

Understanding the lives of multilingual children from their perspectives:

A multi- methods study.

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This study aimed to investigate the usefulness of drawings in research with children and to gain insights into their experiences of being bilingual. 24 bilingual children aged 7;0 – 13;0 years living in the Republic of Ireland (ROI) participated. These children's experiences were explored using a multi-methods approach, including drawings, interviews, and a self-report measure on how children feel about their talking. Ninety-six drawings were produced by the children via prompts focusing on (1) talking at home, (2) talking at school, (3) talking with family, (4) and doing an activity they enjoy. Developmental analysis showed that all participants could draw recognisable figures. Psychological analysis showed participants mostly displayed positivity through their drawings, and focal point analysis revealed many different aspects of the children's lives, as evidenced through facial expressions, accentuated body features, portrayal of talking and listening, colours, conversation partners, and sense of self in their drawings.

The majority of participants reported feeling happy about the way they talk via a self-report measure. Four themes were generated from their interviews: 1) Family, 2) Languages & Friendships, 3) Attitudes to Bilingualism, 4) Perceived Linguistic Competence. In relation to family, participants discussed the different languages they speak with their immediate family and how this can differ depending on their conversation partner: e.g., Bob, (10;11) said: *Well, it depends on who I'm speaking to. If I'm with my mom and my sister, Polish but if I'm talking to my dad then English.* In relation to languages and friendships, some participants described how a shared language can help them make friends with new classmates who do not speak English. Ava (13;0), who spoke Russian, discussed how she was able to form friendships with peers recently arrived from Ukraine: *I think it could help you make even more friends because like a lot of the Ukrainian girls like I'm really good friends with some of them just because I can understand them better.* In relation to attitudes, pride was the most common feeling expressed. In relation to perceived linguistic competence, participants described challenges they experienced and how they overcame them using strategies such as drawing a picture (Alex, 7;0), using Google Translate (Rose, 7;3), parental help and encouragement (Nick, 7;8 & Mark, 7;3), translating in their head (Sofia, 9;1), and translanguaging.

This study highlighted the suitability of using drawings to facilitate child-centred research and promoted a holistic understanding of the bilingual experiences of these children.