

# Multilingual Childhoods

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**SIG members:** We do not know the number of members in the Multilingual Childhood SIG because the Multilingual Childhoods / REYLL network is part of the AILA Research Network in Early Language Learning. There are approximately 20 people attending the SIG meeting (preconference event) each year, and around 120 persons are subscribers of the email-list.

E-mail lists:

<https://www.jiscmail.ac.uk/cgi-bin/webadmin?A0=EARLY-YEARS-LANGUAGE-LEARNING>

[EARLY-YEARS-LANGUAGE-LEARNING@JISCMail.AC.UK](mailto:EARLY-YEARS-LANGUAGE-LEARNING@JISCMail.AC.UK)

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## 1. Aim of the SIG:

The Multilingual Childhoods SIG and network has been set up to bring together researchers who are investigating the learning of two or more languages in the home, school or community by children from birth to the age of 6 years old – this includes aspects of L1 and L2 language development in contexts of awareness of languages, additional languages, foreign languages, second languages, bilingual education, and immersion.

### Objectives for the Multilingual Childhoods SIG

- To bridge the areas of multilingualism and early years education.
- To promote and disseminate research in early years multilingualism and its implementation in policy and practice.
- To create opportunities for informed and constructive discussion and debate.
- To foster possibilities for cross-national collaboration and interaction.

## 2. Activities 2024–2025:

### EECERA 2024

At the Multilingual SIG meeting in Brighton, we focused on the overall conference theme, "Developing Sustainable Early Childhood Education Systems: Comparisons, Contexts and the Cognoscenti," from the perspective of inclusive and translanguaging practice in multilingual settings. We invited two experts in the field who will shed light on this topic from different theoretical perspectives, research experiences, and multilingual contexts.

Presenters:

Alexandra Diamond, University of South Australia, Australia: Young children's language socialization to translanguaging practice in their small, rural, Indo-Fijian community

Annika Åkerblom, University of Gothenburg, Sweden: Inclusive Language Pedagogy for Sustainable Early Childhood Education in Sweden

Chair: Martina Norling, School of Humanities, Education and Social Sciences, Örebro University

For more details, see the following link: <https://multilingualchildhoods.wordpress.com/2024/05/22/pre-conference-meeting-eecera-2024/>

We organised one symposium throughout the EECERA conference (3 presentations in total):

Multilingualism – social and physical sustainable practices in ECEC settings: discussing semiotic landscapes, language immersion, sustainable practice, and collegial reflections.

## Activities 2025

### **The Multilingual Conference Opportunities and challenges in multilingual ECEC contexts: Perspectives from professionals, policy makers and parents, May 12–13, 2025**

The host and organizer for the Conference was Professor Claudine Kirsch, as well as SIG convenors and members Professor Gunhild Tomter Alstad, Associate Professor Anja Perch, and Associate Professor Martina Norling. It was located at the University of Luxembourg. Approximately 50 researchers attended the conference.

The conference included one keynote speaker and one panel discussion with experts on multilingualism in early childhood education, paper presentations (individual and self-organised symposia) and posters. After the conference closing on Tuesday 13th after lunch, we offered workshops (90 min with a hands-on approach to topics as translanguaging (Professor Claudine Kirsch) and teacher-parents collaboration (Associate Professor Anja Perch, and Associate Professor Martina Norling).

Plenary speaker: Drorit Lengyel, University of Hamburg, Germany

Panel discussants: Andrea Young (France), Silva Bratož (Slovenia), Brecht Peleman (Belgium) and Fríða Bjarney Jónsdóttir (Iceland)

### **EECERA 2025 in Bratislava, Slovakia, 25–28 August.**

Our SIG group is growing every year. However, at last year's EECERA in Bratislava (2025), there were approximately 20 attendees at our SIG meeting. We believe the underlying reason is the financial constraints currently affecting universities, which make it challenging for members to obtain funding to attend the conference. Nonetheless, our meeting focused on the overall conference theme, "Early Education for All: Celebrating Diversity and Seeking Inclusion" from a multilingual childhoods' perspective.

As the Multilingual Childhoods SIG was established in 2015, this year we were celebrating our 10-year anniversary with two keynote presentations:

Professor Sandie Mourão and Professor Gunhild T. Alstad (the founder of Multilingual SIG): **A decade of Multilingual Childhoods.**

In this session, they provided an overview of the activities undertaken by the Multilingual Childhoods SIG over the last decade and shared some key moments and achievements of this important SIG.

Fríða Bjarney Jónsdóttir: Policy, research and practice in Iceland; **How can we cocreate the education of multilingual children in a holistic, culturally sensitive and appropriate way?**

Icelandic policy supports enhancing active multilingualism, supporting the development of Icelandic, the language of the school and society, and developing positive relationships with families across languages and cultures. Nevertheless, there are multiple challenges to the belonging and success of multilingual children and their families in ECE.

In the presentation Fríða discussed some of these challenges, drawing on findings from her and other research from the MEMM project that she is currently coordinating, where the focus is on the welcoming and education of multilingual children nationwide

For more details, see the following link: <https://multilingualchildhoods.wordpress.com/2025/06/03/pre-conference-meeting-eeccera-2025/>

Chair: Martina Norling, Örebro University, Sweden and Katri Hansell, Åbo Akademi University, Finland SIG convenors).

### **3. Planned activities:**

#### **Meetings, networking, cross-national collaboration, 2026–2027**

The Multilingual Childhoods SIG will not be organizing a meeting during the EECERA 2026 conference. To make sure the SIG stays active, we are organizing a SIG conference **Multilingual Childhoods – Multidimensional perspectives on equity in multilingual ECEC contexts** in April 26–27, 2027 in Vaasa, Finland. The Multilingual Childhoods conference will be organized as a part of a dual conference on **Multilingualism in Education** to be held in Vaasa April 26-29, 2027: <https://www.abo.fi/en/multilingualism-in-education/>. By combining two conferences, we aim to enable both ecologically and economically sustainable travelling to organize and participate in conferences. The Multilingual Childhoods conference will include two keynote presentations, parallel sessions for presentations, a panel discussion, as well as opportunity to visit local pre-schools.

### **4. Links and networks established with other institutions and organizations**

E-mail lists:

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[EARLY-YEARS-LANGUAGE-LEARNING@JISCMail.AC.UK](mailto:EARLY-YEARS-LANGUAGE-LEARNING@JISCMail.AC.UK)

### **5. How do SIG's activities fit with the aims and ethos of EECERA:**

The Multilingual SIG's activities closely align with EECERA's goals by fostering high-quality research, discussions, and partnerships in early childhood education, particularly focusing on multilingualism. This SIG upholds EECERA's dedication to inclusivity, diversity, and the rights of all children by examining how multilingual practices and viewpoints enhance ECEC practices, early childhood development, and learning environments. By organizing symposia, promoting networking among researchers and practitioners, and participating in scholarly endeavors, the Multilingual Childhoods SIG supports developing and highlighting research, policies, and practices that reflect the linguistic and cultural diversity of today's childhoods across Europe and internationally.