patrick's Campus
6:00 - 6:15 pm	Welcomes and Conference Opening Dr Anna Logan, <i>Interim Executive Dean, DCU Institute of Education</i> Dr Patrick Burke, <i>LAI President</i>	
6:15 - 6:45 pm	Literacy in 1975 and literacy today: From RAI to LAI Dr Vincent Greaney (First President of RAI) in conversation with Dr Patrick Burke (Current LAI president)	
6:45 - 7:30 pm	Literacy through the decades: Progress and Possibilities In this discussion chaired by Dr Clara Fiorentini, panellists will reflect on the progress we have made and the progress we have yet to make in supporting literacy development in Ireland and further afield. Our panellists will include the following LAI presidents: - 2020s: Regina Dunne - 2010s: Dr Gene Mehigan - 2000s: Dr Tina Hickey - 1990s: Dr Finian O'Shea	
7:30 - 8:15 pm	TeachMeet/OidePhlé: Innovative Practices Taking Place in 2025 Chaired by: Dr Susan Nic Reamoinn <i>See presentations below.</i>	
8:15 - 9:00 pm	Reception and Research/Practice Posters Join conference attendees for a social gathering; take the opportunity to talk to presenters sharing their research posters (see below).	





Research/Practice Posters

Pixelated Pedagogies. **Brandon J. Watkins**, *University of South Carolina Upstate* ▶ [Abstract](#)

From Friday Tests to Full Inclusion: Rethinking Spelling in Irish Classrooms. **Sarah O'Farrell**, *Mary Immaculate College/Kilmagner NS* ▶ [Abstract](#)

Teachers' and Children's Experiences and Attitudes Towards the Use of Read Alouds in Senior Primary Classrooms. **Michelle McNamara**, *Marino Institute of Education* ▶ [Abstract](#)

Digital Use and Declining Reading Attitudes: Insights from PIRLS 2016 and 2021. **Jasmine Byrne**, *Educational Research Centre*. ▶ [Abstract](#)

Attention Please - moving high frequency word instruction from whole word to graphophonemic analysis, to improve word recognition in the infant classroom. **Yvonne Comaskey**, *Grace Park Educate Together NS* ▶ [Abstract](#)

Cultivating Comhrá: the quest for meaningful mentoring processes across the continuum of teacher education in Ireland. **Caoimhe Uí Nioclás**, *Mary Immaculate College* ▶ [Abstract](#)

An investigation of the uptake, implementation and impact of the Gaelbhratach scheme in English Medium Primary Schools in Ireland. **Eibhlín Fitzgerald**, *Mary Immaculate College* ▶ [Abstract](#)

Fifteen years since the Peter Effect in the Preparation of Reading Teachers: What have we learned, and have we progressed? **Emily Binks-Cantrell**, *Taylor Seymour*, **Ramona Pittman**, **Malt Joshie**; *Texas A&M University* ▶ [Abstract](#)

From Vision to Impact: A Collaborative Leadership Model for Advancing Literacy at Primary Level. **Cillian O'Sullivan** ▶ [Abstract](#)

MDLI-G - Measúnú agus Diagnóisic Litearthachta don Iar-bhunscoil, Gaeilge - Ag foghlaim ón gcaighdeánú. **Helena Ní Rócháin**, **Muireann Bergin**, **Conall Ó Duibhir**, *Educational Research Centre* ▶ [Abstract](#)





TeachMeet/OidePhlé Presentations

"I don't get it": How "Get Ready, Do, Done" has transformed literacy learning and executive function in my classroom. **Sophie Donegan**

Supporting Autistic Pupils Writing Skills Development. **Carol Ann Ó Sioráin**, *DCU Institute of Education*

Oracy and the Word-Conscious Classroom – strategies to help close the vocabulary gap. **Roisin McNeill**, *St Paul's Primary and Nursery School*.

Diverse books reflecting reality. **Kirsten Barrett**

Perspectives on Handwriting. **Ann-Sofie Selin**, *Federation of European Literacy Associations/Finnish Reading Association*.

Promoting Reading for Pleasure in the Classroom. **Sarah Quirke**, *St. John the Baptist Girls School*.

Beyond "What's the Answer?": Empowering Students Through Math Talk. **Martina Ronan**, *DCU Institute of Education*.

More to follow!





SATURDAY, 8 NOVEMBER 2025

8.30 – 8:55 am
E Block Atrium

REGISTRATION & VENDORS

9.00 – 10.00 am
E214

WELCOME

Dr Patrick Burke
President, Literacy Association of Ireland

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Professor Catherine Snow

is John H. and Elisabeth A. Hobbs Research Professor of Cognition and Education at Harvard Graduate School of Education. Her impactful research career has spanned early childhood through adolescence. She is an expert on language and literacy development in children, focusing on how oral language skills are acquired and how they relate to literacy outcomes. She chaired the US National Research Council Committee on *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children*, the RAND Reading Study Group that produced the report *Reading for Understanding*, and the subcommittee of the NAE Committee on Teacher Education that produced *Knowledge to Support the Teaching of Reading*.



Starting in the classroom: How advances in literacy research can improve literacy outcomes

Abstract: The last 50 years have witnessed significant investments in research on literacy development, leading to a much deeper understanding of the skills that predict success in literacy across the age span from preschool to secondary school. These skills, phonological awareness, letter knowledge, mastery of the alphabetic principle, vocabulary, world knowledge, are associated with the outcomes we desire (accuracy in word reading, fluency and automaticity in text reading, comprehension). These robust associations have been variously summarized in proposals like the Simple View of Reading (Gough & Tunmer, 1986), the Five Pillars of Reading (NRP, 2000), and the Science of Reading (e.g., Adams, 1990). Despite the impressive growth in the research base about psycholinguistic and developmental perspectives on reading, there has been little progress in improving reading outcomes over those years, in part I would argue because of the gulf between understanding the psychology of reading and understanding how to teach reading, which continues to rely on a set of practices that has either not changed or has been distorted and undermined by the evidence from predictive models of reading. We need to think about literacy development in its ecological context -- the home and the classroom -- and start to build a science of teaching reading that recognizes the multiple experiences that nurture students' ability to acquire the array of skills good readers display.





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10:15 am – 11:45 am PARALLEL SESSIONS A1-A9

PARALLEL SESSION A1

Theme: Oral Language Pedagogy

Chair: Gerry Shiel

Room: E214

10:15 – 11:15

SYMPOSIUM ▶ [Abstract](#)

Innovative Approaches to Developing Oral Language Across the Curriculum at Early Childhood and Primary Levels in Diverse Contexts (English)

Gerry Shiel, Geraldine French, Frances Murphy, Patti Roche, Bridget Flanagan, Sylwia Kazmierczak-Murray,
DCU Centre for Literacy Research, Policy & Practice

PARALLEL SESSION A2

Theme: Attitudes towards Reading

Chair: Emma Farragher

Room: E201

10:15 - 11:15

SYMPOSIUM ▶ [Abstract](#)

'I Don't Like Reading, but I Love Books': Reframing Learners' Attitudes Towards Reading.

Emma Farragher, Tina Ronan, Amy McLoughlin,
DCU Institute of Education

PARALLEL SESSION A3

Theme: Workshops on Vocabulary

Chair: Susan Nic Réamoinn

Room: E203

10:15 – 11:00

WORKSHOP 1 ▶ [Abstract](#)

Vocabulary – A Wonder of Words.

Máire O Dea & Sinéad McGourty,
Oide

11:00 – 11:45

WORKSHOP 2 ▶ [Abstract](#)

Is a picture worth a thousand words? Exploring picturebooks for vocabulary development.

Lorraine Lawrance,
Hibernia College



**PARALLEL SESSION A4****Theme:** Literacy Learning for All: Multi-tiered System of Supports**Chair:** Clara Fiorentini**Room:** E205**10:15 - 10:45****PAPER ▶ [Abstract](#)**

Targeted Support for Early Readers: Key Components of Effective Tier 2 Interventions Within an MTSS Framework

Christina Hannify,
*DCU Institute of Education***10:45 - 11:15****PAPER ▶ [Abstract](#)**

Tier 3 intervention produces significant effects on pseudoword decoding and set for variability even after impactful tier 2.

Robert Savage,
*York University***11:15 - 11:45****PAPER ▶ [Abstract](#)**

An Investigation into Multi-grade Teachers' Lived Experiences and Their Approaches to Providing Inclusive Reading Instruction.

Amie Hickey,
*Mary Immaculate College***PARALLEL SESSION A5****Theme:** Reading for pleasure: The Role of Libraries and Librarians**Chair:** Máirín Wilson**Room:** Room E206**10:15 - 10:45****PAPER ▶ [Abstract](#)**

Reading for pleasure and teens: Why it matters and the role school librarians play in fostering it

Martina Boyle,
*North Wicklow Educate Together Secondary School***10:45 - 11:15****PAPER ▶ [Abstract](#)**

Placing book and library access at the heart of a primary school: A teacher – librarian collaboration to develop a culture of reading for pleasure.

Niamh Savage,
Mary Immaculate College/ Réalt na Mara NS, &
Sinéad O'Higgins,
*Waterford Libraries***11:15 - 11:45****PAPER ▶ [Abstract](#)**

Powerful Partnerships: Boosting Reading Motivation Through School–Library Collaboration Promoting equity and access to reading for all learners.

Laura Williams,
Mary Immaculate College, &
Ian Mc Arthur,
Rathkeale Library



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PARALLEL SESSION A6

Theme: Language in the Curriculum

Chair: Jacqueline de Brún

Room: E303

10:15 - 10:45	PAPER ▶ Abstract Developing Academic Language Through Argument Speaking and Writing: Phase 1 Findings from a Classroom-Based Intervention Shane Leonard, <i>DCU Institute of Education</i>
10:45 - 11:15	PAPER ▶ Abstract From Language Insecurity to Language Integration: Exploring Teacher Language Competence in Post-Primary Immersion Education Sarah Ní Dhuinnín, <i>Mary Immaculate College, &</i> TJ Ó Ceallaigh, <i>University College Cork</i>
11:15 - 11:45	PAPER ▶ Abstract Feasacht Teanga an Mhúinteora mar Bhonn agus mar Thaca don Teagasc san Fhoghlaim Chomhtháite Ábhar agus Teanga (FCÁT) sa Bhunscoil a fheidhmíonn trí mheán an Bhéarla Nóra Ní Bheaglaoich, <i>Bunscoil na Cathrach, An Chathair &</i> TJ Ó Ceallaigh, <i>Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh</i>

PARALLEL SESSION A7

Theme: Literacy in Initial Teacher Education

Chair: Gene Mehigan

Room: E305

10:15 - 10:45	PAPER ▶ Abstract Exploring Pre-Service Teachers' Perception of Generative AI in Content Area-Literacy Instructional Planning: A focus on Accuracy, Quality, and Developmental Appropriateness Tonia Bauer, <i>University of South Carolina Upstate</i>
10:45 - 11:15	PAPER ▶ Abstract Assessing Pre-Service Teachers' Knowledge of Children's Literature Siobhán Morrissey, <i>University of Galway, &</i> Becky Long, <i>Children's Books Ireland</i>
11:15 - 11:45	PAPER ▶ Abstract Rage, rage against the dying of literacy: the endeavours of the student teacher to integrate pedagogy, skills, words and wisdom in the inclusive post-primary classroom Claire Redmond, <i>Maryfield College</i>





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PARALLEL SESSION A8

Theme: Literacy, Diversity & Citizenship

Chair: Sylvaine Ní Aogáin

Room: E401

10:15 - 10:45	PAPER ▶ Abstract Identity-Affirming Literacies in Schools: A Practitioner Study of LGBTQ+ YA Book Clubs Jen McLaughlin Cahill, <i>Graduate School of Education - University of Pennsylvania</i>
10:45 - 11:15	PAPER ▶ Abstract Decolonising literacy: Integrating Irish Traveller pedagogical principles into the teaching of literacy Anne Marie Kavanagh, <i>DCU Institute of Education</i>
11:15 - 11:45	PAPER ▶ Abstract From Empathy to Action: Empowering Early Childhood and Primary Students to Create Change Through Reading, Writing, and Research Chris Hass, James Madison University & Katie Kelly, Furman University

PARALLEL SESSION A9

Theme: Home Literacy Environments

Chair: Cillian O'Sullivan

Room: E403

10:15 - 10:45	PAPER ▶ Abstract Parents' and Teacher's Beliefs of Preschool Literacy Instruction and the Home Literacy Environment Lou Ann Roberto & John Strong, <i>University at Buffalo</i>
10:45 - 11:15	PAPER ▶ Abstract Critically and Collaboratively Engaging Pupils, Parents and Teachers with Literacy in a Designated Disadvantaged Primary School Ciara Barry, <i>University College Cork</i>
11:15 - 11:45	PAPER ▶ Abstract Trends in Home Literacy Environment of Low-and High-Achieving Pupils in Ireland: PIRLS 2016 & 2021 Sarah McAteer, <i>Educational Research Centre</i>

11:45 - 12:15

Tea/Coffee – E Block Atrium





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12:15 – 1:45

PARALLEL SESSIONS B1 – B9

PARALLEL SESSION B1

Theme: Children's Writing

Chair: Eithne Kennedy

Room: E214

12:15 – 1:15

SYMPOSIUM ▶ [Abstract](#)

Symposium on Children's Writing: Implementing Evidence-based Approaches in Diverse Primary School Contexts

Eithne Kennedy, *DCU Institute of Education*;

Vera Busse, *Universität Münster*,

Pia Christin Sieveke, *Universität Münster*;

Gerry Shiel, *Educational Research Centre*

PARALLEL SESSION B2

Theme: Léitheoireacht sa Ghaeilge

CHAIR: Róisín Ní Mhulláin

Room: E201

12:15 – 1:15

WORKSHOP ▶ [Abstract](#)

Ceacht léitheoireachta Gaeilge: Léitheoireacht Ghrúpa le *In Ord agus in Eagar* sa Seomra Ranga

Jacqueline de Brún, *Institiúid Oideachais OCBÁC &*

Róisín Ní Mhulláin, *COGG*

PARALLEL SESSION B3

Theme: Science of Reading

CHAIR: Cillian O'Sullivan

Room: E203

12:15 – 1:15

WORKSHOP ▶ [Abstract](#)

Beliefs, Best Practices and Common Questions: A Science of Reading Story and Framework from the Perspective of One American University

Cillian O'Sullivan, **Kevin Flanigan**, **Aideen O'Flynn**, & **Chiara Sheahan**, *West Chester University*





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PARALLEL SESSION B4

Theme: Perspectives on Literacy Practice

Chair: Gene Mehigan

Room: E205

12:15-12:45

PAPER ▶ [Abstract](#)

Literacy practices in The National Assessments of Mathematics and English Reading (NAMER) 2021.

Joanne Kiniry & Sharon Nelis,
Educational Research Centre

12:45 – 1:15

PAPER ▶ [Abstract](#)

International Perspectives: How might we improve reading across the whole of Europe? The EC report, Effective Practices for Literacy Teaching, has some answers- and puts a fresh emphasis on the importance of talk, reading aloud, and small group work- from pre-school to further education.

Colin Harrison,
University of Nottingham

1:15 – 1:45

PAPER ▶ [Abstract](#)

Big Bang from Small Groups

Virginia Quinn Mooney, *Goyen Foundation*

PARALLEL SESSION B5

Theme: Perspectives on Language in the Curriculum

Chair: Sylvaine Ní Aogáin

Room: E206

12:15-12:45

PAPER ▶ [Abstract](#)

Language teachers of Modern Foreign Languages (MFL) in mainstream primary schools – what can they learn from Irish-Medium (IM) practitioners?

Thomas Rogan,
St Mary's University College, Belfast

12:45 – 1:15

PAPER ▶ [Abstract](#)

MFL in the Irish Primary Classroom: How does a CLIL-based approach integrating French and Music through 'CeolLingua' support multimodal literacy and cross-linguistic awareness?

Mairéad Ní Bhriain, *Mary Immaculate College,*
Francis Ward, *DCU Institute of Education,* &
Orfhlaith Ní Bhriain, *Irish World Academy of Music and Dance,*
University of Limerick

1:15 – 1:45

PAPER ▶ [Abstract](#)

Cleachtas teanga na n-ábhar oidí i mbunscoileanna lán-Ghaeilge san OSI/Language practices of student teachers in Irish medium primary schools in SEE

Sarah Murray,
Marino Institute of Education





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PARALLEL SESSION B6

Theme: Early Literacy Development

Chair: Clara Fiorentini

Room: E303

12:15 – 12:45

PAPER ▶ [Abstract](#)

Developing babies' and toddlers' oral language development through a slow relational pedagogy

Geraldine French,
DCU Institute of Education

12:45 – 1:15

PAPER ▶ [Abstract](#)

Locating Preschool Literacy Practices

Clara Fiorentini,
Marino Institute of Education

1:15 – 1:45

PAPER ▶ [Abstract](#)

Conceptualising a Vocabulary Learning Continuum for Children Aged 3–6: A Thematic Literature Review

Alison Nulty,
DCU Institute of Education

PARALLEL SESSION B7

Theme: Assessment in Post-primary Literacy

Chair: Amy McLoughlin

Room: E305

12:15-12:45

PAPER ▶ [Abstract](#)

Literacy as the foundation of 3rd Year Post-Primary students: What the PPAD-E 2024 Pilot reveals about literacy among an older cohort

Theresa Walsh,
Educational Research Centre

12:45 – 1:15

PAPER ▶ [Abstract](#)

Comparing Literacy Outcomes in Irish and English Among Post-Primary Students in Irish-Medium Schools

Brenda Donohue, Muireann Bergin & Helena Ní Rócháin,
Educational Research Centre





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PARALLEL SESSION B8

Theme: Peirspictíochtaí ar an Tumoideachas

Chair: Claire Dunne

Room: E401

12:15-12:45

PAPER ▶ [Abstract](#)

Iniúchadh ar Fheidhmiú an Trasteangaithe i gComhthéacs an Tumoideachais: Dearcadh an Mhúinteora Bunscoile

Helena Ní an Fhailí & TJ Ó Ceallaigh,

Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh

12:45 – 1:15

PAPER ▶ [Abstract](#)

Cur Chuige Scoile Uile mar Thaca le Comhtháthú Teagaisc Foirm-Dhírthe i gComhthéacs an Tumoideachais: Tionchar na Forbartha Gairmiúla Leanúnaí

Caitríona Ní Mhurchú & TJ Ó Ceallaigh,

Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh

1:15 – 1:45

PAPER ▶ [Abstract](#)

Croí na Ceiste: Inniúlachtaí don Tumoideachas in Éirinn

TJ Ó Ceallaigh, *Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh &*

Dr Gabrielle Nig Uidhir, *Coláiste Ollscoile Naomh Muire, Béal Feirste*

PARALLEL SESSION B9

Theme: Literacy Skill Development

Chair: Patrick Burke

Room: E403

12:15-12:45

PAPER ▶ [Abstract](#)

"I take out the textbook and they all say 'Aghh'": Insights on the teaching of Irish reading and writing in English-medium schools

Aisling Ní Dhiorbháin & Patrick Burke,

DCU Institute of Education

12:45 – 1:15

PAPER ▶ [Abstract](#)

Transforming English Spelling Pedagogy in an Irish-Medium School

Ríona Uí Cheallaigh,

Gaelscoil Sáirséal / Mary Immaculate College

1:15 – 1:45

PAPER ▶ [Abstract](#)

Developing Oral Reading Fluency in second and additional languages

Gráinne O'Callaghan,

DCU Institute of Education / Gaelscoil Choláiste Mhuire

Coffee – E Block Atrium

1:45 – 2:45

Lunch – Dining Hall (Included in conference ticket)





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2:45 – 4:15

PARALLEL SESSIONS C1 – C8

PARALLEL SESSION C1

Theme: Peer Assisted Reading

Chair: Gene Mehigan

Room: E201

2:45 – 3:45

SYMPOSIUM ▶ [Abstract](#)

Peer-Assisted Reading to Support Every Child's Literacy Journey: Research and practice from England and Iceland

Emma Vardy, Nottingham Trent University;

Aaron Jordan, Millfield LEAD Trust;

Auður Soffíu Björgvinsdóttir, University of Iceland;

Sólveig Edda, University of Iceland

PARALLEL SESSION C2

Theme: Parental, Home and Adult Engagement in Literacy

Chair: Maureen Colleran

Room: E203

2:45 – 3:15

PAPER ▶ [Abstract](#)

Effective parental engagement - the dance of engagement

Lána McCarthy,

South East Technological University

3:15 – 3:45

PAPER ▶ [Abstract](#)

Get Ready with Teddy: An Early Intervention Transition Programme

Shairi O Donnell & Loraine Burke,

Trinity Primary School

3:45 – 4:15

PAPER ▶ [Abstract](#)

Telling Our Stories: Creative Writing for Adult Literacy

Eleanor Neff, Literacy Development Centre at South East Technological University &

Paula Tiller, Kerry Education and Training Board





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PARALLEL SESSION C3

Theme: Engaging Pedagogy & Alternative Perspectives

Chair: Jacqueline de Brún

Room: E205

2:45 – 3:15

PAPER ▶ [Abstract](#)

Can we mention the “D” word!: Exploring how a playful methodology such as drama can facilitate key principles of the Primary Language Curriculum.

Patti Roche, *DCU Institute of Education*

3:15 – 3:45

PAPER ▶ [Abstract](#)

Attainment and Engagement: Balancing the Goals of Reading Instruction in Irish Primary Classrooms

Art Ó Neachtain, *University of Galway*

3:45 – 4:15

PAPER ▶ [Abstract](#)

When is Cinderella (aka nonverbal communication) going to be asked to the language and literacy ball? Insights on the nonverbal origins of language and by corollary literacy.

John White, *DCU Institute of Education*, &
David B. Givens, *Gonzaga University, USA*

PARALLEL SESSION C4

Theme: Supporting Literacy Learning for All

Chair: Cillian O’Sullivan

Room: E206

2:45 – 3:15

PAPER ▶ [Abstract](#)

Empowering Educators: Addressing Reading Disabilities and Dyslexia in the Classroom

Janet Foor,
Wilson College

3:15 – 3:45

PAPER ▶ [Abstract](#)

Building Collaborative Capacity: An Implementation Study of Online Interprofessional Learning Between Teachers and SLTs in Ireland

Christina Hannify, Sylwia Kazmierczak-Murray & Paula Lehane,
DCU Institute of Education

3:45 – 4:15

PAPER ▶ [Abstract](#)

Celebrating Past Practice, Inspiring Inclusive Futures: A Community of Practice Approach to Supporting Students with SLCD

Ciara Concannon,
Mary Immaculate College





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PARALLEL SESSION C5

Theme: Perspectives on Literacy in DEIS Settings

Chair: Alison Nulty

Room: E303

2:45 – 3:15

PAPER ▶ [Abstract](#)

Vegan Seagulls and Second Minds: An Investigation into How Self-Regulation Skills can be Developed to Improve Reading Comprehension, Metacognition and Motivation in Disadvantaged Settings

Katie Cullen,
Scoil Mhuire Ogh 1, Crumlin

3:15 – 3:45

PAPER ▶ [Abstract](#)

Exploring the Lived Experiences of Students and Teachers Navigating Educational Trajectories Through DEIS Primary and Post-Primary Schools

Aoife Joy Keogh,
University College Dublin

3:45 – 4:15

PAPER ▶ [Abstract](#)

An investigation into the children's literature choices of primary school students and teachers in a newly established DEIS setting.

Sarah Quirke,
St. John the Baptist Girls School

PARALLEL SESSION C6

Theme: Evolving Literacy Policy in Ireland

Chair: Patrick Burke

Room: E305

2:45 – 3:15

PAPER ▶ [Abstract](#)

Reading in the Years: Tracing Changes in the National Curriculum for Literacy since the Foundation of the State

Conall Ó Breacháin & Patrick Burke,
DCU Institute of Education

3:15 – 3:45

PAPER ▶ [Abstract](#)

Mixing Oil and Water? Examining Balanced Literacy in the Irish Context

Jennifer O'Sullivan,
Marino Institute of Education

3:45 – 4:15

PAPER ▶ [Abstract](#)

PIRLS, PISA and Performance: Painting the Post-box Green and the Alphabet Blue, White and Red: Irish Literacy Policy-Implications for DEIS

Niamh Watkins,
DCU Institute of Education





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PARALLEL SESSION C7

Theme: Linguistic Diversity

Chair: Claire Dunne

Room: E401

2:45 – 3:15	PAPER ▶ Abstract Raising awareness of Plurilingualism and Language Awareness in primary language education: An exploration of key concepts and classroom practice Déirdre Kirwan , <i>formerly Scoil Bhríde Cailíní, Dublin 15, & Jane O'Toole, Scoil Chrónáin SNS Swords; CARN</i>
3:15 – 3:45	PAPER ▶ Abstract A Tale of Two Languages: connecting with families through storytime in bilingual households. Chiara Sheahan , <i>Mary Immaculate College</i>
3:45 – 4:15	PAPER ▶ Abstract Supporting EAL: No Fancy Buzz Words - Just Practical Strategies Kirsten Barrett

PARALLEL SESSION C8

Theme: Technology and Literacy

Chair: Susan Nic Réamoinn

Room: E403

2:45 – 3:15	PAPER ▶ Abstract Digital Critical Literacy: Supporting Student Development in the Age of Misinformation Katherine Buck , <i>Evanston Township High School</i>
3:15 – 3:45	PAPER ▶ Abstract Storytelling with Bee-Bot: How a programmable floor robot can support second language learning in the early years of Primary Susan Nic Réamoinn , <i>Marino Institute of Education</i>
3:45 – 4:15	PAPER ▶ Abstract "It Opened the World": Digital Literacy and Transformation for Older Adults in Community Education Matthew Hutnik , <i>Atlas Education/Maynooth University</i>

4:20 – 5:00

LAI BOOK AWARDS

[Learn more about the shortlisted entries here.](#)

E214

5:15 – 6:00

LAI ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

E214





POSTER ABSTRACTS

Pixelated Pedagogies.

Brandon J. Watkins, *University of South Carolina Upstate*

This paper explores how digital game play becomes a transformative space for literacy and critical thinking among Black boys. Utilizing a Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) framework, the study centers on four Black boys (ages 15–19) whose gaming sessions and focus groups reveal rich, culturally sustaining literacies. It will present practical strategies for incorporating Black boys out-of-school literacies into their classrooms enhancing culturally sustaining literacy practices that affirm and elevate student identities and experiences.

Brandon J. Watkins is a doctoral candidate in the Curriculum and Instruction Ph.D. program at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, with a concentration in Urban Literacy Education. With over a decade of experience in public education, Brandon has served as a middle grades ELA teacher, instructional coach, and teacher educator. He currently teaches undergraduate courses at the University of South Carolina Upstate in both educational foundations and the middle/secondary education program, where he supports pre-service teachers across all content areas. He also serves as the coordinator of his department's education foundations program. Brandon's research examines the literacies of Black males, with a focus on gaming, digital contexts, teacher preparation, and culturally sustaining pedagogies. In July 2025, Brandon began serving as national co-chair of the English Language Arts Teacher Educators (ELATE) Graduate Strand, a branch of the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE). He has presented at local, state, and national conferences on creating engaging and inclusive literacy classrooms and has served as a reviewer for academic journals such as *Journal of Curriculum and Pedagogy* and *English Journal*. Brandon is the founder of Brandon's Brown Bookshelf, an online, independent children's and YA bookstore that highlights and celebrates literature by and about Black and Brown communities.

From Friday Tests to Full Inclusion: Rethinking Spelling in Irish Classrooms.

Sarah O'Farrell, *Mary Immaculate College/Kilmagner NS*

This poster explores the beliefs and practices of Irish primary school teachers in teaching spelling, with a focus on how current methods support or hinder inclusive and equitable literacy instruction. Nationally, the Primary Language Curriculum (2019) promotes a balanced approach to literacy but provides limited specific guidance on the explicit teaching or assessment of spelling. Internationally, literacy research underscores the importance of spelling as foundational to writing development, while also advocating for inclusive practices that reflect the diverse linguistic and learning needs of today's classrooms.

This research presents findings from a Constructivist Grounded Theory study. Participants reported receiving minimal training in spelling pedagogy during Initial Teacher Education and expressed low confidence in differentiating spelling instruction—particularly for students with additional needs or English as an additional language. Commercial spelling programmes and weekly tests were the dominant approaches, despite their misalignment with research. Teachers highlighted a lack of time and resources to support early intervention, differentiated strategies and phonological, orthographic and morphological instruction tailored to individual learning needs.

Drawing from these findings, this poster will highlight the implications for national literacy policy, assessment practices and the professional development of teachers. It will propose evidence-informed recommendations for moving beyond traditional rote approaches, towards more inclusive, responsive and effective spelling instruction that acknowledges linguistic diversity and fosters literacy success for all learners.





Sarah O'Farrell is an experienced primary school teacher with over ten years of teaching across Ireland and Australia. She holds a Masters degree in Literacy Education and has a strong interest in inclusive, literacy and digital teaching practices. Sarah has facilitated CPD for teachers in the areas of differentiation and Universal Design for Learning, supporting them in creating more inclusive classroom environments.

Teachers' and Children's Experiences and Attitudes Towards the Use of Read Alouds in Senior Primary Classrooms.

Michelle McNamara, Marino Institute of Education

Reading plays a significant role in a person's life, with many instructional practices for reading evident in primary schools. This study focused on read alouds, an instructional practice synonymous with the younger age groups in research, specifically in the senior primary classroom (5th and 6th classes). A convergent parallel mixed methods (QUALquant) approach was used to ascertain teachers' (n=4) pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) of read alouds, perceived benefits of and challenges, if any, to their inclusion in the classroom through semi-structured interviews. Additionally, students' (n=12), experiences, perceived benefits and enjoyment levels of read alouds were investigated through physical questionnaires. Findings suggested teachers' PCK of read alouds could be strengthened, to result in more effective and worthwhile read aloud experiences for students. Furthermore, teachers and students are aware of the various benefits associated with read alouds, such as vocabulary acquisition, reading fluency and assisting with students' comprehension. Notably, time constraints due to an overloaded curriculum was the most prominent challenge impacting the inclusion of read alouds in the classroom. While significantly, the majority of students (9 out of 12) reported high levels of enjoyment when their teacher reads aloud to them. Overall, the findings highlight the value of including read alouds more regularly in the senior primary classroom.

Michelle McNamara has recently completed her Professional Masters of Education in Marino Institute of Education. Michelle conducted this research as part of her final year dissertation. She is very interested in effective instructional practices for reading, particularly among the older age groups in primary schools.

Digital Use and Declining Reading Attitudes: Insights from PIRLS 2016 and 2021.

Jasmine Byrne, Educational Research Centre

Globally, there has been a growing need for educational policy to reflect the rise of technology. In Ireland, this shift has been emphasised through increased funding for digital infrastructure in schools as well as the integration of digital literacy across subjects, as outlined in the Digital Strategy for Schools to 2027 (Department of Education, 2022). Recent research suggests that almost 60% of pupils had access to digital devices during reading lessons, although regularity of use varied (Delaney, et al., 2023). There is little research, however, on pupils' digital use in the home.

The Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy Strategy (2023) reinforces the importance of digital literacy while also highlighting the role of positive reading attitudes, such as reading for pleasure, and their effects on skill development. Nonetheless, there has been a substantial decline in reading enjoyment recorded in both pupils and pupil's parents (Pitsia, et al., 2024). Therefore, the focus of this paper is to explore the relationship between reading attitudes, factors in the home environment, digital attitudes, and how these relate to digital use in the classroom. Data will be drawn from two PIRLS cycles, 2016 and 2021, to provide rich insight into the decline in literacy attitudes between the two periods.

Within each cycle, three profiles based on pupils' reading attitudes will be constructed: "Very much like reading", "Somewhat like reading", and "Do not like reading".

Exploratory analysis will be used to examine how home-level characteristics, class-level factors, and digital literacy attitudes differ across the three groups, with comparisons





between 2016 and 2021 to account for any notable period changes. This cross-cycle approach aims to reveal patterns in literacy attitudes and to contribute to ongoing curriculum reform and policy development.

Jasmine Byrne is a research assistant at the Educational Research Centre. She is currently a member of the PIRLS 2026 Ireland Team, which is part of an international project that examines literacy in primary schools every 5 years. She holds an M.A. in Psychology that she completed at the University of Limerick in 2023.

Attention Please - moving high frequency word instruction from whole word to graphophonemic analysis, to improve word recognition in the infant classroom.

Yvonne Comaskey, *Grace Park Educate Together NS*

This study places a lens on high frequency word (Dolch words) and instructional approaches in the infant classroom. It aims to explore if instruction for these words, using graphic- phonemic analysis, that is letter- sound knowledge, can increase word recognition. The study reviews whole word or 'flash -card' approaches for these words. It also highlights ambiguity around these words and terms associated with them, such as confusion over the term 'sight word' or 'tricky' word and how this can sometimes guide (or mis-guide) instruction. It also places a lens on the gap between research and classroom practice, especially evidenced based approaches for teaching all words.

The study asks if instruction that gives attention to GPCs in these words enhances word recognition. The study examines if such instruction can build on and improve on previous phonics (letter - sound) knowledge. It also explores reading readiness using Ehri's phases. Participants are categorised as partial or transitioning to full alphabetic phase and how this might impact (all) word acquisition for some early readers.

The action research took place over a six week period in the researcher's senior infant classroom. It included a playful and active based learning approach to align with new Primary Curriculum Framework (2023). With proposed reduction in allocated Literacy teaching time, the need for effective and evidence led instruction is now even more relevant.

Yvonne Comaskey is a primary teacher with twenty years of experience. She is a post-holder with responsibility for literacy in her school. She recently completed a MED in Literacy Professional Practice at DCU. She is passionate about effective and evidence based instruction for early readers.

Cultivating Comhrá: the quest for meaningful mentoring processes across the continuum of teacher education in Ireland.

Caoimhe Uí Nioclás, *Mary Immaculate College*

Mentoring has become a central pillar in the continuum of teacher education, particularly since the introduction of the Droichead policy by the Teaching Council in 2013 and being the only means of induction for newly qualified teachers (NQTs) in Ireland since 2020. While mentoring offers NQTs critical real-time support during their transition into full professional responsibility, important questions persist regarding the readiness of both mentors and mentees to engage in this process meaningfully.

This research intends to interrogate three fundamental questions:

1. Are mentors and mentees mentoring-ready?
2. Do they possess the literacy and professional communication skills necessary to foster rich, dialogic conversations that enhance teaching and learning?
3. Do ecological literacy systems exist within the broader educational landscape to sustain and nurture effective mentoring relationships at all phases of the professional continuum?

Grounded in multiliteracies theory (New London Group, 1996) and informed by dialogic pedagogies (Bakhtin), this study explores the concept of "feedback literacy" and the communicative competencies required for effective professional dialogue. It also





examines the Ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1977) and the environmental and systemic conditions necessary for mentoring to thrive. The findings seek to inform policy and practice by highlighting the need for intentional mentoring preparation, both at the initial teacher education level and through ongoing professional development.

This research invites a reimagining of mentoring not merely as a policy requirement but as a collaborative, literate practice embedded within a responsive and ecologically literate educational system.

Caoimhe Uí Nioclás is an Assistant Professor in Education at Mary Immaculate College, specialising in Gaeilge. She is developing her research in the area of mentoring across the teacher education continuum, with a focus on feedback literacy, dialogic communication and the systemic conditions that support effective mentoring. She intends to pursue this field further as part of her planned future research studies.

*Is Ollamh Cúnta san Oideachas le saineolas sa Ghaeilge í **Caoimhe Uí Nioclás**. Tá sí ag forbairt a cuid taighde ar an bpróiseas mheantóireachta trasna an chontanaim in oideachas múinteoirí, ag díriú ar litearthacht aiseolais, cumarsáid dhialógach agus na coinníollacha córasacha a theastaíonn chun meantóireacht éifeachtach a chothú. Tá sé mar aidhm aici tuilleadh iniúchadh a dhéanamh ar an réimse seo mar chuid dá staidéar taighde atá beartaithe aici.*

An investigation of the uptake, implementation and impact of the Gaelbhratach scheme in English Medium Primary Schools in Ireland.

Eibhlín Fitzgerald, Mary Immaculate College

The Gaelbhratach scheme supports the promotion and development of 'Gaeilge Labhartha' in a fun and interactive manner outside of the formal classroom setting and has been available for implementation in English medium primary schools in Ireland since the 2012/2013 school year.

"Teaching and learning Irish, an endangered language...presents as a challenging aspect of primary school teaching in terms of supporting both learners and teachers" (O Toole, 2023, p.602). The Gaelbhratach aims to support both learners and teachers.

In the 2024/2025 school year 290 schools (primary and post primary) undertook the scheme and worked towards achieving their flags, an increase from 144 in the previous school year which indicates demand for the scheme.

Since its introduction no independent research has been conducted to investigate:

- (a) Why schools apply to be part of the scheme
- (b) How they implement the scheme in their own school setting
- (c) What benefits (if any) they perceive following implementation.

The intended approach to this investigation is a mixed method case study approach rooted in pragmatism. The focus on the production of actionable knowledge sits well in an investigation of a practical scheme implemented in primary schools. Cohen et al (2018) describes the pragmatic approach as focusing on " 'what works' ; trial and error; problem centered; practical; experimental; action oriented; practitioner research; qualitative and quantitative" (Cohen et al., 2018, p.9).

Eibhlín Fitzgerald, a current Structured PhD in Literacy Education student in Mary Immaculate College, Limerick





Fifteen years since the Peter Effect in the Preparation of Reading Teachers: What have we learned, and have we progressed?

Emily Binks-Cantrell, Taylor Seymour, Ramona Pittman, Malt Joshie;
Texas A&M University

Fifteen years ago, teacher educators and their preservice teachers were surveyed for their knowledge of basic language constructs related to effective literacy instruction (Binks-Cantrell et al., 2012). We found that both populations exhibited a lack of understanding of such foundational constructs of the English language but that when teacher educators participated in professional development, their knowledge was significantly enhanced and this carried over to their preservice teachers' knowledge. Thus the Peter Effect was initially established in the preparation of reading teachers - that is, teacher educators cannot provide preservice teachers with foundational knowledge of basic language constructs if they themselves do not possess it. In the present study, we synthesize work completed and published since the original Peter Effect publication related to teacher education and knowledge in basic language constructs, including international perspectives and comparisons; topics related to language and linguistic diversity; expansion to knowledge related to dyslexia, spelling, and comprehension; and with low socio-economic populations. Further, we will present data and analyses from in-progress studies examining patterns in preservice teacher, in-service teacher, and teacher educator knowledge in various language constructs over the past ten years as well as analyses of quantity and quality of coverage of basic language constructs in educator preparation programs throughout the US since reading-related legislation.

Emily Binks-Cantrell, Ph.D., is a Clinical Professor and Co-Chair for the Advanced Literacy Studies Program at Texas A&M University; **Taylor Seymour, M.Ed.**, is a doctoral candidate in the Advanced Literacy Studies Program at Texas A&M University; **Ramona Pittman, Ph.D.**, is an Associate Professor and Reading Clinic Director in the Advanced Literacy Studies Program at Texas A&M University; **Malt Joshi, Ph.D.**, is a Regents Professor in the Advanced Literacy Program and Educational Psychology at Texas A&M University and Editor of *Reading and Writing: An Interdisciplinary Journal*.

From Vision to Impact: A Collaborative Leadership Model for Advancing Literacy at Primary Level.

Cillian O'Sullivan

This poster presents a collaborative model of literacy leadership implemented at an English-medium, urban primary school in Ireland. It highlights how members of the school's Leadership and Management Team (LMT) - specifically, collaboration between an Assistant Principal I and Assistant Principal II holder - worked together over a two-year period to support the enactment of the Primary Language Curriculum (NCCA, 2019) in their school setting.

The initiative focused on embedding curriculum-aligned practices across the school, leading to the following key achievements:

- Development of a whole-school languages plan rooted in the principles of the Primary Language Curriculum (2019)
- Promotion of evidence-based instructional approaches to teaching phonology, orthography, morphology, fluency, and syntax in both English and Gaeilge
- Implementation of a school-wide 'Content and Language Integrated Learning' model (e.g., Gaeilge & PE)
- Enhancement of the use of Gaeilge Neamhfhoirmiúil throughout the school day
- Support for cross-lingual transfer (English-Gaeilge) through an approach to playful learning in infant classrooms
- Coordination of whole-school events centred on language and literacy learning

These outcomes were made possible through collaborative planning sessions, peer-led lesson sharing, the creation of a languages committee, and partnership with external support agencies. While the initiative yielded significant successes, this poster also





outlines the key challenges encountered and the strategies used to navigate these during the process.

Cillian O'Sullivan is an assistant principal and primary school teacher. He is a graduate of the M.Ed. in Literacy Education programme from West Chester University of Pennsylvania, and B.Ed. in Education & Psychology programme from MIC Limerick. He has experience teaching at both the junior and senior end of his school, and is an executive committee member of LAI since 2023.

MDLI-G - Measúnú agus Diagnóisic Litearthachta don Iar-bhunscoil, Gaeilge - Ag foghlaim ón gcaighdeánú.

Helena Ní Rócháin, Muireann Bergin, Conall Ó Duibhir,
Educational Research Centre

Is é an Measúnú Diagnóisic Litearthachta don Iarbhunscoil - Gaeilge (MDLI-G) an chéad triail scagthástála litearthachta Gaeilge ann atá á fhorbairt agus á chaighdeánú i gcomhar leis an tSeirbhís Náisiúnta Síceolaíochta Oideachais (NEPS) agus an bhForas Taighde Oideachais (ERC). Measúnú litearthachta atá sa triail MDLI-G a dhéanann measúnú ar chúig réimse; litriú, léamhthuiscint, mearléitheoireacht, scríobh agus léamh focal. Léiríonn anailís ar shonraí ón gcaighdeánú a cuireadh i gcrích sa bhliain 2025 ar scoláirí (n=1771) in iar-bhunscoileanna lán-Ghaeilge go dtagann méadú suntasacha ar an meánghnóthachtáil trasna na réimsí trialach idir tús na Chéad agus na Tríú Bliana. Ina theannta sin, sonraítear éagsúlachtaí i ngnóthachtáil na rannpháirtithe de réir inscne agus athróga déimeagrafacha eile. Soláthraíonn an páipéar seo achoimre ar na príomhthorthaí gnóthachtála ón gcaighdeánú, agus scrúdaítear na ceachtanna a foghlaimíodh agus MDLI-G á fhorbairt.

Measúnú Diagnóisic Litearthachta don Iarbhunscoil - Gaeilge (MDLI-G) is the first Irish-language literacy screening test being developed and standardised in a collaboration between the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) and the Educational Research Centre (ERC). An assessment of literacy, MDLI-G studies five domains; spelling, reading comprehension, speed reading, writing and word reading. Analysis of data from the standardisation study carried out in 2025 of students (n=1771) in Irish-medium post-primary schools indicates significant increases in mean achievement across the test domains between the beginning of First Year and the beginning of Third Year. Gender and other demographic variables account for other variations in achievement among participants. This paper presents a summary of the key achievement findings from the standardisation, while examining the lessons learned towards the creation of MDLI-G.

Helena Ní Rócháin is a Research Assistant with the Educational Research Centre (ERC). She is working on Measúnú agus Diagnóisic Litearthachta don Iarbhunscoil - Gaeilge (MDLI-G). She holds a BA in Irish and History (University of Limerick) and a MA in Modern Irish (University College Dublin). She worked on the Gaeltacht Schools Recognition Scheme at the ERC between 2020-2023.

Brenda Donohue is a Research Fellow at the Educational Research Centre, with over nine years of expertise in large-scale educational assessments and research. Currently, Brenda oversees the PPAD-E and MDLI-G assessments in Test Development and has previously served as National Project Manager for PISA 2022. Brenda holds a PhD in Theatre from Trinity College Dublin.

Muireann Bergin is a Research Associate in Test Development in the Educational Research Centre. She is the project manager for the MDLI-G development and standardisation. She has a B.A. in Modern Irish and French from University College Dublin (UCD), and an M.A. in Early and Medieval Irish from University College Cork (UCC).

Conall Ó Duibhir is a Research Fellow at the ERC. He previously worked as a Research Associate on Test Development (numeracy and literacy). Conall is a fluent Irish speaker





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and has a keen interest in Irish-medium education and the impact of language of assessment on student achievement. Conall holds a B.A. in Sociology and Politics (University College Dublin), an M.Sc. in Sustainability Science (Stockholm Resilience Centre and Stockholm University), an M.A. in Digital Humanities (Linnaeus University), and completed the taught components of an M.Sc. in Education for Sustainable Development (Gothenburg University).





PARALLEL SESSIONS A - ABSTRACTS

Innovative Approaches to Developing Oral Language Across the Curriculum at Early Childhood and Primary Levels in Diverse Contexts

Gerry Shiel, Geraldine French, Frances Murphy, Patti Roche, Bridget Flanagan, Sylwia Kazmierczak-Murray,

DCU Centre for Literacy Research, Policy & Practice

Language ('being a communicator and using language') is a key competence in the primary school curriculum (NCCA, 2023) and also features strongly in the new Aistear framework (NCCA, 2024). This symposium comprises five short presentations which look at ways in which language can be developed in different in-school contexts and across different curricular areas. Each presenter will highlight key research findings and provide some practical suggestions for advancing oral language development in early years and primary contexts. The discussant will respond to the presentations and consider implications. There will be ample time for audience interaction.

The first presentation looks at how oral language can be developed in play-based early childhood environments, including those attended by children living in areas characterised by poverty and low educational achievement. Oral language in the early years is predictive of later reading achievement and it plays a key supportive role in literacy. It has been identified as a challenge for low-SES children (EEF, 2021; Dobinson & Dockrell, 2021). Evidence from the UK indicates that, at school entry, up to 40% of children in low-SES contexts have delayed language (Law, McBean & Rush., 2011), which can impact on subsequent progress in reading literacy and writing, across a range of curricular areas.

The second presentation considers how oral language and other aspects of literacy can be developed through creative dance. The benefits of creative dance have been well documented. Payne and Costas (2021) report on the socioemotional, arts-based, transferable, embodied, physical and cognitive learning that can occur through dance. They argue for a more central role in curriculum when the benefits and the process of engaging in dance are framed as experiential learning. Work in dance for children linked to story prompts them to represent the text's narrative, to investigate specific vocabulary and the quality of movement that the text evokes (Jefferson, 2024). Throughout the creation of a dance, use of oral language can be viewed as central as children/learners discuss and question, plan and develop prompted by stimuli within the story: the use of rich language and illustrations.

The third presentation looks at ways in which oral language and other aspects of literacy can be developed in the context of drama. The collaborative nature of drama and the taking of a perspective through writing-in-role gives children a strong sense of stance and purpose (Dunn & Stinson, 2012). Dunn et al. (2013, p.252) found that the rich oral language 'rehearsed' within the drama work ensured that the children had plenty of ideas for their writing and a good vocabulary to express these ideas. The provision of multiple contexts for creativity, collaboration and the scaffolding of language through child-adult interaction which drama can provide are well documented in the literature (Baldwin, 2004; Neelands, 1997; O'Toole & Stinson, 2013; Podlozny, 2000; Wells & Sandretto, 2017). Classroom drama provides many opportunities for collaborative student-centred learning, focusing on agency and ownership (Lehtonen et al., 2016). The fact that process drama is a highly visual, engaging and motivational form which is capable of creating rich contexts for learning (Dunn, 2016), makes it a very engaging intervention for children. Using an improvisational approach to story develops possibilities for its elaboration, allowing children to go beyond the text's literal meaning and inhabit the content more deeply (Booth, 2005). By drawing on the resources of the story, its situations, characters, problems, relationships, moods and especially its





concepts, the power of the drama can be found and narrative competence enhanced (Roche, 2012).

The fourth presentation considers the role of language in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics). Research highlights that children have a very positive response to STEM and that it has the potential to develop positive learning dispositions and skills (Simoncini and Lasen; DES 2020; Leavy et al. 2020). Multi-sensory approaches commonly used in STEM education can meaningfully support literacy learning in young children. Scientific or mathematical concepts can enhance children's understanding of language and vocabulary. STEM contexts can serve as rich prompts for storytelling. Oral language is central to this process, as children are encouraged to discuss, question, plan, and reflect on their actions using the language stimulated by STEM-related concepts.

The final presentation will consider oral language development from an inclusive and special education perspective. It will draw the attendees' attention to the prevalence of Developmental Language Disorder (DLD) in Irish classrooms and briefly synthesise evidence-based strategies for supporting comprehension and expression of children with DLD, which are beneficial for all learners. While most of these strategies are not 'innovative', they are important for educators and those who visit their classrooms to repeatedly consider to enhance their implementation in practice. The presentation will signpost the attendees to existing repositories of speech and language resources to support effective language pedagogy.

Dr. Gerry Shiel, formerly a Research Fellow at the Educational Research Center, Dublin, has overseen several large-scale assessments at national level including the OECD Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) and national assessments in reading literacy and mathematics. He works with Eithne Kennedy on the Write to Read project, a longitudinal university and school literacy project.

Dr. Geraldine French is head of the School of Language, Literacy and Early Childhood Education at DCU, and an Associate Professor of Early Childhood Education. Recent publications in Ireland include a Literature Review to Support the Updating of Aistear, the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework, and a Literature Review to Update the Literacy/Digital Literacy and Numeracy Strategy.

Dr. Frances Murphy is an Associate Professor in the School of Arts Education and Movement at DCU. She has extensive experience of curriculum development and coordination between curriculum subjects. She is a member of Department of Education Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) through physical education initiative. Research work has also focused on professional development, assessment in physical education, outdoor adventure, and inclusion in physical education and wellbeing.

Dr. Patti Roche is an Assistant Professor in the School of Language, Literacy and Early Childhood Education at DCU. She currently lectures in the area of literacy in DCU and has also taught in the drama- in-education department. She completed her Masters in Education (which specialised in Drama in Education) in Trinity College in 2012 and defended her PHD thesis in 2024. She also holds a postgraduate diploma in Inclusive and Special Education.

Dr. Bridget Flanagan is an Assistant Professor in Early Childhood Education at DCU Institute of Education. Prior to her move to initial teacher education, Bridget worked as a primary teacher and contributed to the delivery of continuing professional development on Aistear. Bridget completed her Masters In Education in 2011, Diploma in Educational Leadership in 2016 and most recently, her PhD research in 2021. Her





research interests include STEM education, mathematics education, early childhood pedagogy, teacher professional development and Lesson Study.

Dr. Sylwia Kazmierczak-Murray is an Assistant Professor in the School of Inclusive and Special Education at DCU. She is a qualified Speech and Language Therapist. She is chair of European Implementation Collaborative Working Group in Education. Sylwia has led commissioned research that informed national policy (e.g., research on School Completion Programme for the Dept. of Education and guidance for policy makers on the inclusion of disabled children and young people in decision-making for the Dept. of Children, as well as a range of other national programme and service evaluations).

'I Don't Like Reading, but I Love Books': Reframing Learners' Attitudes Towards Reading.

Emma Farragher, Tina Ronan, Amy McLoughlin, DCU Institute of Education

This symposium brings together four teachers from diverse teaching contexts, namely, primary, post-primary, an autism class and an international school- who use books not only to teach reading, but to cultivate engagement, creative and critical thinking, and to foster and develop essential learner competencies.

Through practice-led examples, the presenters will explore:

Visual literacy: Encounters with visual texts have the potential to empower learners as critical and creative thinkers, supporting the development of skills essential not only for navigating their academic lives but for making sense of an increasingly image-saturated world (Serafini, 2014; Kędra, 2019).

Aesthetic and dialogic practices: Reframing students' attitudes to reading through aesthetic experiences can equip them to think critically about the information they consume, a necessity in the 21st century (Anderman, Sinatra, & Gray, 2012).

Disciplinary literacy, particularly through mathematical picturebooks, offers an engaging approach for learners by immersing them in enjoyable and meaningful contexts that encourage mathematical thinking (Zhang et al., 2023).

Multisensory and inclusive approaches to story time, combined with the use of diverse literature, can foster meaningful engagement for non-speaking and minimally verbal autistic learners.

The creative, cross-curricular, and inclusive approaches that will be explored in this symposium reflect the key competencies outlined in Ireland's Primary Curriculum Framework (2023), Junior Cycle (2015), and developing Senior Cycle (2024). Together, the speakers will highlight how purposeful use of books can reimagine reading as a dynamic, inclusive, and enquiry-driven experience for all learners.

Emma Farragher is a primary teacher at Scoil Thomáis, Castleknock where she currently teaches 6th class. She holds a Master's in Literacy Professional Practice from DCU Institute of Education (2023). She is especially interested in the potential of creative pedagogies to support motivation and engagement among young readers and writers.

Tina Ronan is a primary school teacher, now teaching 2nd class students at an international school in Italy. Having completed her Master's in Literacy Professional Practice at DCU Institute of Education in 2023, she is particularly interested in how disciplines such as maths can be approached through a literacy lens.

Amy McLoughlin (MEDLPP) is an assistant principal in Ashbourne Community School, a bustling post-primary school with 1100 students. Amy teaches English, SPHE, and Religious Education. Amy is particularly interested in the promotion and embedding of literacy on a whole-school basis. She seeks to empower post-primary teachers of all subjects, to develop their literacy leadership and recognise the centrality of literacy to students' holistic development. Arts-based teaching and learning are central to her teaching practice.





Vocabulary – A Wonder of Words.

Máire O Dea & Sinéad McGourty, Oide

A rich depth and breadth of vocabulary knowledge directly influences children's reading abilities and text comprehension (Snow et al., 2014). By building on children's prior knowledge, teachers play a crucial role in fostering these skills through high-quality instruction (Ring et al., 2019). Knowledge of effective vocabulary instruction strategies, and the reasons why they succeed, will then empower teachers to advance vocabulary teaching and learning in their classrooms (Wright, Franks, Kuo, McTigue, & Serrano 2016).

This workshop will begin by examining how educational theories have shaped vocabulary instruction (Black & Wright, 2024). Using Graves' (2016) four-part model as a framework, it will explore how each component can inform effective teaching practices and align with the learning outcomes of the Primary Language Curriculum (NCCA, 2019). Participants will consider the importance of both explicit and incidental vocabulary instruction, as well as strategies to broaden and deepen children's vocabulary knowledge.

The workshop will be hands-on in nature, with participants engaging in a series of classroom-based activities designed to provoke thinking, support meaning-making, and model effective vocabulary instruction. These practical tasks will be supported by a suite of resources, enabling teachers to apply the strategies directly in their own classrooms. Throughout the session, delegates will reflect on their current approaches to teaching, monitoring, and assessing vocabulary considering its ongoing and developmental nature as an unconstrained skill (NCCA, 2019). The workshop will also explore how these strategies can transfer to support the teaching and learning of Irish, particularly how competence in vocabulary knowledge, morphological awareness and word-learning strategies developed in English can be leveraged to enhance pupils' language development in Irish. "

Máire O Dea is a primary school teacher from Limerick who is currently seconded to Oide with the Primary Literacy Team. She completed a Master's in Education from Mary Immaculate College in 2021 and has a particular interest in Oral language and language acquisition.

Sinéad McGourty is a primary school teacher from Drumlease N.S. in Co. Leitrim. She is currently seconded to Oide with the Primary Languages Team and her professional interests include Special Educational Needs (SEN), Inclusion and Early Childhood Education.

Is a picture worth a thousand words? Exploring picturebooks for vocabulary development.

Lorraine Lawrance, Hibernia College

This workshop will explore how picturebooks can be powerful tools for vocabulary development within the context of the Primary Language Curriculum and the Primary Curriculum Framework. Designed for primary teachers and educators, the session will demonstrate how richly illustrated texts can spark language learning, deepen word knowledge, and support integrated learning across curriculum areas.

Focusing on the central role of oral language, reading, and writing in the Primary Language Curriculum, the workshop will show how picturebooks naturally foster meaningful language use and support vocabulary acquisition in authentic, engaging contexts. Participants will experience a range of hands-on activities that highlight the power of visual literacy and the interplay between images and text. Through these activities, educators will explore strategies for explicit vocabulary instruction, contextual word learning, and opportunities for creative expression.





The activities will support the development of Tier 3 vocabulary by encouraging deep engagement with subject-specific language through contextualised picturebook exploration. Educators will gain practical tools to guide children in closely reading images- interpreting visual elements, inferring meaning, and connecting illustrations to specialised vocabulary in meaningful ways.

Lorraine Lawrance holds a PhD in Literacy Education from Mary Immaculate College and is currently a Lecturer in Education at Hibernia College. She is the author of *Over the Moon* and a contributing researcher to *Building Bridges of Understanding*. She is an active member of the Literacy Association of Ireland (LAI) and the Dyslexia Association (DA), and also serves as a reviewer for the *Irish Journal of Education*.

Targeted Support for Early Readers: Key Components of Effective Tier 2 Interventions Within an MTSS Framework

Christina Hannify, DCU Institute of Education

Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) has been widely adopted internationally to address students' academic, behavioural, and social-emotional needs through layered levels of intervention (Castillo et al., 2022). In Ireland, MTSS is operationalised through the Continuum of Support framework (DoE, 2024). Reading difficulties are among the most prevalent educational needs in the primary school population, yet early intervention is widely recognised as both effective and cost-efficient in mitigating their long-term impact (Hempenstall, 2013, 2016). MTSS aims to achieve this by promoting early identification through universal screening, followed by the provision of targeted Tier 2 support for children demonstrating emerging reading challenges (Gersten et al., 2009). This presentation will provide a comprehensive review of research on effective Tier 2 interventions for children aged 4 to 9 years who exhibit early signs of reading difficulties. Conceptual models of reading emphasise the importance of strong oral language skills alongside word recognition in the development of proficient reading (e.g., Duke & Cartwright, 2021; Scarborough, 2002). Such models underscore the need for a comprehensive approach that addresses both oral language and code-based skills in screening, planning, and delivering interventions (Gaab & Petscher, 2022). Accordingly, this review synthesises recent evidence, focusing on studies published between 2018 and 2025 that evaluated small-group interventions targeting oral language and/or code-based skills and demonstrated positive effects on language or reading outcomes. This presentation will highlight the key features that characterise effective Tier 2 interventions with a robust evidence base, including their content, pedagogical approaches, and embedded assessment practices. It will offer practical guidance for educators implementing 'School Support for Some' within the Continuum of Support, as well as for others providing targeted interventions for children with emerging needs or those identified as having, or being at risk of, reading difficulties.

Christina Hannify is an Assistant Professor in the School of Special and Inclusive Education at DCU. She previously worked as a primary school teacher and as an Inclusion Advisor with the National Council for Special Education. She currently teaches across a range of initial and continuing teacher education programmes, including the M.Ed. in Specific Learning Difficulties (Dyslexia). Her teaching and research centre on effective literacy intervention, and she is undertaking her PhD which focuses on the early identification and intervention of children with and at risk of reading difficulties.

Tier 3 intervention produces significant effects on pseudoword decoding and set for variability even after impactful tier 2.

Robert Savage, York University, **Kristy Dunn**, University of Alberta, **George Georgiou**, University of Alberta & **Rauno Parrila**, Australian Catholic University

The purpose of this study was to contrast the effects of two theory-driven Tier 3 intervention programs - phonics + set for variability (SfV) and phonics + morphology on different reading skills against a control group that received no intervention. Grade 4 and 5 students who had previously completed a Tier 2 intervention (Dunn et al., 2024) but continued to struggle were assigned to one of the two intervention groups or the





control group. Each intervention group received 72 lessons from trained school staff, 4 times a week for 30 minutes each time. All students were tested three times (pre-test, post-test, and delayed post-test) on exception word reading, set for variability, pseudoword reading, and reading comprehension. Preliminary analyses showed significant effects of intervention on pseudoword reading (both intervention groups outperforming the control group at post- and delayed post-test; Hedges' g ranged from .85 to 1.01) and on Set for Variability (the phonics + SfV group outperforming the control group at both testing times; Hedges' g ranged from .87 to 1.15). Our findings add to those of previous Tier 3 intervention studies (Denton et al., 2006; Vaughn et al., 2009) by showing that Tier 3 intervention adds some value even after strong Tier 2 effects (Dunn et al., 2024).

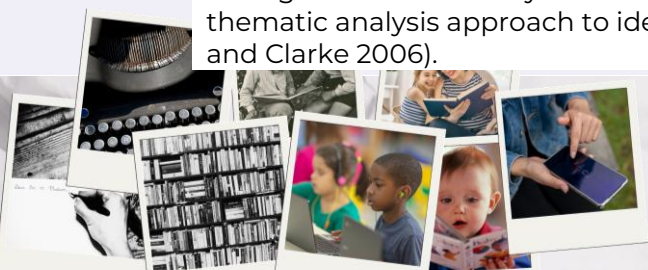
Robert Savage is Professor and Dean of Education at York University, Toronto, Canada. From 2017 until 2021, he was Head of the Department of Psychology and Human Development at University College London UK, and before that, William Dawson Scholar at McGill University, Montreal, Canada (2007-2017). He has published nearly 100 research articles in international journals exploring children's early reading and spelling strategies. He works with children who show both typical and atypical development (e.g., dyslexia). His work is partly on the basic underlying neuro-cognitive processes that are used in reading and spelling by children.

An Investigation into Multi-grade Teachers' Lived Experiences and Their Approaches to Providing Inclusive Reading Instruction.

Amie Hickey, Mary Immaculate College

Inclusive reading practices are essential for ensuring all students can access, participate in, and succeed in reading (Stone 2018; Spear-Swerling 2022). Given the increase in the achievement gap in reading performance both nationally and internationally, reading instruction must move beyond a 'one-size-fits-all' approach to meet the diverse needs of all students (Delaney et al. 2023; NCES 2025). In multigrade contexts, where teachers often have responsibility for three or more class groups within a single classroom, a differentiated approach becomes even more critical for fostering inclusive and effective reading instruction (Tiernan et al. 2020). As research has indicated that multigrade teachers often struggle to respond to this diversity and apply methodologies that are genuinely underpinned by inclusion for all, this study seeks to explore the strategies and challenges these teachers face in providing inclusive reading instruction in such complex classroom settings (Casserly et al. 2019). This study explores how tailored high-quality evidence-based instructional reading strategies that are data-informed, such as those embedded in the Multi-Tiered System of Supports can foster equity in reading achievement and address the disparities highlighted by national and international assessments. By focusing on the integration of data-driven, responsive and inclusive teaching approaches, this research aims to empower multigrade teachers to better meet the diverse needs of all students, ensuring that every child can access, participate in, enjoy, and succeed in reading.

This study adopted a social constructivist, multi-site case study approach to explore inclusive reading strategies in five small schools, framed by Bronfenbrenner's PPCT model (Bronfenbrenner and Morris 2006). It examined the strategies and resources teachers use to engage every child in reading instruction, the impact of the multigrade context on instruction, and the benefits and challenges of delivering inclusive reading practices in such settings. Data collection methods included semi-structured interviews, teacher and pupil questionnaires, reflective journals, and document analysis, providing a comprehensive view of the strategies, challenges, and resources involved in fostering inclusive reading environments. The use of Bronfenbrenner's PPCT model (Bronfenbrenner and Morris 2006) allowed for an exploration of how various contextual factors influenced reading instruction, offering a deeper understanding of the multigrade classroom dynamics. Data analysis was conducted using Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis approach to identify key themes and patterns across the data (Braun and Clarke 2006).





Amie Hickey is an experienced primary school teacher with over 12 years of teaching experience, primarily in multi-grade classroom settings. She has held leadership roles as Acting Deputy Principal and APll post holder. Amie also worked for five years as a Primary Language Curriculum Advisor with PDST/ Oide, supporting schools in the implementation of the revised curriculum. Currently a PhD student in Mary Immaculate College, she is passionate about equitable reading instruction, collaboration, assessment and multi-grade education.

Reading for pleasure and teens: Why it matters and the role school librarians play in fostering it

Martina Boyle, *North Wicklow Educate Together Secondary School*

As part of her Master of Library and Information Studies degree, the author explored why reading for pleasure (RfP) matters for teens in a digital world and the role school librarians play in fostering it. The discussion is embedded in the pedagogy of reading for pleasure – how reading ‘skill’ needs reading ‘will’ for proficiency. Drawing on existing research, she discusses why RfP is important, why teens do or do not read/use the school library and assesses the RfP strategies used by school librarians.

The author found that the RfP strategies used by school librarians align with the core principles of reading for pleasure pedagogy, and with what motivates teens to read and use the school library: student-led choice, access to a diverse range of texts, the library environment. The author also found that school librarians are uniquely placed to promote a RfP ethos in a school and to complement the work of teachers, and that school librarians can support inclusion and equity targets in education.

Within Ireland there is an opportunity now to make (more) visible to politicians, policy makers and school administrators the value of a qualified school librarian to students and the wider school community. The author hopes that her paper can support this advocacy work. This paper is especially relevant for school administrators and school librarians. Drawing on existing Irish and international research the author connects RfP with school librarians, and how school librarians can contribute to better outcomes for all secondary school students.

*In 2022, **Martina Boyle** completed her Master of Library and Information Science degree in UCD. Since then she has worked as a School Librarian in North Wicklow Educate Together Secondary School and within the JCSP Demonstration Library Project.*

Placing book and library access at the heart of a primary school: A teacher – librarian collaboration to develop a culture of reading for pleasure.

Niamh Savage, *Mary Immaculate College/ Réalt na Mara NS*, &
Sinéad O'Higgins, *Waterford Libraries*

Facilitating and promoting reading for pleasure (RfP) in school settings is the subject of much research (Clark & Rumbold 2006; Hempel-Jorgensen 2018; Miller & Lesesne 2022). Research evidence indicates that this form of relational reading fosters deeper interpersonal bonds between readers (Boyask et al. 2022; De Naeghel 2014). Réalt na Mara NS, is a recently amalgamated school across a split site – focussing on RfP as a unifying activity for our pupils and teachers and as a core element of our newly emerging identity. The development of our twin libraries is central to this vision. Despite a lack of access to a library programme, sustained library resources or dedicated school librarians (Merga 2020), our vision is facilitated by a close working relationship with Waterford Libraries and underscored by the National Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy Strategy (2024).

The research inspiration and rationale for this paper is the OU Teachers as Readers findings (Cremin et al. 2014); social reading environments as part of RfP pedagogy in particular. The importance of library settings as social physical reading environments speaks to this focus, addressing not only the physical development of school libraries but also the affective and inclusive aspects which combine to foster RfP effectively (Cremin & Swann 2017; Millar and Brown 2022).





The work of developing libraries across our campuses was the natural place to begin the development of school-wide social reading environments to feed into our burgeoning reading community; harnessing Millar and Brown's (2022) essential elements of space, expertise, resources and community. This paper explores the experience to date from the perspectives of both the teacher and librarian at the heart of this ongoing process.

Niamh Savage is a deputy principal and SET in a Co. Waterford primary school, she is a PhD candidate in literacy education at Mary Immaculate College under the supervision of Dr. Josephine Brady.

Sinead O'Higgins is a Senior Executive Librarian with Waterford Libraries managing seven libraries in the Metro Area of Waterford City. Sinead has volunteered in her daughters' school for the last eight years - reading books and engaging with Niamh to create libraries and communities of readers.

Powerful Partnerships: Boosting Reading Motivation Through School-Library Collaboration Promoting equity and access to reading for all learners.

Laura Williams, Mary Immaculate College, &
Ian McArthur, Rathkeale Library

In this joint session, teacher and PhD candidate Laura Williams will be joined by Ian McArthur, librarian at Rathkeale Library in County Limerick, to explore how strong school-library partnerships can foster a love of reading and build a community of engaged readers.

Laura will share her work on using audiobooks to support struggling decoders in whole-class novel studies—challenging the idea that listening isn't reading and showing how audiobooks can be used to promote access, confidence, and joy without replacing vital decoding instruction. She will offer practical strategies to ensure these students are both receiving the targeted support they need and participating fully in shared literary experiences.

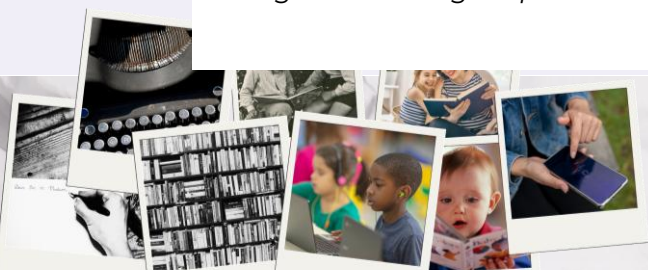
Ian will highlight the library's role in promoting reading for pleasure, increasing access to diverse reading materials, and supporting schools in developing inclusive, reader-centered environments. Together, they will offer real-world examples and actionable ideas for creating sustainable partnerships that empower all students to see themselves as readers.

This session is ideal for teachers, school leaders, and librarians interested in practical, collaborative approaches to increasing reading motivation and equity in their school communities.

Laura Williams is currently pursuing a PhD in Literacy Education at Mary Immaculate College, where her research explores the role of audiobooks in fostering reading motivation among struggling decoders and shaping reading identity. She teaches 3rd class in a DEIS Band 1 school in County Limerick and is the proud mother of a dyslexic son—her daily inspiration.

Ian McArthur has been a librarian at Rathkeale Library for the past two years, where he has focused on building strong school partnerships and promoting reading within the local community. Originally from Canada, he has lived in Ireland since 2008 and now lives in Newcastle West, where he is raising his family.

Both Laura and Ian are avid readers and passionate advocates for inclusive, joyful literacy experiences. They have worked together over the past several years to strengthen reading for pleasure across their school community.





Developing Academic Language Through Argument Speaking and Writing: Phase 1 Findings from a Classroom-Based Intervention

Shane Leonard, *DCU Institute of Education*

There is broad consensus in educational research that academic success depends not only on children's conceptual understanding but also on their proficiency in the language of schooling (Snow, 2010). Academic language, with its complex vocabulary and syntax, often poses challenges for children in upper primary as content and language demands increase (Francis & Stephens, 2018; Kempert et al., 2019). While integrated approaches to language development have become more common in subjects like science (Heppt et al., 2024) and mathematics (Franklin et al., 2010), spoken and written argument remains an underutilised yet rich context for developing academic language skills (Haas et al., 2025).

This paper reports on Phase 1 of a Design-Based Research study that targeted key features of academic language within argumentative speaking and writing. A particular contribution of the study is its focus on syntactic structures, addressing a gap in the literature that has often prioritised vocabulary. The selected syntactic features (e.g. noun groups, nominalisation) were guided by prior research identifying them as central to academic language development (Schleppegrell, 2004; Uccelli et al., 2024).

Phase 1 was implemented in a DEIS classroom with children (n=24) aged 11–12, and focused on supporting the construction of reasoned, evidence-based arguments on topical issues. Using a mixed methods design, data were gathered through researcher-designed and standardised assessments (Carrow Woolfolk, 2011) administered pre and post-intervention. The study contributes to a growing body of work that not only recognises the importance of academic language, but also seeks to make its features visible and teachable in everyday classroom practice. Preliminary findings show that explicit instruction on key linguistic features, integrated into meaningful argument tasks, supports children's ability to construct abstract and reasoned claims. The results underscore the value of embedding language-focused pedagogy within cognitively demanding practice in Irish classrooms

Shane Leonard is a primary school teacher currently on secondment to the Primary Languages Team in Oide. He is in the third year of his PhD at Dublin City University, where he is based in the School of Language, Literacy and Early Childhood. His research focuses on the development of academic language in Irish primary schools, with a particular interest in how language supports learning across the curriculum.

From Language Insecurity to Language Integration: Exploring Teacher Language Competence in Post-Primary Immersion Education

Sarah Ní Dhuinnín, *Mary Immaculate College*, &

TJ Ó Ceallaigh, *University College Cork*

Language immersion education, a form of bilingual instruction where subject content is delivered through a second, foreign, heritage, or indigenous language, aims to develop bilingual proficiency (Tedick, 2014). While immersion programmes often foster strong receptive skills in listening and reading, research consistently shows persistent inaccuracies in students' productive skills in the target language (Ó Duibhir, 2018). Mere exposure to content is insufficient for developing fluent, competent bilinguals. To fulfill their goals, immersion programmes must integrate the teaching of language and subject matter simultaneously. This integration demands that teachers possess professional competencies specific to immersion contexts, particularly advanced language proficiency (Camarata & Ó Ceallaigh, 2020). Form-Focused Instruction (FFI), which highlights language features while maintaining focus on content learning, relies heavily on teachers' language competence and specialised understanding of linguistic structure and use (Lee & Lyster, 2023; Andrews & Lin, 2017). However, many immersion teachers lack this expertise, leading to linguistic insecurity that hinders their capacity and confidence to use FFI effectively (Ó Ceallaigh, 2013; Ní Dhíorbháin et al., 2024). This paper reports on how teacher linguistic competence forms the foundation of effective





immersion pedagogy at post-primary level. Specifically, the paper examines its pivotal role in enabling teachers to meet the dual demands of content and language instruction, thereby supporting robust literacy development in the immersion classroom. The research sample included six Home Economics teachers in post-primary Gaeltacht schools, representing both L1 and L2 speakers of Irish. Anchored in a transformative paradigm and employing an embedded mixed-methods approach, the research followed a two-cycle action research design. Data were collected through classroom observations, questionnaires, stimulated recall interviews, reflective diaries, and customised professional development sessions. Thematic analysis revealed that immersion pedagogy was initially interpreted primarily as teaching through the medium of Irish, with limited focus on the deliberate integration of language and content. Additionally, findings highlighted linguistic insecurity among participants, including L1 speakers of Irish, which, at the outset of the study, constrained their willingness to trial FFI. However, a tailored professional development programme gradually supported participants in integrating FFI into their teaching, while also building their confidence and proficiency in the target language. These developments will be unpacked in the current paper, and implications for future research, practice, and policy will be outlined.

Dr. Sarah Ní Dhuinnín is an Assistant Professor with Expertise in Irish at Mary Immaculate College, Limerick. Her research focuses on immersion education, teacher language competence, and content and language integrated learning (CLIL), with particular interest in post-primary and minority language contexts.

Dr. T.J. Ó Ceallaigh is a Senior Lecturer/Associate Professor at the School of Education, University College Cork, Ireland. His main research interests focus on the pedagogy required for the successful integration of language and content instruction and assessment, with particular reference to language immersion and bilingual contexts.

Feasacht Teanga an Mhúinteora mar Bhonn agus mar Thaca don Teagasc san Fhoghlaim Chomhtháite Ábhar agus Teanga (FCÁT) sa Bhunscoil a fheidhmíonn trí mheán an Bhéarla

Nóra Ní Bheaglaoich, Bunscoil na Cathrach, An Chathair & **TJ Ó Ceallaigh**, Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh

Is cur chuige oideolaíoch nuálach é Foghlaim Chomhtháite Ábhar agus Teanga (FCÁT), a chomhtháthaíonn foghlaim an ábhair agus forbairt na teanga i gcomhthéacs oideachais amháin. Tá FCÁT dírithe ar dhá phríomhchuspóir a bhaint amach go comhuaineach: eolas ar an ábhar a chothú agus inniúlacht teanga an dalta a fhorbairt. Léiríonn an taighde go bhfuil feasacht teanga an mhúinteora lárnach i gcur i bhfeidhm rathúil an chur chuige seo (Troyan, Cammarata & Martel, 2017; Andrews, 2001, 2007). Tagraíonn feasacht teanga don eolas speisialaithe atá riachtanach do mhúinteoirí dara teanga chun tacú go comhtháite le foghlaim ábhair agus teanga. Ní leor go mbeadh an múinteoir líofa sa sprioctheanga amháin; ní mór dóibh bheith ina n-anailíseoirí cumasacha teanga, le tuiscint dhomhain ar struchtúr, feidhm agus úsáid na teanga sa teagasc. Tá sé rithábachtach, mar sin, go mbeadh múinteoirí in ann an teanga a mhúnlú, a shimpliú agus a mhúineadh go feasach chun freastal ar riachtanais éagsúla teanga agus ábhair sa seomra ranga (Andrews, 2001, 2007). Sa pháipéar seo, cíofar ról claochlaitheach na feasachta teanga sa chur chuige FCÁT, agus scrúdófar an chaoi a chuireann múinteoirí oiriúnú teanga i bhfeidhm chun tacú le foghlaim an ábhair agus na teanga ag an am céanna. Pléitear torthaí cás staidéir i mbunscoil a fheidhmíonn trí mheán an Bhéarla inár mhúin triúr bunmhúinteoirí i rang na naíonáin sóisireach matamaitic trí mheán na Gaeilge le FCÁT thar thréimhse sé seachtaine. Léiríonn sonraí ó bhreathnóireacht, dialanna machnaimh agus nótaí páirce an taighdeora gur cuid dhílis den rath sa chur i bhfeidhm seo í feasacht teanga an mhúinteora. Ina iomláine, tugann an staidéar léargas ar chumhacht claochlaitheach na feasachta teanga sa chleachtas múinteoireachta, agus ar an gcaoi a gcuirtear an teanga i bhfeidhm mar uirlis straitéiseach chun tacú go comhtháite le foghlaim na matamaitice agus na





Gaeilge. Ag deireadh an pháipéir, pléifear na himpleachtaí a bhaineann leis seo don fhorbairt ghairmiúil, don bheartas oideachais agus don cheannaireacht scoile.

*Is múinteoir bunscoile í **Nóra Ní Bheaglaoich** atá ag múineadh i scoil a fheidhmíonn trí mheán an Bhéarla ag an mbunleibhéal faoi láthair. Tá an-spéis ag Nóra i dteagasc na Gaeilge sa chomhthéacs T2 agus san fhoghlaím chomhtháite ábhar agus teanga mar chur chuige ábhartha ina leith. Tá Máistreacht san Oideachas bainte amach aici ó Choláiste Mhuire gan Smál, Luimneach (2012) agus Dochtúireacht san Oideachas ó Choláiste na hOllscoile, Corcaigh (2025).*

*Tá an **Dr T.J. Ó Ceallaigh** mar Ollamh Comhlach i Scoil an Oideachais, Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh. An phríomhspéis taighde atá aige is ea díriú ar an oideolaíocht atá ag teastáil chun teagasc na teanga agus an ábhair a chomhtháthú go rathúil, go háirithe i gcomhthéacsanna tumoideachais agus dátheangacha.*

Exploring Pre-Service Teachers' Perception of Generative AI in Content Area-Literacy Instructional Planning: A focus on Accuracy, Quality, and Developmental Appropriateness

Tonia Bauer, University of South Carolina Upstate

This study centers on pre-service teachers' perception of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) in content-area literacy instructional planning. The study occurred with six pre-service teachers, in their senior year of their undergraduate degree in a 400-level literacy course, in a public regional comprehensive university located in the Southeastern region of the United States. This course focused on evidence-based instruction grounded in the science of reading in vocabulary, comprehension, and writing strategies and methods for effective classroom practices. Through a mixed methods design, participants completed a survey, a Likert-scale, written reflections, and semi-structured interview to discuss their interactions and perceptions of planning with GenAI. The results showed a preference for using ChatGPT over Ludia. As a result of the study, pre-service teachers developed their ability to analyze output from GenAI while also creating engaging literacy units. Additionally, students identified that human oversight is necessary to ensure quality and developmental appropriateness.

***Tonia Bauer** is an Assistant Professor of Early Childhood and Elementary Education at the University of South Carolina Upstate in the United States of America. She earned her Doctor of Education in Curriculum and Instruction with a concentration in Educational Technology from the University of South Carolina, Columbia. She also holds a Bachelor of Arts from Lenoir Rhyne University and a Master of Education in Curriculum and Instruction, with a focus on children's literature, from Penn State. Originally from the eastern Caribbean island of Grenada, Dr. Bauer has spent 16 years teaching in K-5 public schools across the United States. Her research interests center on integrating technology into instruction to enhance students' vocabulary development and reading comprehension in early childhood and elementary classrooms.*

Assessing Pre-Service Teachers' Knowledge of Children's Literature

Siobhán Morrissey, University of Galway, &

Becky Long, Children's Books Ireland

Research highlights "the important connection between teachers' literate identities and their students' reading engagement and literacy outcomes" (Price and Simpson, 2025). In Ireland, one of the key success indicators in the "Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy Strategy 2024-2033" is "increased time learners in primary and post-primary schools spend reading and writing for enjoyment (2024). Cremin et al. state that a knowledge of children's literature is "surely a pre-requisite if teachers are to nurture positive attitudes and sustain and develop young readers" (2008). However, teacher education programmes in Ireland do not include mandatory modules on children's literature, meaning students lack the knowledge and training to effectively incorporate children's books into their future practice. This paper discusses the findings of our Taighde Éireann/Research Ireland funded project, which highlights significant gaps in





pre-service teachers' knowledge of children's literature and argues for the crucial need to integrate modules on children's literature in all teacher education programmes. The project to date has surveyed 151 students at Maynooth University, Mary Immaculate College, and University of Galway to determine their level of knowledge of children's books and their attitudes to reading. 77% of students were unable to name six children's book authors. Only one student named an author of colour; the majority of authors mentioned were white and English. According to the NCCA, picturebooks "act as a valuable support to children's language, literacy, and knowledge development", however 59% were unable to name any picturebook authors. 84% were unable to name any Irish-language children's author. The survey also found that only 32% of participants identified as readers. This paper, using the project's findings to date, demonstrates the necessity of embedding children's literature in teacher education programmes to address significant gaps in student teachers' knowledge of diverse, contemporary, and Irish children's authors and develop student teachers' identities as readers.

Dr Siobhán Morrissey is a lecturer in Children's Studies at the University of Galway, where she teaches modules on children's literature and culture. Siobhán regularly delivers workshops on children's literature to primary school children, including as part of the University of Galway's Youth Academy and Uni4U outreach programme. She is the president of the Irish Society for the Study of Children's Literature (ISSCL).

Dr Becky Long is the Education Outreach Manager for Children's Books Ireland, the national charity and arts organisation that champions every child's right to develop a love of reading. Becky holds a BA in English Studies, an MPhil in Children's Literature, and a Doctorate in Irish Children's Literature from Trinity College Dublin and has a background in youth facilitation and outreach work. She also lectures in children's literature in Trinity College Dublin.

Rage, rage against the dying of literacy: the endeavours of the student teacher to integrate pedagogy, skills, words and wisdom in the inclusive post-primary classroom
Claire Redmond, Maryfield College

Throughout history, from the Library of Alexandria to the Renaissance, the ability to read and write has been a cornerstone on which civilisations have built their cultures and economies. This paper will reflect on the endeavours of the student teacher to focus on literacy in the battle for meaningful skills transfer in the post-primary classroom where digital distractions and socio-economic disparities threaten to erode this fundamental human right.

This paper will present insights from facilitating student teachers in building their capacity to engage with pupils and cross-curricular initiatives in the post-primary classroom, where intervention, participation, inclusion and diversity benchmark the core teaching methodologies for pedagogy and practice.

The paper will draw on approaches to literacy in the context of the Framework for Junior Cycle (NCCA, 2015) and Towards Learning: An Overview of Senior Cycle Education and related strategies such as the Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy Strategy 2024-2033: Every learner, from birth to young adulthood.

Literacy supports such as co-teaching and assistive technology are explored in the collaborative environment in which the student teacher endeavours to use creative strategies and methodologies to empower learners in a compelling and effective classroom environment.

It is hoped that delegates will consider the exploration of literacy initiatives with a view to utilising the ideas in their own practice and in working with student teachers.

Dr Claire Redmond is a post-primary teacher in Maryfield College, Dublin. She has also worked extensively on the Professional Master in Education (PME) programme with student teachers in Trinity College and Hibernia College. She is currently working on





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delivering an interactive workshop in her school where initial teachers share their practice with colleagues. Her research interests are in initial teacher education, literacy supports, English as an Additional Language (EAL) and enabling access for all pupils to the curriculum in the inclusive classroom. She has written several textbooks in this area.

Identity-Affirming Literacies in Schools: A Practitioner Study of LGBTQ+ YA Book Clubs
Jen McLaughlin Cahill, *Graduate School of Education - University of Pennsylvania*

The 2025 Literacy Association of Ireland conference asks us to consider what we “need to do to ensure that literacy achievement and engagement is a reality for all.” As I argue in this paper, amid a tenuous US political environment that intends to silence the voices of racially diverse people and those who are LGBTQ+, documenting sites of possibility can contribute to transforming schools and imagining humanizing possibilities for secondary literacy (Francois & McLaughlin Cahill, 2025). Motivated by the desire to understand a site that is striving to promote humanizing literacy learning experiences, I present a practitioner study on queer-inclusive literacy pedagogy to ask, How do students respond to efforts to bridge their lives to their in-school learning? This work is needed to achieve equity, inclusion, and justice in U.S. public schools and beyond.

The rise in educational gag order legislation that seeks to ban ‘divisive’ concepts for teachers in K-12 schools in the US (Movement Advancement Project, 2022) has politicized the existence of queer, trans, and non-binary people. I draw on practitioner memos and artifact data to show how a teacher-designed, whole-class book club centered on reading, writing, and discussing LGBTQ+-themed young adult (YA) literature nurtured students’ independence, critical consciousness, and literacy engagement, as they worked collectively to learn (more) about disrupting dominant narratives about LGBTQ+ youth. YA book clubs created opportunities for students to collectively read, respond, and articulate their thinking about literature with peers. Many students insisted on LGBTQ+ rights and liberation, critiqued various forms of oppression, and made reflective, humanizing connections to characters and themes. To describe the impact and importance of students’ learning about disrupting harmful narratives about diverse genders and sexualities, this paper highlights students’ voices and perspectives, as well as the instruction and text selections that supported teachers’ efforts to disrupt cis/heteronormativity and affirm youth at the intersections of multiple, marginalized identities.

Dr. Jen McLaughlin Cahill is a Lecturer of Educational Practice in the Literacy Studies program at the University of Pennsylvania’s Graduate School of Education. She taught 6–12 English in NYC for 23 years, developing culturally relevant, queer- and trans-inclusive literacy pedagogy and fostering affirming climates for LGBTQIA+ youth, educators, and families.

Decolonising literacy: Integrating Irish Traveller pedagogical principles into the teaching of literacy

Anne Marie Kavanagh, *DCU Institute of Education*

Framed by culturally sustaining pedagogy (CSP) (Paris & Alim, 2017), this conceptual paper examines literacy as a culturally situated and sustaining practice. Reflective of Indigenous pedagogies, Irish Traveller pedagogies emphasise storytelling, oral traditions, learning from the natural environment, community engagement, and older generations as teachers (Kavanagh & Ní Cassaithe, 2024). These methods challenge the dominant Eurocentric frameworks that prioritise standardised literacy texts and individualistic learning. When brought into the literacy classroom, these asset-based approaches (Paris & Alim, 2017) offer rich opportunities to reframe literacy as a relational, holistic, and multimodal process. They also support the broader goal of decolonising the curriculum.

The paper will share practical examples of how traditional stories and oral storytelling can act as tools for narrative development and comprehension, and how a collaborative approach is reflective of the collectivist values of Traveller culture (Kavanagh & Ní





Cassaithe, 2024). While selecting traditional stories can serve as an accessible entry point (Kelly et al., 2021), this paper moves beyond culturally representative literature and illuminates the transformative potential of CSPs that are deeply embedded in practice. From a justice perspective, they illuminate how literacy lessons can serve as powerful platforms for embedding social justice principles, equipping children and young people with the critical literacies needed to navigate and challenge the complex inequities of the twenty-first century.

Anne Marie Kavanagh (PhD, FHEA) is an Assistant Professor at Dublin City University. She teaches and researches in the areas of intercultural education, ethical education, social justice education, climate justice education, and human rights education. A former primary teacher, she has worked extensively with undergraduate and postgraduate student teaches since 2013, and with in-service teachers and principals for over two decades. Recognised nationally and internationally for her expertise in critical and values-based education approaches, she is committed to producing justice-oriented research with socially and pedagogically transformative potential.

From Empathy to Action: Empowering Early Childhood and Primary Students to Create Change Through Reading, Writing, and Research

Chris Hass, James Madison University &

Katie Kelly, Furman University

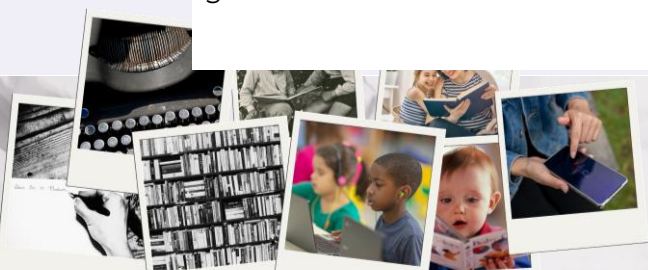
As educators, we have a responsibility to prepare young people to be critically engaged global citizens. Already, we see examples of what is possible when looking at the powerful work children such as Thandiwe Abdullah (racial justice), Greta Thurnberg (climate change), Malala Yousafza (access to education), and David Hogg (gun violence) have done to create safer, healthier, and more just communities for all. We can only imagine the efforts their teachers made, in support of all they were learning at home, to help these young people attain the knowledge, skills, and agency that has served them and their communities so well.

In this session, participants will have an opportunity to explore how literacy instruction can serve as a vehicle for scaffolding young children into civic action by helping them: (1) build greater empathy, (2) become aware of important issues, (3) engage in productive dialogue, (4) conduct critical research, and (5) take action on their convictions. Each of these skills are instrumental in forming the foundation for responsible citizenship. In detailing what this work can look like in early childhood and primary classrooms, we will provide numerous examples from teachers and children whose efforts to use literacy as a means of creating a more just and sustainable world disprove any claims that young children just aren't old enough to understand what's going on or to do anything about it.

Participants will not only hear stories and view clips of teachers doing this work alongside their own students, but engage, first-hand, in some of the very same learning structures they can bring back to their classrooms. From this session, participants will leave feeling more prepared to use their literacy instruction as a means of supporting students to rise up and take action.

Chris Hass is an assistant professor of early childhood and elementary education at James Madison University in Harrisonburg, VA, USA. His teaching and scholarship focus on culturally relevant teaching, social justice education, and student activism.

Katie Kelly is a professor of education at Furman University in Greenville, South Carolina, USA. Dr. Kelly's research interests include teacher preparation and development in the area of literacy instruction with an emphasis on critical literacy, multiliteracies, and culturally sustaining literacy practices to foster compassionate global citizens who advocate for social justice and equity.





Parents' and Teacher's Beliefs of Preschool Literacy Instruction and the Home Literacy Environment

Lou Ann Roberto & John Strong, *University at Buffalo*

The purpose of this study was to investigate parents' and teachers' beliefs about preschool literacy instruction and the home literacy environment (HLE). Preschool literacy instruction and the HLE are critical in developing early language and literacy skills (e.g., letter knowledge, receptive and expressive language) in preschool-aged children. In this study, I developed and validated a survey of parents' and teachers' beliefs about literacy instruction in preschool classrooms and the HLE, the Survey of Preschool Literacy Instruction (SPLI). Experts first provided feedback on the SPLI's validity by assessing each item for appropriate content through cognitive interviews. Next, a 40-item pilot survey was distributed to investigate the SPLI's reliability and validity and report parents' and teachers' beliefs about code-based and meaning-based instruction. Then, a Principal Component Analysis (PCA) and an Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) were used to investigate the construct validity of the SPLI and reduce the number of items to 25. After the final survey data collection, standard reliability analysis procedures were used to investigate the SPLI's internal consistency reliability, and a Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was used to confirm the SPLI's factor structure. Independent and paired samples t-tests were used to compare parents' and teachers' beliefs about literacy instruction and to determine whether their beliefs about code-based and meaning-based instruction differed.

The results of the PCA and EFA indicated two principal components in the data, which were named code-based and meaning-based instruction. Results of the CFA on the final survey indicated that the model fit indices fell within the acceptable ranges, provided a good fit to the data, and supported a two-factor model. Results of the independent samples t-tests revealed no significant difference between the parents' and the teachers' beliefs about literacy instruction. However, paired samples t-tests revealed a significant difference favoring meaning-based instruction over code-based instruction for both preschool teachers and parents of preschool children.

Lou Ann Roberto taught regular and special education in the Utah and Connecticut public schools for over 30 years. She earned her BA in political science and psychology at York University in Toronto, Canada and her M.Ed. in special education at the University of Utah. She recently earned a PhD. in Curriculum Instruction and the Science of Learning at the University at Buffalo. Her research focused on understanding parents and teachers beliefs of preschool curricula in the classroom and the home literacy environment so parents and teachers can collaborate to help develop and improve preschool children's early literacy skills.

Critically and Collaboratively Engaging Pupils, Parents and Teachers with Literacy in a Designated Disadvantaged Primary School

Ciara Barry, *University College Cork*

While working in a primary school in Ireland for the past decade that serves a marginalised population, the quest to improve literacy outcomes for pupils seemed like the impossible task. However, rather than viewing people who live in areas characterised by social and economic disadvantage through a deficit lens, capitalising on their lived experiences and interests can serve as a catalyst for motivating and stimulating literacy instruction. Working with six target children in a senior class, this paper will explore how implementing a 'funds of knowledge' (Moll et al. 1992) and 'funds of identity' (Esteban-Guitart and Moll 2014) approach to literacy instruction can be transformative as pupils begin to share deeply personal artefacts with the researcher who is afforded the privileged opportunity of peeping into the world of the child, from the child's own perspective, to reveal their authentic identities. Utilising these individually chosen artefacts to design literacy lessons is documented in this paper, along with the emergence of critical literacy as a powerful and contextual pedagogical approach.





Ciara Barry is the Deputy Principal of an Urban DEIS Band 1 school in Cork City. She completed her PhD research in University College Cork which focussed on engaging with literacy critically and collaboratively with pupils, parents and teachers. Ciara holds a M.Ed in Educational Leadership and Management and a Post-Graduate Diploma in Special Educational Needs. Her research interests include educational disadvantage, literacy instruction and inclusive pedagogies.

Trends in Home Literacy Environment of Low-and High-Achieving Pupils in Ireland: PIRLS 2016 & 2021

Sarah McAteer, Educational Research Centre

Home is where many children first engage in activities that can aid the development of reading skills, before starting formal education. As children's first educators, parents are in the valuable position of being able to spend time with children, express their views on subjects, and hand down habits or skills. All of which means that parents can carry more influence on pupils than others in their lives. The importance of parental support has been emphasised in the National Strategy to Improve Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy (2023). It is important to understand pupils' educational home environment when developing educational supports that will encourage pupils to learn to the best of their ability. Yet in doing so, it is important to differentiate between the supports required for pupils at different achievement levels. Lower-achieving pupils can have different needs to higher achieving pupils. Therefore, exploring the educational environments that each group of pupils' experience can help in establishing effective educational supports and policy.

This analysis aims to examine home educational factors that are associated with the academic achievement of pupils in Ireland who took part in subsequent cycles of the PIRLS Study. The analysis identified 4th grade pupils in 2016, and 5th grade pupils in 2021, achieving the highest-and lowest 25% in reading. The selected variables are from PIRLS questionnaires completed by participating pupils and parents. The variables included were parent education level, parents like reading, parents' enjoyment of reading, parents' educational expectations for students, home resources for learning and early literacy activities and early literacy tasks. Analysis at present has not been fully completed, but consists of presenting descriptive statistics, highlighting any similarities, differences and major themes among low- and high performing pupils across cycles of PIRLS. Conclusions will be drawn from the analysis, as will recommendations for educational policy.

Sarah McAteer is a Research Associate at the Educational Research Centre Dublin and is currently working as Data Manager in the administration of PIRLS 2026. Sarah has previously worked as part of the national team conducting PISA 2018, and on analysis and reporting of PIRLS 2016 and PIRLS 2021 studies.





PARALLEL SESSIONS B - ABSTRACTS

Symposium on Children's Writing: Implementing Evidence-based Approaches in Diverse Primary School Contexts

Eithne Kennedy, DCU Centre for Literacy Research Policy and Practice; **Vera Busse**, Universität Münster, **Pia Christin Sieveke**, Universität Münster; **Gerry Shiel**, DCU Centre for Literacy Research Policy and Practice

Writing plays a crucial role in educational achievement in general and the successful transition from primary to secondary school. This symposium addresses the impact of evidence-based approaches to teaching writing in diverse contexts on both children and their teachers.

1: Vera Busse, Universität Münster/University of Münster, Germany

Enhancing writing and writing motivation among diverse students in Grades 3-4

Writing plays a crucial role in educational achievement in general and the successful transition from primary to secondary school. Our quasi-experimental study aimed to enhance writing and writing motivation among diverse primary school students. The sample included 846 children (Grades 3-4) across nine schools. Teachers in the experimental group participated in a multi-component professional learning intervention (PLI) focused on evidence-based teaching of writing, emphasizing process-oriented writing and the importance of feedback, among other writing supports, which were implemented in their regular classrooms. We assessed text length and writing quality through texts produced in response to picture prompts, which were administered at three time points (pre- post-and follow-up). In addition, we measured self-efficacy and writing enjoyment (pre-post). The data were analyzed using multilevel modelling with children nested within classes. The intervention had a significant effect on narrative writing quality from pre-to post-test, and learning gains were largely sustained on the follow-up assessment. Text length and writing self-efficacy increased in both the experimental and the control groups, while there was a small decline in writing enjoyment. We discuss findings concerning treatment fidelity that underscore the central role of teachers in supporting writing growth.

2: Pia Christin Sieveke, Universität Münster/University of Münster, Germany

Impact of Professional Development on Primary School Teachers' Implementation of a Multi-component Writing Intervention

While the effectiveness of evidence-based writing practices is well established, transferring these practices into everyday classroom instruction remains challenging. This study investigates how primary school teachers (Grades 3-4) implemented a multi-component writing intervention in their classrooms, following participation in professional development. Using a mixed-methods approach, both quantitative and qualitative data were analysed to identify factors that influence uptake and implementation of evidence-based writing practices in classroom instruction. Teachers reported improved writing knowledge, yet their implementation varied considerably, shaped by perceptions of acceptance, appropriateness, and feasibility. Students taught by high implementers showed larger writing gains than students taught by low implementers. Our findings underscore the importance of addressing teacher perceptions and implementation conditions to enhance sustainable implementation of evidence-based writing practices in primary education.

3: Eithne Kennedy and Gerry Shiel, DCU Centre for Literacy Research Policy and Practice,

Impact of a Write to Read Intervention on Children in First Grade with English as a Second Language





The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of a process-based writing intervention on the quality of First grade children's narrative and informational (report) writing, with particular emphasis on the impact on EAL students. The sample comprised First grade students (N = 160) distributed across in seven classes in five urban primary schools situated in low-SES communities. Prior to the study, data were gathered from teachers on their current approaches to teaching writing, time allocated to teaching writing, and perceptions of children's motivation, strengths and weaknesses. Students completed two pre-intervention writing tasks and two post-intervention tasks, which were scored using the Write to Read rubric – a analytical multi-dimensional rubric (Kennedy & Shiel, 2022, 2025). The 10-week intervention, which included the establishment of a professional learning community for participating teachers, focused on the implementation of writing strategies and the accommodations that can be made for struggling writers and those with EAL, based on a process approach to teaching writing (Graham, 2025; Graham et al., 2012/2018; Westerlund & Brasser, 2021). The data were analysed using multi-level modelling, and will estimate effects of the intervention on different dimensions of writing for children with EAL. The outcomes are discussed with reference to the need to moderate language use alongside writing, and to ensure that structure is provided during instruction.

Vera Busse is a Professor of Education and Multilingualism at the University of Münster. She works on a range of educational issues pertaining to language learning and to teaching in linguistically and culturally diverse classrooms. In particular, she has a keen interest in literacy development.

Pia Christin Sieveke is a doctoral student at the University of Münster, Germany. She is affiliated to the Working Group on Multilingualism and Education, under the direction of Professor Vera Busse.

Eithne Kennedy is a full professor (Literacy Studies) and Programme Chair of the Master of Education in Literacy Professional Practice (MEdLPP) in the School of Language, Literacy and Early Childhood Education at DCU. She is the director of the newly formed DCU Centre for Literacy Research, Policy and Practice. As the director of the Write to Read research project, she works collaboratively with schools and communities to create powerful literacy environments that motivate and engage children as readers, writers and thinkers.

Gerry Shiel, formerly a Research Fellow at the Educational Research Centre, Dublin, has overseen several large-scale assessments at national level including the OECD Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) and national assessments in reading literacy and mathematics. He works with Eithne Kennedy on the Write to Read project, a longitudinal university and school literacy project.

Ceacht léitheoireachta Gaeilge: Léitheoireacht Ghrúpa le *In Ord agus in Eagar* sa Seomra Ranga

Jacqueline de Brún, Institiúid Oideachais OCBÁC & **Róisín Ní Mhulláin**, COGG

Bhí an tionscadal *In Ord agus in Eagar* againn 2024-2025, nuair a iarradh ar mhúinteoirí ó bhunscoileanna agus ó chomhthéacsanna éagsúla, fíorleabhair Ghaeilge a léamh le páistí sna meán agus sna hardranganna, tástáil a dhéanamh ar chumais léitheoireachta agus aiseolas a thabhairt. Cuirfear príomhthorthaí an tionscadail agus an fhoilseacháin *In Ord agus In Eagar* i láthair. Tugann *In Ord agus in Eagar* cur síos dúinn ar na gnéithe a dhéanann leabhar Gaeilge furasta nó dúshlánach do léitheoirí na Gaeilge agus gur féidir leabhair oiriúnacha a thabhairt do léitheoirí óga ag a gcumais féin. Sa cheardlann seo, roghnófar leabhair ón tionscadal le ceardlann idirghníomhach a reáchtáil ar an léitheoireacht ghrúpa. Pléifear an bealach le grúpaí léitheoireachta a eagrú agus a stiúradh i gceacht léitheoireachta Gaeilge, le freastal ar chumais éagsúla léitheoireachta agus le díriú ar riachtanais foghlama ar leith sna ceachtanna léitheoireachta. Tá





féidearthachtaí ann an tionscadal seo a chur i bhfeidhm i scoileanna T1 agus T2 agus fáilte roimh chách!

The In Ord agus in Eagar project took place during 2024-25, during which teachers from scoileanna Gaeltachta and Gaelscoileanna, were asked to read Irish-language books with children in middle and senior classes, to assess reading abilities, and to provide feedback. The main findings of the project and the In Ord agus in Eagar publication will be presented. In Ord agus in Eagar describes features that make an Irish-language book easy or challenging for Irish readers and shows that appropriate books can be provided for young readers at their own level. In this workshop, books from the project will be selected for an interactive group reading workshop. The session will explore how to organise and lead reading groups in Irish lessons, in a way that addresses a range of reading abilities and focuses on particular learning needs in reading lessons. There is potential for this project to be implemented in both T1 and T2 schools and fáilte roimh chách!

*Is léachtóir í **Jacqueline de Brún** in Ollscoil Chathair Bhaile Átha Cliath a bhfuil taighde leathan déanta aici ar theagasc agus ar fhoghlaim na léitheoireachta. Tá taithí aici ar dhearadh clár léitheoireachta don luathléitheoireacht agus clár fónaice don Ghaeilge.*

*Is oifigeach oideachais í **Róisín Ní Mhulláin** leis An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta (COGG). Is iad na réimsí taighde atá aici ná litríocht Ghaeilge na n-óg agus an scíthléitheoireacht agus an léitheoireacht neamhspleách.*

Beliefs, Best Practices and Common Questions: A Science of Reading Story and Framework from the Perspective of One American University

Cillian O'Sullivan, Kevin Flanigan, Aideen O'Flynn, & Chiara Sheahan,
West Chester University

The Science of Reading (SoR) movement has swept across the U.S. and many countries worldwide. The presenters, faculty and graduate students from the Literacy Department of West Chester University (in the U.S.), will tell our story, focusing on how we prepare teachers to teach the SoR in the context of a broader, comprehensive approach to literacy. As the institution that prepares the most teachers in the state of Pennsylvania, we are dedicated to providing a broad, integrated, and evidence-based approach to literacy instruction that aligns with the SoR, but does not neglect other critical factors that aren't always discussed in the context of SoR, such as engagement and diversity, equity, and inclusion (Aukerman & Schuldt, 2021; Duke & Cartwright, 2021; Petscher et al., 2020).

To this end, we created the CLIF model of literacy instruction. The CLIF (Comprehension Literacy Instruction Framework) is a framework for literacy instruction that highlights the factors influencing student learning outside the classroom, inside the classroom, and inside the reader. In this interactive and hands-on workshop, we will explore and discuss (1) the CLIF model, (2) structured literacy, (3) answers to common questions teachers ask about the SoR, and (4) evidence-based strategies and instructional practices teachers can use in their classrooms the very next day to support their students' literacy development.

Kevin Flanigan, PhD, is a professor and graduate coordinator in the Literacy Department at West Chester University (U.S.) He works in the WCU Reading Center along with master's students to assess and teach children and young adults who struggle to read and write. A former middle-grade classroom teacher and reading specialist/coach, Dr. Flanigan researches and writes about developmental word knowledge and interventions for students with reading difficulties and challenges. He is coauthor of several books, including *Assessment for Reading Instruction*, *Words Their Way for Struggling Readers*, *Literacy Intervention in the Middle Grades* and *Developing Word Recognition*.





Aideen O'Flynn is a primary school teacher and current M.Ed. in Literacy student at West Chester University of Pennsylvania.

Cillian O'Sullivan is a primary school teacher and assistant principal at an urban, multi-denominational school in Cork. He is a graduate of the M.Ed. in Literacy programme at West Chester University of Pennsylvania.

Chiara Sheahan is a primary school teacher at an infant school in Clare. She is currently undertaking doctoral studies at Mary Immaculate College. She is also a graduate of the M.Ed. in Literacy programme at West Chester University of Pennsylvania.

Literacy practices in The National Assessments of Mathematics and English Reading (NAMER) 2021.

Joanne Kiniry & Sharon Nelis, Educational Research Centre

The National Assessments of Mathematics and English Reading (NAMER) are assessments administered to a representative sample of Second and Sixth Class pupils in Ireland. As well as measuring pupils' achievement in English Reading and mathematics, contextual information is gathered through pupil, teacher and school principal questionnaires. This presentation discusses data from the NAMER 2021 Context Report which offers insight into the literacy practices of pupils, teachers and schools in May 2021, a period of upheaval caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. School-level literacy practices are explored, with attention given to achievement of Second class pupils and relevant policy. Literacy practices examined include reading at home and school, reading for enjoyment, the use of digital devices for literacy practice and popular classroom practices and programmes. Trends in the literacy practices of pupils will be examined with the previous NAMER cycle of 2014. Findings are discussed in the context of results from international studies such as PIRLS and TIMSS.

Joanne Kiniry is a Research Associate specialising in Reading Literacy and Assessment Development. Having contributed to many projects in the ERC, including the 2009 and 2014 National Assessments, Joanne is project manager for the 2021 National Assessments. In tandem with her work in the ERC, Joanne is a doctoral student at the DCU Institute of Education.

Sharon Nelis is a Research Associate at the ERC and is working on the evaluation of DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools). She is previously published on the performance and the wider context of students in DEIS and Non-DEIS schools using National Assessments and PISA data.

International Perspectives: How might we improve reading across the whole of Europe? The EC report, Effective Practices for Literacy Teaching, has some answers- and puts a fresh emphasis on the importance of talk, reading aloud, and small group work- from pre-school to further education.

Colin Harrison, University of Nottingham

Following COVID, PISA reading achievement scores across Europe gave a cause for concern, and as a response to this, the European Commission asked an international group of reading experts to put together a report drawing upon the latest evidence-based research on how reading should be taught. That report is now free to download, and it includes many examples of good classroom practice. In this paper the lead author of the report highlights some key findings, and invites the audience to offer their own views on these. The report places an emphasis that has perhaps not always been seen in the past on the importance of children's talk. The authors argue that it is important for every teacher (and every parent) to understand how enormously valuable it is for children who are learning to read to sing songs, to hear stories and poems read aloud, and to participate in conversations about what they have read and heard. But it's not a good idea to simply ask children to get in a group and read. Most children will work well in a group only if they have a clear task and a role that they understand.





'Reciprocal teaching' is the best-known approach to this. A research review of over 800 papers on educational achievement reported that reciprocal teaching was one of the most valuable approaches available to teachers for improving comprehension. The session offers an explanation of why reciprocal teaching is so transformative, and why it needs to figure more prominently in the reading curriculum, in both primary and secondary education.

Colin Harrison is Emeritus Professor of Literacy Studies in Education at the University of Nottingham. He was a founding editor of the *Journal of Research in Reading*, and is a Past President of the UK Reading Association. He was awarded the International Citation of Merit from the International Reading Association in 2010.

Big Bang from Small Groups

Virginia Quinn Mooney, Goyen Foundation

The session will provide the research and science behind small group instruction. You will enter the structured literacy classroom with videos showcasing best practice and come away with actionable practices to use tomorrow. Step into the classroom of a highly effective structured literacy teacher and experience best practices in action for small group foundational instruction. This engaging presentation includes real classroom videos of students and teacher interactions that bring the "how" and "why" of targeted small group instruction to life.

Grounded in the research of Dr. Matt Burns, this session emphasizes that small group instruction must be intentional, data-driven, and responsive to student needs. Participants will observe a range of small groups, each tailored to specific instructional levels—from students in the alphabetic stage to those working with uncontrolled text.

Dr. Holly Lane's work will also be highlighted, reinforcing how well-designed, data-informed small groups can effectively address gaps in students' foundational literacy skills.

Participants will leave with a toolkit of actionable strategies that can be implemented immediately in their classrooms. In addition, they will see how classrooms can be structured so that all students are meaningfully engaged—even when the teacher is working with a small group.

This session offers valuable insight and practical guidance for educators who are striving to meet the diverse needs of their learners. With so much asked of teachers, this is a timely opportunity to provide support, clarity, and inspiration for delivering impactful Tier II instruction through small groups.

With over 20 years of classroom experience, **Virginia Quinn Mooney** is a passionate educator and literacy leader dedicated to promoting best practices in foundational reading instruction.

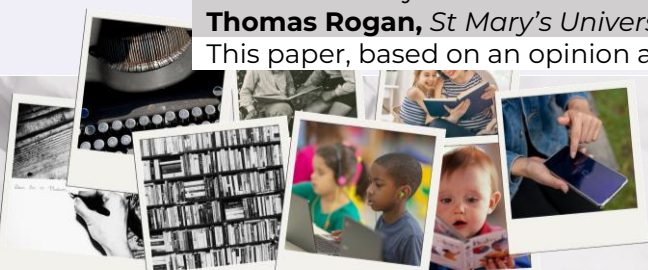
As the founder of *Teachers Teach Teachers*, a virtual training forum that has reached thousands of educators, Virginia has created a powerful platform for professional learning and collaboration. She also serves as a moderator and group expert for the widely respected *What I Should Have Learned in College* Facebook page, where she supports a growing community of educators seeking clarity and confidence in their literacy instruction.

She has been featured on the popular podcasts *Melissa and Lori Love Literacy* and *Triple R*, as well as a bonus episode of the groundbreaking series *Sold a Story*.

Language teachers of Modern Foreign Languages (MFL) in mainstream primary schools – what can they learn from Irish-Medium (IM) practitioners?

Thomas Rogan, St Mary's University College, Belfast

This paper, based on an opinion article, explores how primary Modern Foreign





Language (MFL) teachers in mainstream schools can enhance their pedagogy by adopting effective strategies from Irish-Medium Education (IME). As a form of immersion education delivered primarily through Irish - a minority language - IME provides a valuable model for second language acquisition through sustained exposure, contextual learning, and integrated language use.

The paper identifies three key insights: the benefits of immersive practices, the importance of purposeful communication, and the role of a positive language-learning culture. These elements demonstrate how MFL teaching in mainstream primary settings can be enriched.

I argue that aligning MFL pedagogy with IME principles can lead to more engaging, effective, and authentic second language learning experiences in primary education.

Thomas Rogan is a Senior Lecturer in Irish Medium Education at St Mary's University College, Belfast. A former primary school teacher in an Irish medium school, his research interests include immersion education, bilingual education, and the support of learners with additional needs.

MFL in the Irish Primary Classroom: How does a CLIL-based approach integrating French and Music through 'CeoLingua' support multimodal literacy and cross-linguistic awareness?

Mairéad Ní Bhriain, Mary Immaculate College,

Francis Ward, DCU Institute of Education, &

Orfhlaith Ní Bhriain, Irish World Academy of Music and Dance, University of Limerick

Definitions of literacy have evolved significantly in recent years, expanding beyond traditional considerations of reading and writing to encompass a wide range of skills necessary for meaningful communication. In line with the New London Group's Multiliteracies framework (1996), which highlights the diverse communication modes of 21st century society, this paper examines the literacy affordances of a new multimodal CLIL resource entitled CeoLingua, wherein the teaching of Modern Foreign Languages (MFL) at beginner level is combined with the teaching of music in primary schools. The paper argues that foregrounding a 'sound over symbol' approach to both the teaching of music and language affords children spaces for exploration and performance, helps develop their confidence, and offers differentiated pathways to communication which draw on their sense of sound, rhythm and musicality.

The paper details the collaborative design process behind CeoLingua – a process shaped by intentional focus on aural as well as linguistic modes of learning – and presents segments of data gathered from children and teachers involved in the in-classroom pilots, highlighting how this CLIL approach can support the teaching and development of multimodal literacy and cross-linguistic awareness within the primary classroom in Ireland. Drawing on analytical frameworks of multimodal social semiotics (Mills, Unsworth, Jewitt and Kress), the analysis will consider potential affordances of music and language for communication, meaning-making, and language acquisition, broadening the concept of literacy beyond the traditional dyad of reading and writing.

More broadly, it will contribute to emerging scholarship – most notably by the Graz Group (2017) – surrounding the deeper benefits of CLIL as a pathway to the acquisition of pluriliteracies. Equally, this paper offers timely insights for ongoing discussions surrounding the value, efficacy and enactment of the new Primary Language Curriculum and, most particularly, the formal introduction of MFL at Primary level for the first time.

Cleachtas teanga na n-ábhar oidí i mbunscoileanna lán-Ghaeilge san OSI/Language practices of student teachers in Irish medium primary schools in SEE

Sarah Murray, Marino Institute of Education

In recent years, there has been much policy development in Irish medium education, including the Policy for Gaeltacht Education (2017-2022) (DES, 2017) the 20 Year Strategy for Irish (2010-2030) (Government of Ireland, 2010), and more recently the consultation





process to develop a policy for Irish Medium Schools outside of the Gaeltacht (DE, 2023). This, in addition to the restructuring of the Primary School Curriculum (Government of Ireland, 1999) to the Primary Curriculum Framework (NCCA, 2023), has caused much development and change, particularly for Irish medium primary schools. It has been recommended that schools receive 'guidance on immersion education...CLIL...and form focused teaching' (DE, 2023: 22), i.e. the specific ways in which Irish medium schools should teach language. It has also been recommended that initial teacher education should provide specific modules on immersive education, in addition to methodologies on how best to teach language in these settings (DE, 2023). Based on these recommendations, this paper will discuss proposed doctoral research on how pre-service primary teachers are teaching language in Irish medium settings, specifically in social and environmental education (SEE) lessons. It will refer to literature already available on the topic, from an international and Irish context, in addition to the rationale for the research. Finally, it will refer to the qualitative approach that will be used for the proposed research, such as reflective diaries, interviews, CPD, and observation.

Sarah Murray is an assistant lecturer in Gaeilge and SESE at Marino Institute of Education. She previously worked as a primary school teacher in an Irish medium setting. Sarah has a particular interest in CLIL, language acquisition in immersive education settings, and sociolinguistics. She is starting her doctoral studies in Trinity College Dublin.

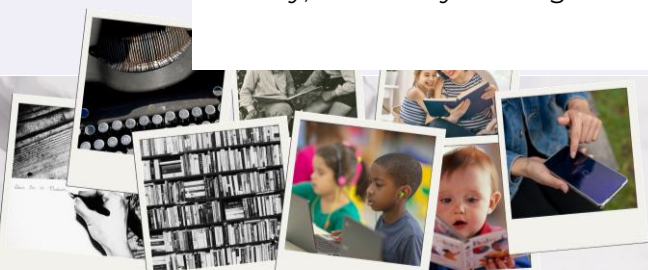
Developing babies' and toddlers' oral language development through a slow relational pedagogy

Geraldine French, DCU Institute of Education

Children are born primed to engage with people, to explore, learn and make meaning from the world around them. The importance of the first two years specifically have been highlighted in relation to the overall rapid development, in particular for marginalised children. "Interventions during this period can offset the effects of trauma and deprivation (OECD, 2025, p.52). Studies which cross disciplines from neuroscience, psychology, machine learning and education have further confirmed that language is developmentally linked with cognition and social processes (Dalli, 2014). Oral language development from birth to four years predicts reading comprehension in later years (Language and Reading Research Consortium & Chiu, 2018).

All the above points to the need for babies and toddlers to have knowledgeable, responsive and 'attuned' early childhood educators and low stress appropriate environments (Dalli et al., 2011; Melhuish et al., 2015). Responsive teaching was associated with development across social and cognitive domains, and with gains in early language and literacy skills (Hamre et al, 2014). In the Irish policy context, the role of slow relational pedagogy (French, 2021; French & McKenna, 2022; French, 2023) which acknowledges that children need to be anchored by the emotional support of an adult in order to be free to learn and thrive, has gained ground (Government of Ireland 2025). We know that supporting "meaningful interactions between children" and adults is key (OECD, 2025, p. 14). What babies and toddlers experience from moment to moment is what drives their development and emotional well-being in the present and the future. This paper addresses what, why and how of slow relational pedagogy to enable oral language development in babies and toddlers.

Geraldine French is an Associate Professor, Head of School of Language, Literacy and Early Childhood Education, Programme Chair of the Master of Education in Early Childhood Education and Senior Fellow of Advance HE (SFHEA) in the Institute of Education, Dublin City University. Her most recent research included leading the literature review to update Aistear and the development of the revised national literacy, numeracy and digital literacy strategy (from an early childhood perspective).





Locating Preschool Literacy Practices

Clara Fiorentini, *Marino Institute of Education*

"The preschool years offer a unique window of time to support young children in developing emergent and early literacy skills prior to formal schooling. Ultimately, optimal emergent literacy support and early literacy learning experiences in preschool settings are dependent on educator knowledge and competence. While research on the educative nature of early childhood education demonstrates the crucial role of the early childhood educator in micro- and mesosystemic interactions, research demonstrating the role of the preschool educator as an early literacy educator, continues to be sparse. This research study explores early literacy practice and provision within the two final years of early childhood education in Ireland prior to beginning formal primary school education, more commonly known as the ECCE years. Reflecting on a systems-based approach to preschool literacy provision and the nature of meaningful interactions, this study acknowledges the unique and dynamic role of the preschool educator as an early literacy educator and the factors affecting the potential of their individual influence on children's early literacy learning experiences and development across the preschool years. Through a Bioecological lens, this study considers what currently informs existing early literacy practices in Irish preschools and unpacks a range of ongoing challenges associated with preschool literacy provision in terms of educator knowledge, pedagogical practices, resourcing, and broader sector-wide issues. The findings of this study offer valuable insights into patterns within existing priorities for preschool literacy practices, with particular attention to accommodations for, and value of, the read aloud as an intentional early literacy method and proximal process in the preschool years. Key recommendations for policy and practice in relation to preschool literacy provision and the quality of preservice educator literacy training are identified in the context of preschool and national domains.

Clara Maria Fiorentini is a lecturer in Literacy and Early Childhood Education at Marino Institute of Education. Clara was the President of LAI for 2024.

Conceptualising a Vocabulary Learning Continuum for Children Aged 3–6: A Thematic Literature Review

Alison Nulty, *DCU Institute of Education*

Vocabulary develops rapidly between the ages of three and six, a time when children are particularly sensitive to word learning (MacWhinney et al., 2022; Finders et al., 2023), and when most children in Ireland are transitioning across the Early Childhood Education (ECE) continuum, from pre-primary into the early primary years. A rich vocabulary supports children's communication, social and emotional development, and lays the foundations for literacy and academic success (Suggate et al., 2018; Dwyer & Harbaugh, 2020; Halcrow, 2025). Therefore, it is important that vocabulary development is prioritised during this period, and that children experience consistent vocabulary learning experiences and are supported to ensure their vocabulary knowledge progresses.

In line with this, the Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy Strategy 2024-2033 (GoI, 2024) emphasises the importance of smooth transitions to support literacy learning, while Aistear (NCCA, 2024) and the Primary Curriculum Framework (NCCA, 2023) highlight the need for continuity and progression to support children's learning. However, none of these policy documents explain how this relates specifically to vocabulary, or how educators can support continuity and progression in practice. As a result, there is little guidance on how vocabulary development can be supported across the ECE continuum.

This thematic literature review, conducted as part of an ongoing PhD study, conceptualises a vocabulary learning continuum for children aged 3-6. It explores how we can draw on three key mechanisms for word learning: incidental exposure, explicit instruction, and educator intentionality, as well as concepts of curriculum and





instructional alignment, to ensure continuity of learning experiences. It also examines theories of vocabulary developmental progression and different domains of learning to build a clearer picture of what progression looks like in ECE. The review brings these two threads together through two pedagogical approaches: shared reading and guided play, showing how intentional teaching can support progression while maintaining continuity. The insights aim to inform the development of a vocabulary learning continuum that will guide the next phase of this PhD study.

Alison Nulty is a PhD candidate at DCU Institute of Education. Her research explores educator professional learning in the area of early literacy, with a focus on fostering continuity and progression in vocabulary instruction for children aged 3–6 across pre-primary and primary education. She has a background in infant teaching and experience lecturing on initial teacher education programmes in early childhood and literacy.

Literacy as the foundation of 3rd Year Post-Primary students: What the PPAD-E 2024 Pilot reveals about literacy among an older cohort

Theresa Walsh, Educational Research Centre

Standardised and diagnostic testing materials developed specifically for the Irish cultural and educational context with Irish norms have traditionally been of more limited availability at post-primary level when compared to primary level. The launch of the Post-Primary Assessment and Diagnosis-English (PPAD-E) to schools in the autumn of 2020 has changed this landscape and offered Post-Primary schools the opportunity to test their students' literacy using Irish norms.

PPAD-E was standardised for use in Post-Primary schools at First Year in 2019, and a recent Pilot Study investigated the possibility of furthering its utility by developing norms for PPAD-E at Third Year. The Pilot study was conducted in a convenience sample of 20 schools, testing a total of 449 students on five subtests assessing competence in the key literacy areas of Word Reading, Spelling, Reading Comprehension, Reading Fluency and Writing.

This paper will reflect on the results obtained from the Pilot Study for each of the literacy competencies tested, and compare them with the results obtained from the First Year cohort during the PPAD-E 2019 Standardisation. The study contributes to the wider field of literacy studies at post-primary level in Ireland, providing much needed data on diverse literacy skills in 3rd year students in Ireland.

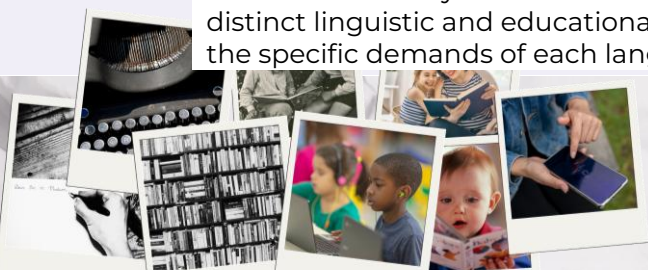
Theresa Walsh works as a Research Associate on Test Development (numeracy and literacy). She previously worked on PISA 2022 in the Educational Research Centre. She has a keen interest in literacy and numeracy in education.

Comparing Literacy Outcomes in Irish and English Among Post-Primary Students in Irish-Medium Schools

Brenda Donohue, Muireann Bergin & Helena Ní Rócháin, Educational Research Centre

This study examines the literacy levels of students in Irish-medium post-primary schools by comparing their performance on two parallel assessments – MDLI-G (Measúnú Diagnóisic Litearthachta don Iarbhunscoil – Gaeilge) and PPAD-E (Post-Primary Assessment & Diagnostic – English). These assessments, equivalent in structure and focus, evaluate five key literacy skills: spelling, reading comprehension, speed reading, writing, and word reading.

The comparison of test scores offers a nuanced perspective on literacy development and investigates the comparability of proficiency in a minority language such as Irish with performance in the dominant language, English. This serves to highlight the need for tailored literacy instruction in minority-language contexts, where learners may face distinct linguistic and educational challenges. A differentiated approach, responsive to the specific demands of each language, is essential to support student success across





both Irish and English.

This study adds to the wider discourse on minority-language education by presenting a comprehensive analysis of literacy outcomes in Irish and drawing comparisons with English performance. Its findings have practical implications for curriculum design, teaching practices, and assessment frameworks. By pinpointing the factors influencing literacy development in Irish-medium post-primary education, the research provides valuable guidance for policymaking, education strategies, and curriculum development. Ultimately, it underscores the importance of continued investigation into the interplay of language, literacy, and education in minority-language settings to promote equitable learning opportunities for all students in Ireland.

Muireann Bergin is a Research Associate in Test Development in the Educational Research Centre. She is the project manager for the MDLI-G development and standardisation. She has a B.A. in Modern Irish and French from University College Dublin (UCD), and an M.A. in Early and Medieval Irish from University College Cork (UCC).

Brenda Donohue is a Research Fellow at the Educational Research Centre, with over nine years of expertise in large-scale educational assessments and research. Currently, Brenda oversees the PPAD-E and MDLI-G assessments in Test Development and has previously served as National Project Manager for PISA 2022. Brenda holds a PhD in Theatre from Trinity College Dublin.

Helena Ní Rócháin is a Research Assistant with the Educational Research Centre (ERC) working on MDLI-G. She holds a BA in Irish and History (University of Limerick) and a MA in Modern Irish (University College Dublin). She worked on the Gaeltacht Schools Recognition Scheme at the ERC between 2020-2023.

Iniúchadh ar Fheidhmiú an Trasteangaithe i gComhthéacs an Tumoideachais:
Dearcadh an Mhúinteora Bunscoile

Helena Nic an Fhailí & TJ Ó Ceallaigh, Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh

Ba é Cen Williams, oideachasóir iomráiteach ón mBreatain Bheag, a bhain leas as an téarma ‘trasteangú’ (trawsieithu) den chéad uair mar shainmhíniú ar “the planned and systematic use of two languages for teaching and learning inside the same lesson” (Lewis, Jones & Baker, 2012, lch 643). Níos mó ná riamh, tá taighdeoirí ar an oideachas sa dara teanga ag éileamh go n úsáidfí cleachtais oideolaíocha trasteangaithe i gcláir dhátheangacha/thumoideachais chun foghlaiméirí dátheangacha agus a múinteoirí a spreagadh le leas a bhaint as a n acmhainní teanga ar fad (Canagarajah, 2011; García & Wei, 2014). Réasúnaíocht lárnach don chomhtháthú thar theangacha is ea gur féidir éifeachtúlachtaí foghlama a bhaint amach nuair a tharraingíonn múinteoirí aird na ndaltaí go follasach ar na cosúlachtaí agus na difríochtaí idir na teangacha atá acu agus nuair a threisiúnn siad straitéisí foghlama lárnacha ar bhealach comhordaithe. Is é aidhm an taighde fheidhmigh seo iniúchadh a dhéanamh ar na peirspictíochtaí éagsúla atá ag múinteoirí bunscoile ar an trasteangú i gcomhthéacs an tumoideachais. Baineadh leas as agallaimh aonair, ceardlanna um fhorbairt ghairmiúil agus as grúpaí fócais chun sonraí ó mhúinteoirí bunscoile an tumoideachais a ghiniúint agus rinneadh anailís ar na sonraí a bailíodh. Tabharfar léargas ar dhá théama leathana a tháinig chun cinn sa pháipéar seo – an trasteangú mar bhac agus an trasteangú mar thaca. Déanfar plé ar réimsí ina bhfeidhmíonn an trasteangú mar bhac ar dtús le tagairt shonrach ar stádas na dteangacha mar choimhlint, ar laghdú i gcaighdeán na Gaeilge, ar mhí-ailíniú idir fealsúnacht an tumoideachais agus oideolaíocht an trasteangaithe agus ar dhébhríocht Churaclam Teanga na Bunscoile i dtaobh an trasteangaithe. Ina dhiaidh sin, cuirfear gnéithe ina bhfeidhmíonn an trasteangú mar thaca i láthair, lena n-áirítear gnéithe teagaisc, foghlama, struchtúracha agus comhthéacsúla. Ag deireadh an pháipéir, cuirfear conclúidí agus moltaí ábhartha i láthair le béim ar fhorbairt ghairmiúil, ar bheartas agus ar thaighde.





Tá **Helena Nic an Fhailí** sa cheathrú bliain de chéim dochtúireachta i Scoil an Oideachais, Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh. An phríomhspéis taighde atá aici is ea sealbhú na dteangacha sa suíomh tumoideachais.

Tá an **Dr T.J. Ó Ceallaigh** mar Ollamh Comhlach i Scoil an Oideachais, Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh. An phríomhspéis taighde atá aige is ea díriú ar an oideolaíocht atá ag teastáil chun teagasc na teanga agus an ábhair a chomhtháthú go rathúil, go háirithe i gcomhthéacsanna tumoideachais agus dáttheangacha.

Cur Chuige Scoile Uile mar Thaca le Comhtháthú Teagaisc Foirm-Dhírithe i gComhthéacs an Tumoideachais: Tionchar na Forbartha Gairmiúla Leanúnaí **Caitríona Ní Mhurchú & TJ Ó Ceallaigh, Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh**

Sainmhínítear an tumoideachas mar chineál amháin d'oideachas dháttheangach suimitheach ina soláthraítear teagasc ábharbhunaithe trí mheán an dara teanga ar feadh tréimhse ama leanúnaigh (Tedick & Lyster, 2020). In ainneoin iliomad buntáistí a bhaineann leis an gcineál seo oideachais, maítear gurb é an cumas oideolaíocht fhoirm-dhírithe agus bhrídhírithe a chomhtháthú atá mar chroílár chur i bhfeidhm éifeachtach an tumoideachais (Ó Ceallaigh et al., 2019). Mar sin féin, is constac suntasach leanúnach é d'oideachasóirí cur chuige comhtháite mar seo a chur i bhfeidhm ar bhealach comhsheasmhach agus éifeachtach (Cammarata & Ó Ceallaigh, 2020).

Cuirtear Teagasc foirm-dhírithe (TFD) chun cinn mar chur chuige oideolaíoch féideartha chun an dúshlán seo a shárú. Tacaítear le daltaí tumoideachais gnéithe foirmeacha na teanga a thabhairt faoi deara, gnéithe a d'fhéadfaidís neamhaird a dhéanamh díobh murach sin. Is gné riachtanach de bhonn eolais an mhúinteora tumoideachais é an cumas TFD agus teagasc ábharbhunaithe a chomhtháthú (Tedick & Lyster, 2020).

I bhfianaise seo, cuireadh an tionscadal taighde i gcrích faoi scáth na paraidíme pragmataí chun iniúchadh a dhéanamh ar thionchar na forbartha gairmiúla leanúnaí ar chleachtas múinteoirí tumoideachais, agus chun na tréithe criticiúla d'eispéiris forbartha ghairmiúla a aithint. Cuirtear béim ar leith sa pháipéar seo ar chur chuige scoile uile, rud a aithnítear mar ghné lárnach chun TFD a chur i bhfeidhm go comhtháite trasna an churaclaim.

Roghnaíodh sampla de scoil lán-Ghaeilge amháin ina cuireadh forbairt ghairmiúil ar fáil do 17 múinteoir tumoideachais. Cuireadh oiliúint orthu maidir le TFD agus le modhanna chun aiseolas ceartaítheach (AC) a chur i bhfeidhm ina seomraí ranga, ar bhonn scoile uile. Bailíodh sonraí trí cheistneoirí (u = 31), agallaimh leathstruchtúrtha (u = 20), dialanna machnaimh na rannpháirtithe, agus nótaí breathnóireachta an taighdeora. Sa pháipéar seo, cuirfear príomhthorthaí an taighde i láthair maidir le tréithe na forbartha gairmiúla éifeachtaí, le béim ar chur chuige scoile uile. Pléifear iad i gcomhthéacs na litríochta reatha. Aithníodh le linn anailíse na héilimh eolais a bhaineann le comhtháthú TFD ó pheirspictíocht an mhúinteora tumoideachais, chomh maith le tréithe criticiúla d'eispéiris foghlama a bhí rathúil. Tá géarghá le forbairt ghairmiúil fhadtréimhseach, phearsantaithe, atá fréamhaithe i gcur chuige scoile uile agus atá oiriúnaithe do chomhthéacs ar leith an tumoideachais. Pléifear na torthaí seo mar aon le himpleachtaí don chleachtas, don taighde agus don bheartas oideachais.

Is mac léinn dochtúireachta í **Caitríona Ní Mhurchú** i Scoil an Oideachais, Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh. Tá spéis aici in oideolaíocht teagaisc sainiúil don suíomh tumoideachais agus i bhforbairt ghairmiúil leanúnach múinteoirí sa chomhthéacs tumoideachais.

Tá an **Dr T.J. Ó Ceallaigh** mar Ollamh Comhlach i Scoil an Oideachais, Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh. An phríomhspéis taighde atá aige is ea díriú ar an oideolaíocht atá ag teastáil chun teagasc na teanga agus an ábhair a chomhtháthú go rathúil, go háirithe i gcomhthéacsanna tumoideachais agus dáttheangacha.





Croí na Ceiste: Inniúlachtaí don Tumoideachas in Éirinn

TJ Ó Ceallaigh, Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh &

Dr Gabrielle Nig Uidhir, Coláiste Ollscoile Naomh Muire, Béal Feirste

Maítear go comhsheasmhach sa taighde ar an tumoideachas gur modh iontaofa atá ann chun teangacha a theagasc, chun ábhar a theagasc, agus chun iad sin a dhéanamh go rathúil gan dochar a dhéanamh do chéad teanga na bhfoghlaimoirí (Tedick & Lyster, 2020; Thomas & Collier, 2017). Mar sin féin, go dtí seo, ní aithníonn ach líon beag staidéar na hinniúlachtaí sin a bhaineann go sonrach leis an tumoideachas agus a bhíonn de dhíth sa tumoideachas. Is é aidhm an staidéir seo an bonn eolais sin a shainaithint. Baineadh leas as ceistneoir fairsing ar líne, siompóisiam le múinteoirí faoi oiliúint, agallaimh aonair, agus agallaimh le fócasghrúpaí, agus bailíodh sonraí ó na príomhpháirtithe leasmhara (n=78) ar fud chontanam an oideachais lán-Ghaeilge i dTuaisceart Éireann agus i bPoblacht na hÉireann, mar shampla múinteoirí faoi oiliúint, múinteoirí i mbun oibre, príomhoidí, soláthraithe oiliúna tosaigh múinteoirí. Tháinig trí théama leathana chun cinn le haghaidh na hanailíse ar shonraí – fíis agus luachanna, eolas múinteoirí le haghaidh an tumoideachais, agus scileanna agus cleachtais oideolaíocha. Sa pháipéar seo, tabharfar léargas ar eolas a bhaineann go sonrach leis an tumoideachas chun an chothromaíocht a aimsiú go comhsheasmhach idir an teanga agus an t-ábhar sa teagasc. Cíorfar inniúlachtaí bunriachtanacha, lena n-áirítear eolas múinteoirí faoin teanga agus eolas le haghaidh an chomhtháthaithe oideolaíoch sa tumoideachas. Ag deireadh an pháipéir, cuirfear conclúidí agus moltaí ábhartha i láthair mar aon le táscairí i dtreo feabhsúcháin.

*Tá an **Dr T.J. Ó Ceallaigh** mar Ollamh Comhlach i Scoil an Oideachais, Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh. An phríomhspéis taighde atá aige is ea díriú ar an oideolaíocht atá ag teastáil chun teagasc na teanga agus an ábhair a chomhtháthú go rathúil, go háirithe i gcomhthéacsanna tumoideachais agus dátheangacha.*

*Tá an **Dr Gabrielle Nig Uidhir** mar Dhéan le Cúram Forbartha i gColáiste Ollscoile Naomh Muire, Béal Feirste. Tá Gabrielle mar shaineolaí ar an tumoideachas agus ar an oideolaíocht a bhaineann le comhtháthú ábhar agus teanga go háirithe.*

"I take out the textbook and they all say 'Aghh'": Insights on the teaching of Irish reading and writing in English-medium schools

Aisling Ní Dhiorbháin & Patrick Burke, DCU Institute of Education

The reciprocal relationship between language and literacy development is clearly recognised in the Irish curriculum at primary (DES, 2019) and post-primary level (DES, 2015). Similarly, the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR; Council of Europe, 2020) reflects that reading and writing are interwoven with listening and speaking in real-life communication. Learning how to read and write can support language development, but literacy development requires particular support. While there is scope for the transfer of literacy skills from a learner's first language (Cummins, 1984; 2021; Ó Duibhir & Cummins, 2012), skills that are specific to Irish need to be explicitly taught (e.g. Irish orthography). Though the teaching of skills such as phonics has traditionally received careful attention in English, this has received less attention in Irish (Stenson & Hickey, 2018).

This paper reports findings from focus groups with a large sample (N=404) of primary and post-primary students, teachers, parents, principals and student teachers who took part in the consultation on the teaching and learning of Irish in English-medium schools in 2025. Specifically, the paper focuses on participants' experiences and perspectives relating to reading and writing when learning Irish as a second or additional language.

Participants regularly expressed the view that oral competence should be the primary goal of learning Irish in school, with less concern for literacy skills. Views on the potentially supportive role of reading and writing tended to be mixed, or in many cases,





negative. Children, teachers and parents cited a focus on reading and writing (predominantly from textbooks) as a source for declining motivation for learning Irish in the latter part of primary school. The use of traditional Friday spelling tests was a source of considerable anxiety for both children and parents, leading to negative associations with the Irish language. Participants reported that there was no structured programme/approach for teaching Irish reading at primary level. Lack of knowledge of Irish phonics led to difficulties in reading, writing and pronunciation in Irish. At post-primary level, students, teachers and parents perceived that the strong emphasis on reading and writing was a barrier to the development of spoken Irish skills for many students. Challenges also emerged in terms of inclusive education and the need to support all learners to learn Irish. Overall, the findings point to a need to re-think the approach to teaching reading and writing in Irish. Towards this end, we draw on recommendations from national and international literature to chart potentially supportive practices in primary and post-primary schools.

Dr Aisling Ní Dhiorbháin is director of SEALBHÚ and an Associate Professor in the School of Language, Literacy and Early Childhood Education at Dublin City University. A former Irish-medium primary teacher, she has a wide range of experience of teaching Irish to various age groups. She is interested in all aspects of teaching Irish and teaching through Irish. Aisling has a particular interest in immersion education, plurilingualism, second language teaching and learning and in minority language acquisition in particular.

Dr Patrick Burke is an Assistant Professor in the School of Language, Literacy and Early Childhood Education. He is currently chairperson of the NCCA Primary Language Development Group and the President of the Literacy Association of Ireland. He also serves as chairperson of the International Literacy Association Dina Feitelson/Albert J Harris Award committee. His editorial commitments include appointments to the boards of Literacy and Active Learning in Higher Education. Patrick started his career as a primary school teacher in a primary school in North County Dublin.

Transforming English Spelling Pedagogy in an Irish-Medium School

Ríona Uí Cheallaigh, Gaelscoil Sáirséal / Mary Immaculate College

This presentation explores how we are transforming our approach to teaching English spelling in a Gaelscoil context, moving away from traditional rote learning of weekly word lists and Friday spelling tests, towards a more structured, research-informed model grounded in the Science of Reading. Research (Moats, 2005; Ehri 2014; Graham & Santangelo, 2014; Gentry, 2021) highlights the strong connection between spelling and reading, with findings from neuroscience and cognitive psychology underscoring the essential role spelling plays in supporting reading development. We now focus on explicitly teaching the foundational elements of English spelling through systematic phonics instruction, including phoneme-grapheme correspondence, phonemic awareness, syllable patterns, spelling rules and morphological awareness. This shift has been influenced by key research on English orthography, which emphasises that spelling is a developmental process requiring explicit instruction and repeated exposure to patterns and rules (Gentry, 2000; Moats, 2005; Ehri, 2014, Bowers & Bowers, 2017; Moats 2020; Ehri, 2023).

Recognising that English has a complex orthography—where sound-to-letter correspondences are not always predictable, our instruction now looks to support students in decoding and encoding words through a deeper understanding of phonological, orthographic, morphological and etymological layers.

This presentation will outline the research pertaining to spelling, the practical changes we've implemented, share classroom strategies and resources, discuss assessment and interpreting the data, and present early results and observations on the impact of this approach on pupil confidence, teacher knowledge and spelling accuracy.





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Ríona Uí Cheallaigh graduated from Mary Immaculate College in 2001, returning in 2009 to undertake a Masters in Education in ICT and is currently working towards a Masters in Education in Literacy. She is Deputy Principal and Literacy Coordinator in Gaelscoil Sáirséal, Limerick. She is passionate about reading, history and more recently spelling!

Developing Oral Reading Fluency in second and additional languages

Gráinne O'Callaghan, DCU Institute of Education/ Gaelscoil Choláiste Mhuire

The study investigated the impact of explicitly taught oral reading fluency strategies on students learning Irish as a second language (L2) in a Gaelscoil (Irish-medium) primary classroom. Drawing on the researcher's experience in both English and Irish-medium settings, the research responds to a noticeable gap in structured fluency instruction for Irish L2 learners.

Over a seven-week period, a design-based intervention was implemented, focusing on the systematic teaching of oral reading fluency. Instruction was grounded in established methodologies; Timed Repeated Reading and Phrased Text Reading (Rasinski, 2010; 2011) and informed by the Multidimensional Fluency Rubric (Zutell & Rasinski, 1991), adapted to include four dimensions of fluency in Irish: Gluais (pace), Luas (smoothness), Blas (phrasing), and Snas (expression and volume).

Data collection methods included fluency rubrics, timed readings, student reflections and a teacher-researcher journal. The findings demonstrated consistent improvements in oral reading fluency across all participants, with particular gains in expression, phrasing and reading automaticity.

The study highlights the value of explicit, scaffolded fluency instruction in second language contexts and points to the importance of appropriate text selection, learner engagement and reflective practice in fostering fluency development. These findings offer practical insights for educators seeking to support oral reading fluency in Irish and other L2 literacy classrooms.

Gráinne O'Callaghan is an Irish speaker who taught for 22 years in Paradise Place ET before moving to a Gaelscoil. With a long-standing interest in Irish language and literacy, she recently completed a Master of Education in Literacy Professional Practice, where her research project focused on improving reading fluency in Irish as a second language.





PARALLEL SESSIONS C – ABSTRACTS

Peer-Assisted Reading to Support Every Child's Literacy Journey: Research and practice from England and Iceland

Emma Vardy, Nottingham Trent University;

Aaron Jordan, Millfield LEAD Trust;

Auður Soffíu Björgvinsdóttir, University of Iceland;

Sólveig Edda, University of Iceland

This symposium will showcase reading interventions that are evidence-informed to inspire the future of literacy practices in Ireland. Aaron Jordan, a practicing teacher in England, UK will present the development of Starling a direct instructional vocabulary programme for primary and secondary schools which has had transformational impact on his school and across the LEAD Trust. Starling targets the teaching of tier two vocabulary to address the vocabulary gap resulting in improvements in reading comprehension and writing. Dr Emma Vardy will present findings from the Education Endowment Foundation funded evaluation of PALS-UK, a 20-week intervention for primary school children in Year 3 to Year 6 to improve their reading comprehension and oral reading fluency. The latest results reported children made two months additional progress in the PALS condition compared to the control in their reading attainment. Dr. Auður Soffíu Björgvinsdóttir will present findings from a study on the effects of K-PALS and First Grade PALS for 1st and 2nd graders at risk for reading difficulties in Iceland. Sixty-one at-risk students across eight schools were assigned to either the PALS intervention or a control group. Early reading skills were assessed three times annually over two years, with data analyzed using a mixed linear model. Students in the PALS group showed significantly greater growth across all measures compared to controls, demonstrating medium to large effects of the intervention. Sólveig Edda Ingvarsdóttir, special education teacher and doctoral student, will present preliminary data from an ongoing pilot study examining the use of K-PALS and 1st grade PALS for Tier 1 and Tier 2 instruction. The study is evaluating the feasibility of the use of PALS to implement an effective tiered system of instruction in foundational reading skills in an elementary school in the capital region of Iceland with a high proportion of multilingual students.

Emma Vardy is a Senior Lecturer in the School of Social Sciences at Nottingham Trent University. Aaron Jordan is a practicing teacher at Millfield LEAD Trust in England.

Auður Soffíu Björgvinsdóttir is a literacy specialist and adjunct at the University of Iceland, School of Education. Sólveig Edda Ingvarsdóttir is a special education teacher and a doctoral student at the University of Iceland, School of Education.

Effective parental engagement - the dance of engagement

Lána McCarthy, South East Technological University

Effective parental engagement in family literacy programmes is a key factor in improving outcomes for children, particularly in areas of socio-economic disadvantage. Family literacy programmes that promote a culture of learning in the home matters - for our families, our communities and our society. Research consistently highlights the positive impact of parental engagement on children's language and literacy development, highlighting the crucial role of parents' attitudes and behaviours toward education. Early access to the right supports is vital for children to build strong developmental foundations, and this becomes even more critical when children are growing up in disadvantaged socio-economic environments.

Despite these clear benefits, many programmes that rely on parental engagement face many well-documented challenges. Efforts to increase parental engagement often fail to address or overlook the significant barriers some families face in accessing services. These barriers are frequently rooted in socio-economic disadvantage, including factors such as single parenthood, poverty, and unmet literacy needs. For teachers, addressing these deeply embedded challenges can be particularly difficult.





This presentation is a study that investigates the diverse perspectives of parents and teachers in a socio-economically disadvantaged area regarding effective engagement strategies. The theory developed from the study, the “dance of engagement”, is viewed through the lens of both parents and teachers and has significant potential to support low-income and marginalised families. This research is grounded in the belief that meaningful change in disadvantaged communities occurs where children and families actively engage with schools and teachers through family literacy programmes. The aim is to contribute to the growing body of knowledge on parental engagement within community-based family literacy initiatives and to serve as a catalyst for positive change, helping to improve literacy outcomes for children and families in high-need areas.

Dr Lána McCarthy is a lecturer in the Literacy Development Centre in South East Technological University (SETU). I have over twenty five years' experience as a literacy tutor and co-ordinator of family literacy programmes. I have led the family literacy initiatives of community programmes in partnership with schools, designing and developing many successful family literacy programmes.

Get Ready with Teddy: An Early Intervention Transition Programme

Shairi O Donnell & Loraine Burke, Trinity Primary School

Trinity Primary School is a DEIS Band One school with a student population of 810 students based in the urban setting of Tuam, Co Galway. Tuam is home to the largest Traveller population outside Irish cities, and according to Census 2022, has become the most diverse Municipal District in County Galway. Only 12% of our pupils identify as white Irish, and a growing number are international protection applicants or children of migrant families.

Our school embodies inclusion and resilience, delivering high-quality education through diverse learning programs, strong community links, and targeted supports. We are continually creating innovative programs to combat the educational disadvantage that many of our students encounter. One of these programmes is Get Ready with Teddy.

We here in Trinity Primary School have witnessed first hand the devastating impact that non attendance in the two year ECCE scheme can have on our Junior Infants. They start their mainstream education at an immediate disadvantage. Evidence shows that children who do not attend preschool struggle to acquire basic literacy skills hence the need for the DEIS programme to place huge emphasis on the importance of early intervention in primary schools and on transitions including the important transition into primary school from an early years setting or the home.

With up to 40 percent of our incoming Junior Infants yearly not attending the ECCE scheme, we decided here in TPS to establish an effective programme to aid in the transition for this cohort of students.

'Get Ready with Teddy' is an Early Intervention Transition programme that creates authentic, contextualised language experiences that are relevant to our school, children and our families. The programme is based on the fundamental roots from the Literacy Tree as cited in 'A Balanced Approach to Literacy in the Early Years- NEPS Good Practice Guide'. These are 'Access to books', 'Oral Language experiences', 'Reading at Home' and 'Motivation'.

The 4 week Programme is designed to be accessible to all children with an easy to follow weekly video. It breaks down the barriers of language, gives access to books and activities, which will help reduce anxiety around the transition and create a sense of excitement which in turn will motivate them to come to school with a positive attitude to learn.





The activities facilitate the development of oral language skills with language based around school. They also support school readiness by working on fine motor skills and cutting skills. But more importantly, they give both parents and children activities to do together where they can explore, learn and get a sense of what Junior Infants will be like.

Loraine Burke, Principal of Trinity PS, a large urban DEIS Band One school with a student population of 810 students, 80 teaching staff and 37 SNA 's. Loraine has over 20 years of teaching experience with a Higher Diploma in Special Educational Needs and a Masters In Educational Leadership. Loraine was appointed principal in September 2019 of the newly formed Trinity Primary School.

Shairi O' Donnell, Home School Community Liaison Coordinator of Trinity Primary School. Shairi has over 15 years of teaching experience in mainstream and SEN. Having worked with children over the last 15 years, Shairi made the change to HSCL this year, as she values the partnership role between home and school, one that is needed to combat educational disadvantage.

Telling Our Stories: Creative Writing for Adult Literacy

Eleanor Neff, Literacy Development Centre at South East Technological University & **Paula Tiller**, Kerry Education and Training Board

Recent findings from the OECD (2024) highlight that the number of adults in Ireland experiencing unmet literacy needs has risen from 18% to 21%. The Adult Literacy for Life (ALL) strategy emphasises the transformative potential of a whole-of-society approach to literacy, numeracy, and digital inclusion (SOLAS, 2021) to address these literacy challenges. Improving adult literacy is not just about gaining skills; it can be a transformative process that changes how individuals see themselves and their place in the world (Mezirow, 1994). Our paper explores the potential for creative writing as a tool for this transformation in adult literacy education.

Drawing on a creative writing initiative that we developed for adults with unmet literacy needs, this paper highlights how a safe writing environment can support literacy skills and encourage learners to take risks with their writing. Underpinned by a wealth model approach (O'Grady and Byrne, 2018), our work also adapted the inclusive principles advocated by Pat Schneider in *Writing Alone and with Others* (2003). These emphasise that everyone is a storyteller and every story deserves to be heard.

We also look at how using themes like community, nature, and global citizenship gives adult learners a chance to connect their writing to lived experiences. This encourages the expression of unique perspectives and critical voices (Freire, 1970).

Finally, we offer some practical writing ideas and recommendations for adult educators seeking to support adult literacy work through creative writing and the transformative power of storytelling.

Dr Eleanor Neff is a lecturer with the Literacy Development Centre (LDC) at South East Technological University (SETU) in Waterford. With 24 years of experience in adult education, including 15 years focused on adult literacy, she has designed and delivered a range of ESOL, literacy, and family literacy courses, and contributed to refugee resettlement and literacy tutor training programmes. She is also on the board of NALA, and chairs NALA's Education, Training, and Assessment subcommittee.

Paula Tiller is a Regional Literacy Coordinator with Kerry ETB under the Adult Literacy for Life Strategy who aims to get people talking about literacy and to make Kerry literacy-friendly. She has been working in adult literacy and community education for over twenty years, designing and delivering courses across a range of disciplines. A member of the NALA board since 2023, literacy as social practice is her passion. As a tutor, she endeavoured to build transformative potential into all her courses aiming to encourage people to draw on their own resources to flourish and reach their full potential.





Can we mention the “D” word! : Exploring how a playful methodology such as drama can facilitate key principles of the Primary Language Curriculum.

Patti Roche, *DCU Institute of Education*

This paper wishes to share aspects of a multimodal classroom practice using drama which was conducted during my doctoral research in a school for children with dyslexia. It will show how key findings of this study align with the principles of the redeveloped curriculum, and in particular, the Primary Language Curriculum, and will provide guidance on how these strategies can be easily and effectively used in the classroom. The provision by drama of multiple contexts for creativity, collaboration and the scaffolding of language through child-adult interaction is well documented in the literature (Baldwin, 2004; Neelands, 1997; O'Toole & Stinson, 2013; Podlozny, 2000; Wells & Sandretto, 2017). Classroom drama provides many opportunities for collaborative student-centred inclusive learning, focusing on agency and ownership (Lehtonen et al., 2016). The fact that it is a highly visual and motivational form which is capable of creating rich contexts for learning (Dunn, 2016), make it a very engaging one for children.

While acknowledging that child-led playful environments lead to better contexts for language learning, the PLC makes little direct reference to drama, role-play, improvisation, or any of the core drama skills that could be harnessed in literacy learning across all age ranges.

This classroom-based research showed how drama provided multimodal contexts within which the children could engage in meaningful, scaffolded language interactions. It motivated them to engage and share their ideas, listen, question, and offer solutions to problems, thus increasing their creative thinking and expression, reflection, critique, and empathy. The voices of the children in this study reported finding the stories treated with drama to be more fun and enjoyable, and easier to access when they were 'in the story' using drama. This increased their academic self-concept, self-esteem, and facilitated a more positive approach to their work than was typical in their more traditional literacy learning.

Patti Roche is an Assistant Professor in Literacy in DCU. Prior to taking on this role, she taught children with dyslexia for many years in Catherine McAuley N.S., Baginbun St.. She is passionate about creating classroom contexts for inclusive, agentic and creative literacy practice particularly using story and drama.

Attainment and Engagement: Balancing the Goals of Reading Instruction in Irish Primary Classrooms

Art Ó Neachtain, *University of Galway*

Irish children are reading less for enjoyment than ever before. Recent national and international reading assessments have highlighted a decline in the number of children and young people reading for enjoyment in Ireland (Delaney et al., 2023; McKeown et al., 2019; Nelis & Gilleece, 2023). These assessments consistently show that those who read for pleasure on a regular basis perform significantly better than peers who read less frequently. More broadly, there is strong evidence that children who read widely and frequently tend to achieve better academic outcomes, find learning easier, and are more likely to pursue further education (OECD, 2002).

Over the last decade, there has been an increased focus on standardised testing in Ireland, prompting concern among teachers about the impact this is having on classroom practice (O'Leary et al., 2019). When excessive emphasis is placed on the skills and strategies needed in such assessments, the reading curriculum can become narrowed and constrained (Afflerbach, 2022). While it is essential to maintain high expectations for reading attainment and proficiency, there is also a clear need to support the affective dimensions of reading, including motivation, enjoyment, and engagement. Striking a balance between these dual goals of reading attainment and engagement presents an ongoing challenge for Irish teachers.





Given the decline in reading rates among young people, the strong evidence linking frequent reading to educational success, and increasing accountability pressures from standardised testing, it is timely to critically examine how reading for pleasure is positioned within Irish education. This paper reviews key research, curriculum, and policy documents, including the Primary Language Curriculum (Department of Education and Skills, 2019) and the Literacy, Numeracy, and Digital Literacy Strategy (Government of Ireland, 2024), to assess how reading for pleasure is conceptualised and supported. It concludes with recommendations and practical strategies for repositioning reading for pleasure as a central, rather than peripheral, educational priority.

Art O Neachtain lectures in the School of Education at the University of Galway. He teaches across undergraduate and postgraduate teacher education programmes. His research and teaching interests include literacy, teacher education, and school leadership.

When is Cinderella (aka nonverbal communication) going to be asked to the language and literacy ball? Insights on the nonverbal origins of language and by corollary literacy.

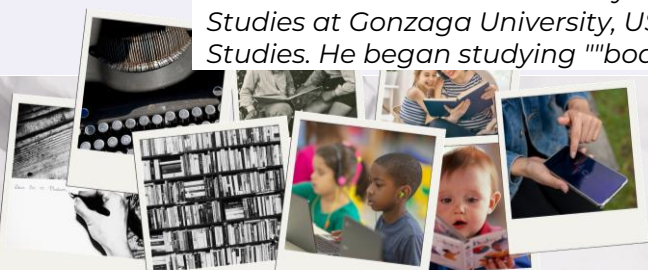
John White, DCU Institute of Education, &
David B. Givens, Gonzaga University, USA

This paper proposes that the verbal language used in literacy actually has much of its origins in the nonverbal. The argument is grounded in desk-top research undertaken by the authors in preparation for a book now in press entitled: 'Nonverbal Steps to the Origin of Language' (Routledge, 2025). The human brain, nervous system, and sensory organs, are all electromagnetically designed and activated. This nonverbal neural linkage explains why hand gestures are intimately coupled in the evolution of human speech. Indeed, the use of gestures has been called the "cinderella" of language acquisition (Adolph et al 2010, 269) with motor development and action now being "rescued from the dustbin and invited to the language ball" (Adolph et al 2010, 269).

Nonverbal motor development involves pointing, now regarded as key to language development (Lüke et al., 2020) and considered "the royal road to language for babies" (Butterworth 2003, 17). Other key findings include the discovery of mirror neurons (Rizzolatti et al., 1996) and research by Iacoboni (2008, 87) which shows that "gestures precede speech and mirror neurons are probably the critical brain cells in language development". Moreover, studies in the field of cognitive linguistics clearly demonstrate a link between the nonverbal and language acquisition. Similarly, modern neuroscience has established strong connections between manual praxis and language (Corballis, 2010; Krolczak et al., 2021). It is also important to note that much of how humans 'see' the world is nonverbal with audiovisual integration occurring at multiple levels (Gao et al., 2023, 9). Because of the human's unique sensory, visual and auditory sensory cortices, how we see the world nonverbally has an effect on how we use language to describe it (Gao et al. 2023, 5575). The paper proposes that studies in literacy need to take greater account of how humans acquire language nonverbally.

Dr John White works on undergraduate and postgraduate education programmes in the Institute of Education, Dublin City University. He currently works as Director of the DCU Changemaker Schools Network. His research interests include changemaker practices, nonverbal communication, primary education, embodied cognition, arts-based research and language acquisition. He is co-author of 'The Classroom X – Factor: The Power of Body Language and Nonverbal Communication in Teaching' (Routledge, 2011) and co-author of 'The Routledge Dictionary of Nonverbal Communication' (Routledge, 2021).

Prof David Givens has recently retired as a teacher in the School of Professional Studies at Gonzaga University, USA and is the Director of the Center for Nonverbal Studies. He began studying "body language" for his Ph.D. in Anthropology at the





University of Washington in Seattle, USA. He served as Anthropologist in Residence at the American Anthropological Association in Washington, D.C. from 1985-97 and has previously taught Anthropology at the University of Washington. His expertise is in Nonverbal Communication, Anthropology and the Brain.

Empowering Educators: Addressing Reading Disabilities and Dyslexia in the Classroom
Janet Foor, Wilson College

This paper, titled "Empowering Educators: Addressing Reading Disabilities and Dyslexia in the Classroom," aims to equip pre-service and practicing teachers with the knowledge and strategies necessary to effectively support students with reading disabilities and dyslexia. Research underscores the critical need for explicit, systematic, and sequential instruction in literacy to address the unique challenges faced by these students. Studies have shown that pre-service teachers who implement evidence-based practices, such as the Self-Regulated Strategy Development (SRSD) model, can significantly improve the reading comprehension of students with reading difficulties. Additionally, foundational literacy skills, including phonemic awareness and phonics, are essential for students with dyslexia, who often struggle with word-level reading. The National Reading Panel and subsequent research highlight the importance of explicit instruction in these areas to ensure all students, particularly those with learning disabilities, can achieve reading proficiency. This paper will provide educators with best practices and practical tools to apply strategies in their classrooms, fostering an inclusive and supportive learning environment. By empowering teachers with the necessary skills and knowledge, we can enhance literacy outcomes for students with reading disabilities and dyslexia, promoting their academic success and well-being.

***Dr. Janet Foor** has dedicated nearly 41 years to the fields of special and general education, working in both private and public sectors. Since 2013, Dr. Foor has been an Assistant Professor of Special Education at Wilson College in Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, where she previously served as an adjunct professor. Throughout her career, Dr. Foor has held various roles including teacher, reading specialist, principal, Director of Special Education, Director of Student Services, and Executive Director of Educational Services. Additionally, Dr. Foor has worked at the Pennsylvania Department of Education and is currently an educational consultant with a law firm in Washington, D.C., representing students and their families.*

Building Collaborative Capacity: An Implementation Study of Online Interprofessional Learning Between Teachers and SLTs in Ireland

Christina Hannify, Sylwia Kazmierczak-Murray & Paula Lehane,
DCU Institute of Education

Interprofessional collaboration between health and education workers is now seen as essential to inclusive education (European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2022). While international efforts to build greater ties between teachers and speech and language therapists (SLTs) have grown, there is limited research within the Irish context on developing such partnerships. This gap is disappointing given the well-established links between language and literacy. To address this, the current study examined the development and implementation of an online interprofessional Community of Practice (CoP) involving six primary school teachers and four speech and language therapists (SLTs) from across Ireland. The CoP focused on effective literacy instruction and improving outcomes for children and young people with literacy difficulties. Meeting online eight times over four months, each session was facilitated by a teacher educator and centred on a different element of structured linguistic approaches to literacy instruction (International Dyslexia Association, 2024). Data gathered included facilitator reflective diaries, as well as participant surveys and interviews. Proctor's (2011) Taxonomy of Implementation Outcomes was used to evaluate the online CoP across six key categories: feasibility, acceptability, appropriateness, penetration, fidelity, and sustainability. This Implementation Science framework provided valuable insights into the development of interprofessional partnerships in online settings. Results indicated that such collaborative, online partnerships are both feasible and sustainable, and can influence both teachers and





SLTs' learning needs (appropriateness) and practice (penetration). However, differing priorities for learners and dissent on professional boundaries were identified as potential barriers to future collaborative partnerships between teachers and SLTs. To effectively develop interprofessional partnerships in line with the proposed School Inclusion Model (National Council for Special Education, 2021), further research and greater attention to equitable forms of professional learning is required.

Dr Sylwia Kazmierczak-Murray is an Assistant Professor in the School of Inclusive and Special Education, DCU. She is a CORU registered Speech and Language Therapist. Her research and teaching focuses mainly on language and literacy interventions, interprofessional collaboration, and children and young people's participation. She co-chairs a European Implementation Collaborative Working Group which champions Implementation Science approaches in formal and non-formal education.

Dr Paula Lehane is an Assistant Professor in the School of Inclusive and Special Education in the Institute of Education at Dublin City University (DCU). She previously worked as a primary school teacher and was the Special Educational Needs (SEN) coordinator of a large urban primary school. She is currently the programme chair of the M.Ed in Specific Learning Difficulties (Dyslexia) in DCU and lectures on issues relating to dyslexia, assessment, inclusion and research methods.

Christina Hannify is an Assistant Professor in the School of Inclusive and Special Education, DCU. She previously taught in both mainstream and special school settings and was seconded as an Inclusion Advisor with the National Council for Special Education before joining DCU. She is currently undertaking a PhD focused on the early identification of and intervention for children at risk of reading difficulties, with an emphasis on inclusive, research-informed approaches to literacy support.

Celebrating Past Practice, Inspiring Inclusive Futures: A Community of Practice Approach to Supporting Students with SLCD

Ciara Concannon, Mary Immaculate College

Students with Speech, Language and Communication Difficulties (SLCD) represent a substantial and growing cohort within Irish primary schools (Bishop, 2010; IASLT, 2017). Supporting these students requires the combined efforts of class teachers, Special Education Teachers (SETs), and external professionals such as Speech and Language Therapists (SLTs). This study reflects on current collaborative practices in Irish primary schools, drawing from the past to identify persistent challenges, while offering pathways to inspire more effective and inclusive practices in supporting students with SLCD.

Using Lave and Wenger's (1991) Community of Practice (CoP) framework, this research explores how professional communities can work together to identify and meet the needs of students with SLCD. A social constructivist paradigm and qualitative methodology guided the study, with semi-structured interviews conducted across four main cluster groups in the greater Dublin area. This approach ensured the lived experiences and perspectives of teachers, SLTs, and principals were meaningfully captured.

Thematic analysis revealed that while stakeholders strongly value collaboration, several barriers hinder its effective implementation. These include insufficient time, limited opportunities for shared knowledge, and shortcomings in Continued Professional Development (CPD), particularly in relation to recent curricular changes. While the study presents a range of findings with implications for both policy and practice, this paper primarily focuses on the importance of context-specific CPD and the cultivation of Communities of Practice (CoP) to effectively support students with SLCD.

In celebrating past efforts and acknowledging current challenges, this research calls for





a renewed focus on building robust Communities of Practice (CoP) across educational and therapeutic domains. It offers actionable recommendations for enhancing policy, school-based practice, Initial Teacher Education (ITE), and CPD. Ultimately, the study aims to inspire a more cohesive, future-facing approach to inclusive education where interprofessional collaboration is not just encouraged but embedded in everyday practice.

Dr Ciara Concannon is an Assistant Professor in Early Childhood Education in Mary Immaculate College, Limerick. Her research interests focus on inclusive policy and practice as well as language and literacy development for students with additional needs. Ciara is currently supervising a number of final year undergraduate dissertations and PhD students

Vegan Seagulls and Second Minds: An Investigation into How Self-Regulation Skills can be Developed to Improve Reading Comprehension, Metacognition and Motivation in Disadvantaged Settings

Katie Cullen, Scoil Mhuire Ogh 1, Crumlin

"As we celebrate 50 years of learning and progress, it is hard for educators in the DEIS context not to feel that for every step forward, their students are knocked back ten in terms of literacy. Though we as an island ranked second globally in the PIRLS 2021 (Delaney et al., 2023) and PISA 2022 (Donohue et al., 2023), our students in DEIS school (particularly in Urban DEIS Band 1), there are issues of note. For example, significantly underachieving in literacy, not meeting the goals outlined in the DEIS Plan 2017 and barely narrowing the gap between themselves and their non-DEIS peers. This classroom-based intervention, delivered in an Urban DEIS Band 1 school in Dublin 12, explored how explicitly teaching self-regulation strategies could be the key to unlocking deeper comprehension, metacognition, and learner self-belief. Utilising the Gradual Release of Responsibility Model (Pearson & Gallagher, 1986), children engaged in scaffolded mini-lessons, peer discussions, and reflective routines that helped them not only understand texts but also themselves as readers.

While test scores exhibited only modest statistical shifts, something more compelling emerged: children began to talk differently about reading, persevered through challenges, and increasingly saw themselves as capable. Interviews and Think Alouds from a target group revealed a growing awareness of strategy use, emotional regulation, and reading identity. The data suggests that thoughtful, targeted instruction can create ripples of change even in a dosage as short as a six-week window. As we look forward to the next 50 years, this research underscores the need to blend academic and emotional literacy, especially in schools where systemic barriers exist. With time, support and policy which support and prioritise the whole learner, we can ensure reading is not just a skill, but a source of power, agency and joy for every child.

A proud Carlow woman with origins in Wicklow, **Katie Cullen** has spent the past 5 years cultivating a rich, meaningful background in literacy as a primary teacher, moving from the junior classes to senior primary classes. A MEDLPP graduate, Katie has worked with Dyslexia Ireland as a Workshop facilitator in Kildare and as part of the largely successful Readable Project, as well as qualifying as a TEFL teacher in 2018. Katie has spent the last two years working in Dublin 12 in DEIS Band 1 schools. Her interests include: the influence of trauma on literacy development, literacy in disadvantaged contexts, struggling readers and writers, and the role of executive function on literacy learning.

Exploring the Lived Experiences of Students and Teachers Navigating Educational Trajectories Through DEIS Primary and Post-Primary Schools

Aoife Joy Keogh, University College Dublin

This paper explores students' and teachers' experiences of and perspectives on literacy education across the continuum of both primary and post-primary school. This research uses a multiple case study approach (Yin, 2017; Creswell, 2012) and focuses specifically on the lived experiences of students and teacher in 10 DEIS primary (n=3) and post-primary schools (n=7) in the Dublin North West Area. The research methodology





consisted of semi-structured interviews with 23 teachers (primary n=13, post-primary n=10) and both semi-structured interviews and focus groups with 78 students (primary n=56, post-primary n=22) from 1st class in primary school to 6th year in post-primary school. Draw and tell (Goodwin et al., 2023; Angell et al., 2015) was also utilised as a method within the data collection process. Data was coded thematically and presented in the form of a narrative synthesis (Braun & Clarke, 2022).

Key themes emerged within the findings relating to the educational trajectories of students as they progress across the continuum of education and the perspectives of teachers in relation to their role within these trajectories are explored within the discussion of the paper. The findings highlight the variance which exists across students' and teachers' conceptualisations of disciplinary literacy and a noticeable shift was identified in relation to literacy pedagogy in the post-primary setting. Themes such as the influence of assessment/examinations, teacher training, and the role of care in education emerged in relation to this shift in pedagogical practices. The findings also emphasised the role of early success or failure in primary literacy education in developing students' identities as learners. This impact of students' experiences and attainment within primary literacy education on their academic self-concept and educational aspirations in post-primary school is further discussed within the findings, considering the ways in which this phenomenon shapes students' educational trajectories and progression to higher education.

Aoife Joy Keogh is a PhD candidate in UCD School of Education, whose research is funded by a Research Ireland Government of Ireland Scholarship. Her research interests include literacy education, educational disadvantage and policy, and access to higher education. Her professional experience spans a wide variety of contexts, including social care, community-based work, and teaching primary and post-primary school students in urban communities experiencing socio-economic disadvantage. Aoife is actively involved in the work of the Finglas and Darndale-Kilbarrack-Coolock Community Learning Hubs, established by DCU Educational Disadvantage Centre with the Northside Partnership and Dublin Northwest Partnership to promote diversity within the teaching profession.

An investigation into the children's literature choices of primary school students and teachers in a newly established DEIS setting.

Sarah Quirke, St. John the Baptist Girls School

Situated in the interpretivist paradigm, the researcher investigated the children's literature preferences of students and teachers in a school which recently gained DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools) status. The researcher engaged in case study research to identify the children's literature preferences of students and teachers in Cherry Blossom School, noting similarities and differences of both participant groups. The researcher generated data using questionnaires, focus groups, and a draw and tell activity. Questionnaires were distributed to 290 participants, five focus groups were formed, with five participants in each, and fifteen draw and tell activities were completed and analysed.

As a newly established DEIS school, literacy is an area of focus in DEIS planning. It is a requirement of DEIS schools to have a DEIS literacy plan in addition to a whole school literacy plan. One target within the DEIS literacy plan for Cherry Blossom School was the promotion of Reading for Pleasure (RfP). This aim inspired the research for this study to gain insights into both student and teacher preferences on children's literature. While international studies discuss students' children's literature preferences, there is a need for contemporary research of student and teacher preferences in the Irish context. The findings of this exploratory study reveal that fictional texts are favoured by students and teachers, motivation to read should come from intrinsic influences, incorporating child voice into book choices in classroom instruction is desirable, and building upon the existing children's literature collection is a priority to include a diverse range of book genres and texts.





This research can assist in supporting schools and researchers to reflect on the reading practices of students in their schools, determine literature preferences of students and teachers, analyse the availability of diverse texts and genres available in their schools and enhance the reading experiences of students.

Sarah Quirke is a primary school teacher in Tipperary. She completed her Masters of Education in Literacy Education at Mary Immaculate College, Limerick (2022-2024). Her research focuses on children's literature and Reading for Pleasure. She is a mainstream class teacher in her school since 2019. She has facilitated literacy webinars with Education Centres across Ireland. She also shared her research at the UKLA International Literacy Conference earlier this year.

Reading in the Years: Tracing Changes in the National Curriculum for Literacy since the Foundation of the State

Conall Ó Breacháin & Patrick Burke, DCU Institute of Education

This paper traces the development of literacy curriculum policy in Ireland in the past fifty years and back to the foundation of the state, exploring how conceptions and approaches to literacy have evolved in response to broader societal, political, and educational shifts. While, arguably, Ireland has not experienced the dramatic pendulum swings in literacy philosophy seen internationally, its curriculum documents reflect changing priorities and pedagogical trends.

The period begins with the waning influence of the 1922 National Programme for Instruction and the introduction of the 1971 curriculum, which marked a significant shift, promoting literacy across the curriculum and positioning every lesson as a language lesson. By 1999, a more expansive vision of literacy emerged, though the document's complexity and lack of clarity for teachers limited its impact, an issue acknowledged in a 2005 review. Following a dip in Ireland's PISA results in 2009, the Primary Language Curriculum (PLC) was fast-tracked, placing a greater emphasis on the discrete skills of literacy acquisition and acknowledging the changing linguistic and cultural landscape of Irish classrooms. The 2025 PLC builds on this by formally recognising plurilingualism as a central consideration.

This historical overview highlights how Irish literacy education has evolved over time. The review details, for example, how guidance on phonics and word recognition has been somewhat slow to respond to the internationally published research in this area. The paper underscores the need to understand the philosophical and practical underpinnings of past curricula to inform future development.

Dr Conall Ó Breacháin is an Assistant Professor in the School of Language, Literacy and Early Childhood Education in the Institute of Education, DCU. Prior to joining DCU in early 2019, Conall was the Deputy National Director of the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST). Conall completed his PhD under the tutelage of Professor Ciarán Sugrue (UCD) on the phenomenon of teacher agency in the context of curriculum reform. Research interests include literacy leadership, the impact of professional development, literacy policy implementation and literacy and professional development. Conall began his teaching career in 2002, in a primary school in north county Dublin.

Dr Patrick Burke is an Assistant Professor in the School of Language, Literacy and Early Childhood Education. He is currently chairperson of the NCCA Primary Language Development Group and the President of the Literacy Association of Ireland. He also serves as chairperson of the International Literacy Association Dina Feitelson/Albert J Harris Award committee. His editorial commitments include appointments to the boards of Literacy and Active Learning in Higher Education. Patrick started his career as a primary school teacher in a primary school in North County Dublin.





Mixing Oil and Water? Examining Balanced Literacy in the Irish Context

Jennifer O'Sullivan, *Marino Institute of Education*

This presentation explores the evolution of reading instruction in Ireland through the metaphor of oil and water—two elements that are notoriously difficult to mix. It considers the enduring tension between meaning-based and skills-based approaches to reading and the persistent struggle to integrate them coherently in both policy and practice.

At the heart of this analysis is the concept of balanced literacy, first introduced by Michael Pressley in the 1990s. Pressley (1998) envisioned a deliberate emulsification of practices: combining systematic instruction in foundational skills with meaningful engagement in reading, writing, and oral language. His version of balanced literacy was less about equal measures and more about thoughtful integration. However, over time, the term has lost its clarity—often morphing into a vague mixture of eclectic practices (Moats, 2020; Shanahan, 2021).

Ireland presents a compelling case. Historically, its literacy policy and curricula have sought to blend structured instruction with holistic, child-centred pedagogy. This combination has arguably contributed to Ireland's strong performance in international assessments of reading such as PIRLS and PISA. As a result, international observers are increasingly looking to Ireland for guidance. Yet the continued use of the term balanced literacy to describe Ireland's approach to reading risks misrepresenting the intentionality and coherence of the Irish model—casting it as yet another unstable mix rather than a well-emulsified system.

Drawing on curriculum documents, national strategies, and contemporary research in reading, this presentation questions whether the term balanced literacy still serves a productive purpose in Irish education. It suggests that a reframing—or even rebranding—is needed to reflect a more stable integration of reading components, grounded in a shared, evidence-based understanding of reading pedagogy. Crucially, it highlights teacher knowledge as the emulsifier—the active agent that can bind skills and meaning into a cohesive whole.

Dr. Jen O'Sullivan is a lecturer in literacy education at the Marino Institute of Education, an associated college of Trinity College Dublin. She is a past president of the Literacy Association of Ireland.

PIRLS, PISA and Performance: Painting the Post-box Green and the Alphabet Blue, White and Red: Irish Literacy Policy- Implications for DEIS

Niamh Watkins, *DCU Institute of Education*

Since its inception in 2005, the DEIS programme has been implemented as a policy to address educational disadvantage. While several studies have questioned its effectiveness in disrupting the cycle of inequality, particularly from a broader societal perspective (Fleming & Harford, 2023; Cahill, 2015), few studies have specifically examined the existing DEIS literacy policy and its contribution to enhancing educational standards for children from low socioeconomic backgrounds.

This paper presents a critical policy analysis of Irish literacy policy at primary level. It adopts a cyclical analytical perspective to explore the policy drivers, levers, gaps, and silences within Irish literacy policy. The analysis further examines the pervasive influence of neoliberal ideology and International Large-Scale Assessments (ILSAs) as a catalyst for policy change and the contentious role of intergovernmental organisations, such as the OECD, in reviewing DEIS policy (2024).





The presentation underscores the importance of integrating normative policy dimensions to ensure a holistic literacy policy. Can we enhance outcomes by taking into account our distinct national context?

Dr. Niamh Watkins is an assistant professor of literacy in the Institute of Education in Dublin City University. Her research interests include literacy policy, writing pedagogy, reading-writing connections and the science of writing.

Raising awareness of Plurilingualism and Language Awareness in primary language education: An exploration of key concepts and classroom practice

Déirdre Kirwan, formerly Scoil Bhríde Cailíní, Dublin 15, & **Jane O'Toole**, Scoil Chrónáin SNS Swords; CARN

The LAI Call for Papers for 2025 asks what the next fifty years of literacy education have in store. What do we need to do to ensure that literacy achievement and engagement is a reality for all? What, it asks, requires further attention? In response, this paper argues that valuing and including the plurilingual repertoires of all pupils in the learning process is the first step towards implementing an approach to learning that supports all pupils in their goal to reach their full potential.

The Primary Language Curriculum (PLC) advocates the use of plurilingual approach in language learning that draws on the child's existing knowledge and experience (NCCA, 2024:1). Furthermore, the Council of Europe (CoE) Recommendation CM/Rec(2022)1 states that "individuals' home languages – the languages in which their identity is most deeply rooted – are necessarily the starting point for all learning" (CoE, 2022: 30). Language awareness is a tool to support learning that is activated by tapping into the child's existing knowledge and experience. It is also one of learning's most valuable outcomes in that it empowers the learner to use their agency to drive their own learning.

This paper will firstly examine essential language theory relating to plurilingualism and language awareness. Evolving language education policy at national and European level relating to the role of language awareness will then be reviewed. In the context of the redeveloped PLC (NCCA, 2025*), practical examples of students' language awareness-related learning experiences and activities at classroom and school level will also be explored. This may serve to empower educators by illustrating the potential of using a learner-centred, plurilingual approach to language awareness and language education more broadly.

Dr. Déirdre Kirwan was principal of a linguistically and culturally diverse primary school. With the school community, she led an integrated, plurilingual approach to education. She was awarded European Ambassador for Languages (Léargas, 2008); conferred with a PhD in language education (Trinity College Dublin, 2009); awarded Chevalier de l'Ordre des Palmes Académiques (French Government, 2023). She is a contributor to the NCCA development group for MFLs in primary schools, and to the European Centre for Modern Languages (ECML).

Dr. Jane O'Toole is a primary school teacher and school leader who specialises in Language Education. A Coordinating Member of the Collaborative Action Research Network (CARN), Jane also contributes to the NCCA Primary Language Development Group, the Action Research Community (ARC) for Language Educators (ECML), the EUROCALL Less Commonly Taught Languages (LCTL) SIG, and serves as Secretary of the Japanese Language Teachers of Ireland (JLTI). Jane's teaching and research interests include Irish as an L2 and MFL at primary level. You can find out more about Jane's research at: https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Jane-Otoole-3?ev=hdr_xprf





A Tale of Two Languages: connecting with families through storytime in bilingual households.

Chiara Sheahan, *Mary Immaculate College*

The benefits of parents/guardians reading-aloud to their children are well established and have an undeniable positive impact on the child's language learning. Benefits include: an increased rate of vocabulary acquisition, the enhanced development of comprehension skills, the stimulation of communication through shared experiences between a child and their parent/ guardian, and the development of the child's critical thinking skills (Barrentine 1996; Batini 2018; Lane and Wright 2007; Senawait et al 2021). In homes where more than one language is present, read-alouds between parents/guardians and their children may have additional benefits.

Through exploring the preliminary findings of the research study entitled Read-Alouds and Cross-Lingual Transfer in the Promotion of English as an Additional Language for Students and their Parents/ Guardians, this paper will explore the use of bi-lingual read-alouds in the homes of bi-lingual families, and how they can be used to connect with multilingual families within the context of a DEIS urban setting.

Chiara Sheahan is a primary school teacher in an urban DEIS context in Co. Clare. She is a graduate of West Chester University's M.Ed in Literacy programme, and is currently a PhD candidate in MIC's PhD in Applied Linguistics programme.

Supporting EAL: No Fancy Buzz Words - Just Practical Strategies

Kirsten Barrett

This practical and interactive session offers educators a range of effective strategies to better support EAL learners across the curriculum.

This session is planned for those who know the theory and understand that multilingualism is an asset (Cummins, 2021). This session will not be research-heavy, but instead a toolkit of practical easy ways to make sure that multilingual learners are included in your classrooms. Based on classroom experiences and supported by research, with less buzz words and more real, usable strategies for supporting multilingual learners (Gibbons, 1996; Little & Kirwan, 2019; Sharples, 2023; Washbourne, 2012).

You will be invited to engage and experience some activities that you can replicate in your setting. You will also be shown real examples to include all learners in your settings.

Some ideas will be familiar; however, the hope is that this session will remind you of the power of these activities. Others will need a little bit of preparation before you can use them. Participants should leave with at least one idea that you can implement in your classroom/setting immediately. (Please do bring something to write with.)

Research consistently shows that EAL strategies support all learners, not just those learning English as an additional language. By making small, intentional changes to our daily practice, we can create classrooms where every learner feels safe, valued, and empowered to learn.

Kirsten Barrett was an EAL teacher for 15 years in Glasgow, Scotland.

Now she works part-time with Business in the Community and delivers webinars for Clare, Navan and Tralee Education Centre while she works on her Masters in Education at UCC. Kirsten is an advocate of Reading for Joy and leads a Teacher Reading Group in Ireland.

Digital Critical Literacy: Supporting Student Development in the Age of Misinformation

Katherine Buck, *Evanston Township High School*

There exists a common misconception that today's students, considered "digital natives," are more adept than previous generations at navigating digital spaces.

Research demonstrates that this is not the case, as specific digital literacy skills must be taught, just as in specific academic disciplines.





In the United States, recent political and societal tumult have led to conversations around the ability of the general public to read critically and to engage in critical discourse. This confusion, paired with the general understanding that literacy rates are lower than desired, creates important questions around changes in literacy education as it pertains to digital spaces. Additionally, digital landscapes are increasingly influenced by algorithms and shifting AI capabilities, which many adults and educators do not fully understand.

This workshop will discuss current research and dispel common misconceptions around teaching digital literacy skills. Participants will take part in a sample lesson on a digital literacy skill that can be applied to multiple content areas and contexts. Through this workshop, participants will consider:

- What are some effective strategies to support students in applying criticality to the digital spaces they encounter, both in academic and social contexts?
- How can reading teachers adapt to changing needs surrounding digital literacy?

This workshop aims to contribute to larger conversations around digital literacy and how literacy educators play a significant role in preparing students to navigate the world as critical thinkers and citizens. The presenter is a Ph.D. student, literacy specialist, and proud member of Gen-Z. Her knowledge of both literacy education and digital landscapes allows her to serve as a bridge between our current students and many generations of educators.

Katherine Buck has been a high school English teacher and literacy specialist for five years. She is currently a Ph.D. student at DePaul University in Chicago studying adolescent literacy. Her research interests include translanguaging, multilingual education, adolescent literacy and literacy intervention, and multimodality in literacy education.

Storytelling with Bee-Bot: How a programmable floor robot can support second language learning in the early years of Primary

Susan Nic Réamoinn, Marino Institute of Education

This paper presents a sociocultural investigation into the use of robotics to support second language learning (SLL) in the early years of primary education. The study explores how a storytelling-based, playful activity using Bee-Bot, a programmable floor robot, can create meaningful opportunities for young children to engage with the Irish language in an English-medium Junior Infant classroom. The six-week intervention involved 22 children aged 5–6, who worked in small groups to programme Bee-Bot as part of a narrative task delivered through Irish.

Using a design-based research (DBR) methodology, the intervention was developed and refined over four iterative cycles. The research focused on how digital tools, when embedded in play and social interaction, can support early language development. While computational thinking (CT) skills emerged naturally during the activity, the primary emphasis was on second language use and development within a socioculturally rich learning environment. Research supports the integration of CT skills across the curriculum (Wing, 2006), and studies have shown that when used meaningfully, robotics can enhance both CT and language skills in young learners (Alimisis & Moro, 2016; Angeli & Valanides, 2020; Angeli et al., 2016; Bers, 2020; Bers et al., 2012; Hassenfeld & Bers, 2020).

Findings from the study indicate that the integration of robotics and storytelling enhanced children's motivation, supported spontaneous language use, and fostered meaningful peer interaction in Irish. Positive feedback from the classroom teacher and observed language gains among the children highlight the potential of robotics as a pedagogical tool for early language learning.





As the Irish primary curriculum moves toward a more integrated model (NCCA, 2023), this research offers timely insights into how digital resources can support early childhood language education in playful and developmentally appropriate ways.

Susan Nic Réamoinn is a Lecturer in Literacy and Early Childhood Education at Marino Institute of Education, where she has been based since 2021. She completed her PhD at Trinity College Dublin in 2024, undertaking a sociocultural investigation into the use of robotics to support second language learning and computational thinking in the early years of primary education. Prior to her current role, Susan worked as an Education Officer (Language) with the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA), where she contributed to the development of the Primary Language Curriculum and associated projects. Her research interests centre on early language development, with a particular focus on the integration of digital technologies to support first and second language acquisition in early childhood settings.

"It Opened the World": Digital Literacy and Transformation for Older Adults in Community Education

Matthew Hutnik,

Atlas Education/Maynooth University

In an increasingly digital society, older individuals face barriers such as fear and anxiety and lack of confidence in operating technology and the Internet (Yazdani-Darki et al., 2020; Wilson et al., 2023). This paper presents findings from a qualitative study exploring the experiences of individuals over 60 engaging in Digital Skills education in a Community Education setting. It seeks to address a gap literature surrounding digital skills for older learners in this context (Pizzul et al., 2024; Flynn, 2025). The study investigates the impact of this learning experience upon their digital skills, digital confidence and digital motivation to use these tools outside of the classroom environment. It also explores the challenges implicit to this and what factors supported their learning as well as if this learning experience was transformational.

Underpinned by a Transformative Learning Theory (Mezirow, 1975) framework and social constructionist approach, the study utilised semi-structured interviews with eight former learners. Findings revealed participants used their learned skills to make progress towards closing the gap between themselves and the technological society they inhabit. Many participants expressed a reduction in feelings of fear, anxiety and an increase in confidence in their abilities. However, these barriers persisted for some. Peer interaction and a supportive classroom environment were identified as facilitators of a positive learning experience and aided in mitigating the barriers identified.

Ultimately, this research highlights the transformative effect which Community Education has to enable access for over 60s to the digital world and enable them to make strides towards participating in it as active citizens.

Matthew Hutnik is a Sligo based Adult and Community Education Teacher specialising in teaching digital skills, the fundamentals of academic research and writing and other academic and community-based workshops including QQI Accredited Awards. He provides his services in collaboration with organisations such as Mayo, Sligo and Leitrim Education and Training Board (MSLETB), Sligo LEADER Partnership and Sligo Local Community Development Committee. He is currently studying for a Master of Education in Adult and Community Education in Maynooth University. His research focus surrounds his teaching practice exploring the impacts of Digital Skills in a Community Education setting for adults over 60.



