

iACTYC

Together and Committed to Young Children



Capturing Voices: Stories from the Early Years

Aston University, Birmingham, 2024



Welcome to TACTYC:

A message from our president

Dear friends and colleagues,

In 1978, a group of early years tutors working in universities across the country came together united in feeling their work was not well understood or appreciated, and in the need for mutual support. By 1980, the group had become known as TACTYC, an acronym for 'Tutors of Advanced Courses for Teachers of Young Children'. The first Early Years Journal was produced at this time. The main aim of the Journal was to "...keep abreast of relevant research...and take part in public debates on matters of policy and on current issues in the care of young children, by alerting readers to them, commenting on them and publishing articles." (Early Years, 1(1):3)

We became a Charitable Incorporated Organisation in 2018. Trustees, who are members of the voluntary Executive Committee, have worked hard on self-evaluation; they have recently undertaken a stringent review of governance and an analysis of membership characteristics and expectations.

There have been many developments over the past 45 years: the Journal is now an impressive publication with a highly respected international reputation. TACTYC has a website, is involved in commissioning research, and producing a book series, Reflections articles and Occasional Papers. We respond to consultations, and are involved in campaigns. We support a wide range of practitioners with evidence-based reflective practice and research opportunities, and provide a voice for all those involved in early years through advocacy and lobbying.

I am delighted to welcome you all to the TACTYC conference here at Aston University. We can look forward to refreshment in each other's' company as well as opportunities for discussion and debate at a significant time for early years.

Developments in Ofsted's approach as well as the proposed review of Early Years to be led by David Bell, coupled with the change in government, give the promise of significant improvements in provision for our youngest children. Although this cannot happen quickly, there are opportunities for us to influence government thinking. Our conference has the potential to set the scene, so let us make the most of our time together.

I look forward to hearing of your experiences and your hopes.

Wendy Scott, OBE: President of TACTYC



Welcome to our annual conference: A message from our chair

Dear Friends,

We are delighted that you have joined us here in Birmingham today to take part in our annual conference. Our conference is an opportunity to come together as individuals and organisations committed to young children, to share insights from our research and practice and we are thrilled to be joined by friends and colleagues from a wide range of institutions and organisations.

This year, our theme is 'capturing voices from the Early Years: practitioner, families and children'. There can be no doubt that we live in an ever changing world, one in which the needs of young children, their families and those who work with them are often overlooked. Our conference brings together a wide range of research informed presentations that consider these needs and the extent to which they are being met within our current practice.

We have also tried to make space within our day for conversation and networking, a chance to connect and explore how much more powerful our voices are when we work 'Together And Committed To Young Children'.

Thank you for joining us, we hope you have a great day!

Dr Viki Veale: Chair of TACTYC

Schedule of events

Poster presentations will be displayed in the exhibition area throughout the day

<p>Stuart Busby Exeter University</p>	<p>Eleanor Milligan, Lorna Williams, Janet Morris and Viki Veale Reception Class Teachers' Network</p>	<p>Bouchra Tari Canterbury Christ Church University</p>
<p>Exploring how schools in Tanzania are supporting child development during the disruption to learning caused by the cost-of-living crisis.</p>	<p>Creating a community of practice for Reception Class teachers across England</p>	<p>Navigating Identity in Early Childhood Education: Educators' Voices on Celebrating Foreign Cultural Aspects</p>

Session 1

<p>Session 1</p>
<p>10:30-11:00- Registration, coffee and pastries</p>
<p>11:00-11:10- Welcome, housekeeping and introduction (Wendy Scott and Viki Veale)</p>
<p>11:10-11:55- Keynote 1: Dr Nathan Archer Turning up the volume: Amplifying the voices of early educators in changing times</p>
<p>11:55-12:15- Discussion and round table networking</p>
<p>12:15-12:30- Coffee and comfort break</p>

Session 2

12:30-1:30- Breakout sessions: research briefings and discussion items

Room 1 Chair: Elizabeth Carruthers	Room 2 Chair: Sue Allingham	Room 3: Chair: Lewis Fogarty	Room 4 Chair: Rod Parker Rees
Janet Morris: Learning with families about conversations with young children: connection, interests, experiences.	Joelle Feudjo Maneze: Bridging Cultural Gaps in Early Childhood Education and Care: Strengthening Parent-Practitioner Partnerships for Minority Children's Success	Zoe Lewis, Vina Patel, Dr Karen Vincent, Tim Clark and Joanne Munyard: Capturing the Voices of Early Childhood Studies Graduate Practitioners	Kate Russell: Little Minds: A mindful pedagogy to support early years speech and communication.
Vikki Wynn: Becky Cozens and Laura Scouler: Working collaboratively to expand understanding within the Inspiring Foundations federation of Nursery schools (Workshop)	Denise Amnkwah: Exploring factors influencing intergenerational language transmission among African families in the UK	Aaron Bradbury: Work-based learning for early years professionals: reconceptualising the third teacher	Chantal Worsdell: Parent Participation in a Reggio Inspired setting in England (pre-recorded presentation)
	Eva Mikuska: Exploring students perspectives on the use of language in discussions of gender diversity	Christina Motoca: Learning from lived experience: exploring the disconnect between policy and practice	Richard Waite: My Early Childhood career: 35 years and counting!
Eleanor Milligan, Viki Veale, Janet Morris and Lorna Williams: Creating a community of practice for Reception Class teachers	Samantha Hulston: Voicing interests through objects: young children's use of play-based objects to respond to shared readings of picture books	Beckee Everitt: Towards a new leadership model for the Early Years Sector	Dr Poppy Gibson and Jayne Carter: Early Years Essentials: insights from practice
1:45-2:45- lunch and round table networking			

Session 3

2:45-2:55- Welcome back and introduction (Wendy Scott and Lewis Fogarty)

2:55-3:40- Keynote 1: Dr Mary Moloney
Beyond the white noise: our professional selves; who we are in the lives of young children

3:40-3:55- Comfort break

3:55-4:15- Discussion and round table networking

4:15-4:30- Reflections award, closing thoughts and announcement of next year's theme



We hope you enjoy these stories from the early years. To find out more about the people sharing them, please read on.

Key Note 1: Dr Nathan Archer



Dr. Nathan Archer is a researcher in early childhood education. He has a professional background as a Montessori teacher and has worked in early childhood education for over twenty years in practice, policy and research. Nathan completed a PhD at University of Sheffield in 2020, exploring the agency and activism of early childhood educators in England. Since then, he has undertaken research with Sutton Trust, Nuffield Foundation, Leeds Beckett University and University of Leeds.

Turning up the volume dial: Amplifying the voices of early educators in changing times

Following calls for research to ‘turn up the volume on the depressed or inaudible voice’ (Clough 2002) **Nathan Archer's** presentation draws on a body of literature and a number of his own research projects which have centred the voices of early childhood educators and their lived experiences. Rejecting the idea of research as ‘giving voice’ to early childhood educators, rather priority is given to hearing stories and making space for personal narratives. Drawing on a tradition of radical listening, this presentation highlights the potential of *critical hope* as ‘an act of ethical and political responsibility that has the potential to recover a lost sense of connectedness, relationality, and solidarity with others’ (Zembylas, 2013:14). Such critical hope foregrounds both critique of unjust power relations and a commitment to solidarity and collaboration. This manifests as action-oriented responses to contemporary challenges.

Key Note 2: Dr Mary Moloney



Dr. Mary Moloney is a researcher, author and lecturer in Early Childhood Education and Care at Mary Immaculate College, Limerick, Ireland. She has more than twenty years’ experience of working in the early childhood field, both as a practitioner and an academic. She is passionate about children's early education and care; inclusion and diversity (influenced by her work with refugees in Greece); policy; governance, and the professional identity and well-being of early childhood professionals.

Beyond the white noise: Our Professional Selves. Who are we in the lives of young children?

Mary Maloney explores the white noise (demands on early childhood professionals) and how it can diminish their sense of professional identity. She asks: how can early childhood professionals influence professionalism from within?

Denise Amankwah: University of Essex



Denise is currently completing her PhD in Applied Linguistics at the University of Essex. She has held several positions working in the Early Years. Her most recent role was as a Speech and Language Advisor offering specialist training to Early Years professionals and ongoing support to a number of families and professionals. In this role, she successfully amended the organisation's training materials so that they were inclusive of bilingual pupils and their families. She completed a Master's in Education, specialising in Language and Literacy. Her thesis is now a published paper. She continues to have a great interest in heritage language maintenance and how colonial language ideologies are upheld in UK classrooms.

Dr Aaron Bradbury: Nottingham Trent University



Dr Aaron Bradbury is Principal Lecturer at Nottingham Trent University for Early Childhood Studies, Childhood, Early Years Apprenticeships and Higher Technical Qualifications in Early Years.

Aaron publishes and presents regularly. His work is widely known and respected within the Early Years community.

Stuart Busby: University of Exeter



Stuart Busby a PhD student at the University of Exeter currently exploring partnerships between English and Tanzanian schools.

Having worked as a leader of global partnerships since 2006, he has developed strong links with several primary schools in the Tanga region of Tanzania. During this time, he noticed the difficulties that head teachers have faced and how many have struggled to improve the standard of learning in their schools.

Jayne Carter:	
	<p>Jayne is the Director of Ignite Education Ltd, providing consultancy for practitioners within the Early Years & Primary sector. She uses coaching as a model for change, facilitating professional conversations which are focused on empowering others & generating growth in knowledge & skills.</p> <p>Jayne is also a project manager at Partnership for Children, a charity who develop programmes to support the mental health of pupils in the UK & internationally.</p>
Dr Tim Clark: University of West England	
	<p>I am Director of Research and Enterprise for the School of Education and Childhood at UWE Bristol. I am currently conducting a range of research projects exploring doctoral student's methodological decision making and learning, particularly in relation to the use of arts-based approaches in education.</p> <p>Alongside this, I am member of the Early Childhood Studies Degree Network (ECSDN) RKE Strategy Group, lead for the Children, Childhood and Young People strand of UWE's Education and Childhood Research Group (ECRG) and co-editor of the forthcoming Sage title 'Debating Childhood: Critical Perspectives on Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood'.</p>
Becky Cozens: University of Sunderland	
	<p>I am a lecturer in International Initial Teacher Training at the University of Sunderland working closely with Early Years trainee teachers in settings around the world. I am currently completing my PhD in Education and Social Justice at Lancaster University. The PhD research explores the lived experiences of giving and receiving care in a nursery, capturing practitioner, parent and children's perspectives on caregiving relationships.</p>

Joelle Feudjo Maneze, Independent Early Years Consultant



With over two decades of experience in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) Joelle's journey encompasses various roles, from managerial positions to active participation in advocacy roles within the sector.

As a member of a minority ethnic community who is deeply committed to Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC), her intention is to draw upon her experiences to advocate for the development of policies, programs, and practices that are effectively inclusive and supportive for practitioners and children from minority backgrounds.

Dr Poppy Gibson: Open University



Poppy Gibson is a Lecturer in Education at the Open University. Poppy's key interests involve children's psychological development and mental health, and wellbeing in education.

Poppy moved into higher education after over a decade working in London primary schools, and has been lecturing since 2017, programme leading at both University of Greenwich and Anglia Ruskin University.

Dr Samantha Hulston:



Samantha Hulston is a researcher and former Early Years and Key Stage 1 teacher. She completed her PhD at the University of Cambridge. Her PhD research involved working in Reception classrooms, reading and playing alongside young children to understand more about how young readers engage with stories and how adults can support their engagement. She is a recipient of a BERA Early Career Researcher Career Development Fellowship and currently works on several literacy projects at the Open University. Most recently, she worked with colleagues on the creation of a practical framework for educators and practitioners designed to support and enable reading and writing for pleasure.

Dr Zoe Lewis: Birmingham City University



Zoe Lewis completed her doctoral research with a project exploring the relational nature of creativity in early childhood education. Zoe worked as a qualified early years teacher and leader before taking up her current post as a Senior Lecturer in Early Years at Birmingham City University. She also worked as a volunteer leader, trainer and outdoor activities adviser with Girlguiding UK for over 25 years.

Zoe has researched and published in the field of early childhood education with a focus on national policy, children's play and outdoor learning, and the characteristics of effective learning.

Dr Eva Mikuska: University of Portsmouth



Dr Eva Mikuska, Senior Lecturer and Departmental Director for Research Degrees at the University of Portsmouth. Eva started her career as a geography teacher, but at the beginning of the Yugoslav war, she came to live in the UK in 1992. After working in various early years settings, in 2005 Eva joined the UK FE, and later the HE sector as a lecturer and researcher. Currently she is teaching on various early childhood and psychology related programmes, with the main focus on methodological approaches to research, early years professional and educational practices among other Early Childhood Education and Care related topics.

Eleanor Milligan: University of East Anglia



Eleanor worked as an early years teacher and leader prior to her work in higher education. She is a Lecturer in Education at UEA with a range of responsibilities. Eleanor leads the Early Years pathway of the Primary PGCE Programme, and co-ordinates the Joyce Morris Early Years Literacies Forum. She is also Co-Investigator on the Little Minds research project exploring the potential of mindfulness based approach for early years settings to use to support children's self-regulation and speech and language development. Eleanor has also engaged in small scale research projects and recently evaluated the Community Communication Champions Project for the Norwich Opportunity Area.

Janet Morris: University of Greenwich



Janet re-trained as a primary teacher following a career in the NHS as a state registered dietitian. She worked as a reception teacher, and a nursery teacher, becoming the early years lead and a leading teacher in EYFS for Lewisham, before becoming a senior lecturer in primary education (early years) at the University of Greenwich. She currently leads on early years in the primary team and teaches and leads on the early years components of both the undergraduate and post graduate initial teacher training programmes as well as supervising masters and doctoral students. Her research interests are children’s early language development, partnership with parents, children’s funds of knowledge-based interests and curriculum building

Christina Motoca: University of Roehampton/ Alton Community Playschool



Cristina Motoca is a part-time PhD (Prof) Education research student at the University of Roehampton, exploring the policy disconnect in the early years sector in England through stakeholders' views as a foundation for developing and implementing the relevant policy to address the sector’s workforce crisis. Alongside her research student role, she has been a leader in the early years sector for over twelve years who also represents the early years private and voluntary sector (PVI) in Wandsworth by being part of the Education Advisory Strategy Group formed of early years, primary, secondary school leaders and Wandsworth Education Advisory Representatives. Therefore, her research resonates with her professional and personal interests.

Vina Patel: Birmingham City University



Vina Patel is currently completing her doctoral research at the Centre for Research in Early Childhood (CREC) and Birmingham City University (BCU). Her research title is ‘An exploration of Early Childhood Studies Students’ experiences of placement and its role in the development of professional identity’.

Vina is a Senior Lecturer at Birmingham City University. She led, managed and area managed provision for a large nursery chain. Vina then developed and led early years services for a trailblazer Sure Start local programme in the West Midlands. She is Course Leader for DipHE in Preschool Education in Guangdong, China.

Kate Russell: University of East Anglia



Kate's current research includes the negotiation of gender and sexuality in sport, leisure, and educational contexts. Other research focuses on mental health and mindfulness: The Mental Health Trainee Teacher project explores the provision of mental health support to trainee teachers, an ESRC funded research project (led by Prof John Gordon) focuses on the role of digital technology in supporting teacher agency where she leads on exploring the potential of mindfulness for supporting schoolteachers, Kate also co-leads on a Joyce Morris Legacy funded project (Little Minds) investigating the role of mindfulness in supporting speech and communication development in early years settings.

Laura Scouler: Houghton Community Nursery School



Early Years Educator and Childcare Coordinator at Houghton Community Nursery School (IF: Inspiring Foundations):
I have now worked within Early Years for around 11 years and continuously find myself waking up each morning with a feeling of excitement, awe and wonder at the many possibilities the day will bring, as well as how yesterday's thoughts and curiosities could possibly be built upon and extended.
Through networking with other likeminded educators, I hope to inspire and be inspired, as well as to be part of many thought-provoking discussions.

Dr Bochra Tari: Canterbury Christ Church University



Dr. Bochra Tari is a researcher and academic with a PhD in Education Studies from Canterbury Christ Church University. Her doctoral research, titled "Global Trends, Local Contexts: Ideological Positions and Their Impact on Early Childhood Education Practices in Algeria," explores the intersection of global educational policies and local education practices. Dr Tari's research interests include multilingualism, intercultural education, identity, and the role of education in fostering inclusivity.

Dr Viki Veale: St Mary's University, Twickenham



Viki Veale has over 30 years' experience as an educator. She is a former Reception teacher who is committed to promoting professional development.

She is a senior lecturer in Early Years and Primary Education at St Mary's University in Twickenham. She leads a broad range of modules focusing on professional confidence, political engagement, research activity and an understanding of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Viki is also chair of TACTYC and professional development director of Miindfulness. Her research focuses on professional development

Dr Karen Vincent: Canterbury Christ Church University



I am a Senior Lecturer in Early Childhood Education at Canterbury Christ Church University. My experiences as a teacher and middle leader in early years settings are at the root of my pedagogical research interests. My doctoral study explored the values and beliefs of early childhood initial teacher educators, concluding that pedagogical activism is a key component of their pedagogical practices. I teach and lead modules to support our undergraduate placement students and masters' students I am Secretary and Vice Chair of the England branch of the International Professional Development Association (IPDA), Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy and a long-serving member of TACTYC.

Richard Waite: Early Childhood Technology and online safety advisor



I am an Early Childhood Technology and Online Safety Advisor with over 35 years in Early Childhood Education (ECE), I have a profound passion for nurturing young minds. My journey began in 1986 with an NNEB Nursery Nursing course, leading to a BSc Honors in Education and Information Management, and an NNEB Diploma.

I've held various roles, from Educator to acting Manager, and created a new role as an ICT Coordinator for a large Nursery group. I've seen significant changes in ECE, particularly in technology and online safety. As I explore new opportunities in consulting, technology development, education, research, and writing, my goal is to continue positively impacting young children and their families.

Lorna Williams: Worcester University



Lorna has over 20 years’ experience working in Early Years. . Holistic child development, creating dynamic learning environments, and fostering effective relationships with children and their families has been a cornerstone of her career. Now serving as a principal lecturer at the University of Worcester, Lorna guides aspiring early years teachers through various programs. Her emphasis lies in appreciating the distinctiveness of the early years foundation stage, cultivating a robust early years teacher identity, and igniting a passion for early years pedagogy and practice among teachers. Lorna's commitment to celebrating and championing the magic of early years persists through her writing, outreach efforts, and knowledge exchange.

Chantal Wordsell: Opportunity Pre-School/ University of Chester



An experienced Early Years Practitioner and parent activist, Chantal is also a doctoral student at the University of Chester and was awarded the University of Chester’s Prize for Outstanding Dedication to Children’s Development in the Early Years 2024 (in Memory of Kathryn Wilkinson). She has worked as a Visiting Lecturer and recently published in Early Years Educator Magazine. Her presentation and conference paper are based on research into the experiences of parents and practitioners participating in co-management of a Reggio-inspired pre-school. The title of, Chantal’s presentation comes from the words of a practitioner who explained that “the really lovely, rich, magical moments are when we create something together - parents, children, staff”.

Viki Wynn: University of Sunderland



I am an Early Years specialist practitioner researcher with 20 years’ experience in education, teacher training and research. I am passionate about promoting the professionalisation of the Early Years sector and developing effective evidence-based training to ensure all children have access to high quality provision. Through my engagement with ongoing research, I hope to empower Early Years professionals to share their own research, supporting the development of the sector with an innovative community of practice not only in England but with international trainee teachers too

Janet Morris: University of Greenwich

Learning with families about conversations with young children: connection, interests, experiences.

The presentation will share findings from my doctoral research study, which aimed to explore adults' conversations with young children in their homes and communities through collaborative research with parents. The qualitative collective case study (Yin, 2014) drew upon a purposive, largely convenience sample of four parents to explore the conversational environment around three children aged between 3 and 5 years old. Data were collected using qualitative methods, including conversation logs compiled by the collaborating parents using a 'research menu' approach (Flewitt et al, 2018) including written notes, audio and video recordings. Semi-structured interviews enabled joint reflection on conversation logs and specific episodes of conversation. The collaborative revealed responsive adults who connect, 'tune in' and share understandings with the children in a Third Space (Bhabba, 1994), supporting sustained conversation. Parents were valued as active partners in the research and the collaborative process provided insights into their children's communicative practices and enabled the creation of individual thematic maps of fruitful topics of conversations, unique for each child. The maps gave indications of children's individual funds of knowledge-based interests (Hedges, 2022). Children talked about matters of 'deep interest' (Hedges, 2022:4) including events in their life, popular culture, enquiries and concerns, but also their own ephemeral world of dreams, imagination, and play. The implications of listening to and learning with parents about communication with their young children will be considered.

Vikki Wynn: University of Sunderland, **Becky Cozens:** University of Sunderland, and **Laura Scouler:** Houghton Community Nursery School

Working collaboratively to expand understanding within the Inspiring Foundations federation of Nursery schools

The 'Inspiring Foundations' (IF) Federation of maintained nursery schools is heavily inspired by Reggio Emilia, particularly in relation to working collaboratively with fellow early years practitioners and with professionals in other fields to expand their understanding of unique topics and the opportunities available to families via the bespoke curriculum being used. Facing the challenges of the current economic climate impacts the whole early years sector and IF nurseries are directly affected by changes to national policy along with the retention crisis of early years professionals in the UK. Yet the Federation continues to thrive with the whole team striving to develop further in all aspects of nursery life. The leadership team began to wonder about this, eager to know more about what motivates the teams and how the approach used by IF continues to be sustainable amidst the current challenges. A cross-sectional analysis has been undertaken to understand more about how all practitioners within the IF team perceive the approach being used, their own individual role within this and that of the team. Capturing all voices assists in the ongoing ethical practice of the Federation that encourages continuous reflection. It is hoped that having the voices of everyone within the teams captured in this way will aid leaders in their understanding of what is valued by practitioners, what the motivation continues to be and how they are agents of change within the sector, willing to strive for better in every sense.

Eleanor Milligan: University of East Anglia, **Lorna Williams:** Worcester University, **Janet Morris:** University of Greenwich and **Viki Veale:** St Mary's University, Twickenham
Creating a community of practice for Reception Class teachers

The Reception Class Teacher Network (RCTN) is an initiative set up collaboratively by four English HEI lecturers (Eleanor Milligan, University of East Anglia; Vikki Veale, St Marys University; Lorna Williams, University of Worcester and Janet Morris, University of Greenwich), all of whom had previously been Reception Class teachers themselves. It was initiated through the Joyce Morris Early Years Literacies Forum public engagement work (University of East Anglia) and aims to provide a positive research informed community of practice to teachers half termly. For this oral presentation, the co-founders (listed above) are joined by one of the Reception Class Teacher Network participants Sally Teare. The presentation will explore the rationale behind the development of the network and the value and impact of its work so far. Drawing on the evaluations from practitioners who have attended this network and research such as the lived experiences of early years practitioners (Veale 2024) and integrated marketing communications (Persuit and McDowell Marinchak 2016) it aims to answer the following questions; Why is the RCTN important for the Joyce Morris Early Years Literacies Forum? Why is the RCTN important for Reception Class Teachers? Why/how does the RCTN establish its identity? Why is RCTN valued by teachers? Why is the RCTN offering further initiatives?

Joelle Feudjo Maneze: Independent Early Years Consultant
Bridging Cultural Gaps in Early Childhood Education and Care: Strengthening Parent-Practitioner Partnerships for Minority Children's Success

In the realm of Early Childhood Education and Care, fostering inclusive and supportive environments for minority ethnic children is crucial. This discussion aims to explore the critical importance of quality Early Childhood Education and Care for minority ethnic children, highlighting the challenges and long-term implications. Bridging cultural gaps between parents and practitioners in daycare settings is essential for enhancing minority children's learning and development journeys, ultimately improving their educational outcomes and life chances. By navigating cultural complexities and fostering effective parent-practitioner partnerships, we can create an inclusive educational landscape that supports every child's potential. Drawing on personal perspectives from a minority ethnic professional, this discussion delves into the solutions and strategies for overcoming cultural barriers in Early Childhood Education and Care, ensuring that every child receives the support they need to thrive.

Denise Amankwah: University of Sussex
Exploring factors influencing intergenerational language transmission among African families in the UK

Bilingual parents must often make difficult and complex choices about which languages to use with their children. While existing research has explored family language practices and attitudes within certain language communities, the experiences of African parents are conspicuously absent from the literature. My study explored factors influencing intergenerational language transmission among African families in the UK. As educators can influence parental language choices, data were collected through semi-structured interviews with Early Years Professionals and parents of children attending nurseries. Interviews considered participants' language backgrounds, attitudes and practices, especially in relation to heritage language maintenance. The interviews were recorded, transcribed, and analysed using thematic analysis. Findings revealed that being proficient in the English language was prioritised by all participants over maintaining the children's heritage language, and the value of African languages was low. The findings suggest that the educators' language practices were influenced by the monolingual education system and, for parents, colonial language ideologies that place English on a pedestal over African languages continue to play an influential role in shaping their language attitudes. Implications of this study include the need for increased understanding within Early Years practice of the unique language profiles and practices of bilingual African families

Eva Mikuska: University of Portsmouth
Exploring students perspectives on the use of language in discussions of gender diversity

Gender diversity is a current and controversial topic. Students are entering university with contemporary meanings and beliefs around the use of language in the discussion of gender diversity that could challenge traditional value systems, especially when addressing biological determination. This qualitative research was carried out on Early Childhood Studies students, both traditional and non-traditional, by means of self-directed focus groups. The aims were to find students views on the language of gender diversity, the variability of gender identity, and

the extent to which language can reflect and create gender identity. It was argued that with increasing global awareness of gender diversity, the findings of this research offers the ways in which students learn, interpret, use and understand the language of gender.

Samantha Hulston:

Voicing interests through objects: young children use of play-based objects to respond to shared readings of fictional picture books.

This presentation, drawing on doctoral research, outlines how young children use play-based objects to voice their interests in fictional picture books. Existing literature (e.g. Snipe, 2000, 2001, 2007) richly illustrates that young children have myriad ideas to express after the shared reading of fictional picture books in Early Years settings. Such research has focused on young children's spoken responses as the primary manner through which ideas are shared. However, researchers (e.g. Flewitt, 2005) have used multi modal principles to indicate that an emphasis on talking may mean some 'voices' are missed. Accordingly, there is value in exploring how else young children might share their interests and ideas. The empirical research project cited in this presentation involved me working as a researcher-practitioner in English Reception classrooms, where I provided small group playful activities after shared readings of fictional picture books. Multimodal analysis of video observations provided valuable insights into how young children use objects to voice their interests in and about stories. Specifically, young children used the sequential arrangement of objects to indicate interest in narrative trajectories. Additionally, the children used proximity to group objects thereby drawing attention to characters and actions of interest to them in the moment. Through discussing this research, this presentation aims to affirm the value of playful activities and of attending to how young children voice their interests using more than vocal playful practices.

Karen Vincent; Canterbury Christ Church University, **Zoe Lewis;** Birmingham City University, **Tim Clark;**, **Vina Patel** and **Joanne Munyard:** University of the West of England
Capturing the Voices of Early Childhood Studies Graduate Practitioners

A highly skilled and trained workforce is important for impact (Nutbrown, 2021; Ofsted, 2022) and enhances positive outcomes for children (Bonetti and Blanden, 2020; Oppenheim and Archer, 2021; Sutton Trust, 2021) yet the lack of a clear and coherent vision for workforce development in England (Bonetti, 2019) has contributed to a recruitment and retention crisis (Pascal et al, 2020; DfE, 2022). This paper reports on phase 1 of an ongoing 2-phase collaborative ECSDN funded project that builds on previous research (Fairchild et al., 2022; Richardson et al., 2022), to capture the voices of graduate practitioners on the value of their Early Childhood Studies degree. The research design adopts pragmatist (Feilzer, 2010) and feminist (Carett and Riano, 2016) participatory methodologies. The first phase has addressed the following key question through an online survey: How have ECS degrees contributed to graduates' career pathways and sense of professional identity within ECEC? The survey was distributed via online social media and professional networks to capture the voices of 84 ECS graduates and analysed through team-based reflexive thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006; 2022). The findings explore the ECS graduates' identities, perceptions of their degree and their experiences, challenges and successes of being a graduate.

Aaron Bradbury: Nottingham Trent University
Work-based learning for early years professionals: reconceptualising the third teacher

There is a paucity of research exploring learning and pedagogy in the Early Years workplace. This thesis addresses that gap by exploring how learning and pedagogy are differently experienced by early years trainees pursuing a Level 3 early years apprenticeship and a full-time diploma early childhood programme. Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory provides the theoretical framework for this qualitative study, which was predicated on the belief that knowledge is gained from practice through experiences of the learner within the ecological theory model and that further development is built upon interactions within the workplace. Eight early childhood practitioners participated in the study, which adopted a case study approach and utilised a range of methods including on-line interviews, focus-groups, observations, and reflective diaries contributed by the participants. The study illustrates how potential work-based learning opportunities are mediated by the type of learning programme pursued by trainees, also demonstrating how early childhood practitioners with a stronger learning orientation achieve higher levels of work-based competence/expertise of being an early years professional. Colleagues and supervisors' social support within practice was found to play a significant role in job competence/expertise, highlighting the need for highly trained practitioners within the area of early childhood. Related to this, the study found that the role of the 'third teacher', or learning within the early years workplace environment, is significant in outcomes for trainees in the Early Years sector. The informal relationships that the trainee professional makes with other colleagues is based on the findings of this research, which has given a new idea to how early years professionals are learning whilst undertaking their training courses. The thesis clearly argues that there is a change in what is meant by the third teacher and

reconceptualises what it means, regarding early years work-based learning. It concludes that there are significant differences in the work-place learning opportunities offered to trainees on different programmes, and that the importance of developing informal connections with early years colleagues provides the basis for work-based learning in Early Years training.

Christina Motoca: University of Roehampton/ Alton Community Playschool
Learning from lived experience: exploring the disconnect between policy and practice

The presentation aims to generate new knowledge within the early years field by exploring the policy disconnect in the early years sector in England through the views of early years stakeholders. Therefore, it will delve into the lived experiences of early years stakeholders as a foundation for developing and implementing the relevant policy to address the sector's workforces worst-ever crisis. As a leader in the early years for over twelve years, the researcher believes this study could significantly contribute to understanding the sector's challenges and potential solutions regarding this topic. Given the significant changes and challenges the English early years sector has experienced over the past thirty years, the literature review is crucial since it would enable the researcher to explore what recommendations have been made so far by the existing policy documents and research published to address the sector's workforce crisis and its potential impact on children's learning and development, their first experiences in early years settings, and the quality of education and care, so, in this way, providing a comprehensive context for the study. Policymakers constantly change practices within the sector but not to affect change in terms of attraction, sustainability, and retention of early years educators. For example, recent changes have been aimed at increasing the ratio and lowering the early years workforce's qualifications as an immediate solution (Early Years Alliance, 2023; GOV.UK, 2023). Yet, those changes may not always benefit the sector. Moreover, they contradict the recommendations made by research and the sector for years.

Beckee Everit: University of Northampton
Towards a new leadership model for the Early Years Sector

This PhD research aims to propose, and implement, a leadership model for the Early Childhood sector, challenging the top-down, hierarchical approaches to leadership (Waniganayake et al., 2012; Hughes et al., 2023), through shadowing methodology. Research identified that leadership in Early Childhood combines compassion, empathy, and collaboration between practitioners and stakeholders (Tomkins, 2020; Wilson, 2020). Practitioners who draw on their experiences, form and deploy intellectual and emotional responses to support others (James et al., 2021). The proposed model focuses on collaboration and autonomy, allowing everyone within the setting to have elements of leadership and influence over policies, practices, and provision, as a participatory model (Nuttall and Thomas, 2015) whilst aiming to improve outcomes for children', by professionalizing practitioners in society (Sheridan et al., 2022; Penn, 2019) within my position as an Operations Director. Next phase of this research will apply a shadowing methodology (Bøe et al., 2017; Hughes et al., 2023), a new approach in Early Childhood, working with practitioners, holding different positions, qualifications to support a leadership model and reflecting on decisions made. Ethical approval will be obtained from the university. Guidelines will be followed (BERA 2018; EECERA, 2015), including protection of participants and consent. Literature explored demonstrates a need for collaborative, participatory approaches to leadership to provide the best outcomes for children (Hughes et al., 2023). Research is at an early stage but aims to provide insight into leadership occurring on various levels within PVI settings, supporting the development of practitioners and enhance provision, influencing leadership in Early Childhood.

Kate Russell: University of East Anglia

Little Minds: A mindful pedagogy to support early years speech and communication

As part of a larger project exploring early years literacies, the Little Minds project uses a realist methodology to explore the mechanisms of mindfulness in supporting the speech and communication development of children in early years settings. This focuses on understanding what works for whom, in what circumstances, and in what respects an intervention is more likely to succeed. As part of this work, the research team co-created a mindful pedagogy CPD training for early years practitioners to support them in their work with children. This also included the development of a Reflective Practitioner Tool to explore how mindful practitioners' already were in their work with children. The training emphasised the benefit of 'being' mindful rather than 'doing' mindfulness in the setting and the importance of practitioners own wellbeing in supporting their work with the children in their care. This presentation focuses on how the voices of the practitioners on reflections of the CPD training and its usefulness in their professional practice. Early findings suggest that practitioners have little awareness of and/ or spend very little time on their own direct experiential understanding of their wellbeing: thoughts, feelings, physical sensations. By engaging in the CPD training, they were able to bring awareness to their day to day states and reflect on how this could/did/may influence their interactions with children as well as other staff and parents. The project continues to revise the CPD training for further testing in January 2025.

Chantal Wordsell: Opportunity Pre-school, Shrewsbury and University of Chester

Parent Participation in a Reggio Inspired setting in England (pre-recorded presentation)

I'm currently completing my MA dissertation on the impact of parent-participation in a Reggio-inspired, community-led ECEC setting in England. The study demonstrates the powerful impact of collaboration in a setting managed by a group of parents and practitioners working together to co-produce pedagogy and practice. Voice is one of the most significant themes of the research; parents are empowered to use their voice as lived experience experts within a supportive and collaborative environment while practitioners embrace enhanced opportunities to develop truly child-centred practice in a supportive and nurturing workplace where their expertise is respected and valued. Through this, the child's voice is prioritised. A further, significant theme to develop from the study is the reconceptualisation of "Professional Love" and the "Triangle of Care" (Page, 2018) between parent, child and practitioner to recognise the proactive role parents can play within a community-led model. This offers a subtle rebalancing, so the onus for creating space for love in ECEC settings is no longer solely on practitioners' shoulders but instead is co-created with parents. The study shows how parents' acts of love, through governance of the setting, contributes to a professionally loving environment which supports and empowers practitioners to enact professional love within their daily practice. Although the community-led management model is currently declining, the study seeks to show it is a vital part of the ECEC sector and can enable authentic and enriching reciprocal partnerships between families and educators.

Richard Waite:

My Early Childhood Career 38 years and counting

This abstract summarizes a career dedicated to Early Childhood Education (ECE). With over 35 years of experience, I have held various roles within nurseries, demonstrating resilience in overcoming challenges and a deep passion for nurturing young minds. I have witnessed significant changes in ECE, particularly in terms of technology and online safety, and has developed expertise in these areas. As I seek new career opportunities, my goal is to continue making a positive impact on early childhood education through consulting, technology development, education, research, or writing. This paper explores my career journey with over 35 years of experience in Early Childhood Education (ECE). I will discuss my experiences working in various roles within nurseries, including Educator, Deputy, acting Manager, and IT and Early Years departments. Despite facing challenges such as physical injuries and societal stigmas, I remained dedicated to the field. I will highlight the significant changes in ECE over the decades, particularly in terms of technology and online safety. My personal experience with these advancements and my passion for early years technology and online safety led me to explore potential career paths in these areas. I will conclude by discussing my current research and exploration of potential career opportunities, such as consulting, technology development, education, research, and writing.

Poppy Gibson and Jayne Carter

Early Years Essentials: insights from practice

Early Years Essentials: in this talk, Poppy and Jayne share insight into some best practice from practitioners that they have been gathering for their upcoming book with Routledge - "Early Years Essentials". Poppy and Jayne share some inspiring ideas and also encourage the audience to consider how they may wish to share their voice in the book too!

	<p>Wendy Scott, OBE: President of TACTYC</p> <p>Extensive experience as an early years teacher, head teacher of a demonstration nursery school and a university lecturer equipped Wendy to serve as an inspector with the ILEA, and then Kensington and Chelsea. She headed BAECE, and worked with the DfE to set up Sure Start. As an Ofsted Inspector and trainer, she gained insight into nursery provision across the country, and invaluable international experience. Having judged Nursery of the Year since its inception, Wendy was the first person to be honoured with a lifetime achievement award by Nursery World She has also been awarded an OBE for services to education.</p>
	<p>Viki Veale: Chair</p> <p>Viki is a former Reception class teacher and senior leader who has worked across a range of settings including schools and homebased childcare. She is now a senior lecturer in Early Years and Primary Education at St Marys University in Twickenham. Viki is an active member of several Cross Party Parliamentary groups and represents TACTYC at MTAS, the Early Years Coalition and the Primary Umbrella Group.</p>
	<p>Lewis Fogarty: Vice Chair</p> <p>Lewis is the Director of a small group of nurseries in Berkshire and Director of Teaching and Learning for the Department of Education at Brunel University. These professional roles, as well as being a Dad of two young boys, motivates a deep engagement with all things Early Years and the positive development of the sector. In particular, Lewis explores leadership in Early Years in his research activity and represents TACTYC at Family.</p>
	<p>Karen Vincent: Secretary</p> <p>Karen is a Senior Lecturer in Early Childhood Education at Canterbury Christ Church University. Her doctoral study explored the values and beliefs of early childhood initial teacher educators, concluding that pedagogical activism is a key component of their pedagogical practices. She is Secretary and Vice Chair of the England branch of the International Professional Development Association (IPDA), and a long-serving member of TACTYC.</p>
	<p>Elizabeth Carruthers: Treasurer</p> <p>Elizabeth was an inner-city Nursery School head teacher for 12 years where she developed a teacher/practitioner research active community. She has worked in various roles in education in London, the South-West of England and the United States. Her main research area is early mathematics. As an independent researcher, she is presently working with the Western Australian Education Department collaborating with teacher researchers on Children's Mathematical Graphics.</p>
	<p>Rod Parker-Rees: Journal Editor</p> <p>Rod was a nursery teacher before developing and running Early Years BED and PGCE programmes and a BA Early Childhood Studies. Since he became an editor, in 1998, 'Early Years' has grown into a fully international journal, listed in the Social Sciences Citation Index, with five issues and about 200,000 downloads per year and with a team of editors from America, Australia and Chile as well as from the UK.</p>

	<p>Eva Mikuska Eva is a Senior Lecturer and Departmental Director at the University of Portsmouth. Eva started her career as a geography teacher, but at the beginning of the Yugoslav war, she came to live in the UK and started working in early years settings. In 2005 Eva moved into further, and later, into higher education. Her research focuses on exploring the role of emotion in professional practice, and discourse around gender and ethnicity in ECEC. Eva represents TACTYC at ECSDN.</p>
	<p>Eleanor Milligan Eleanor is a mother, educator and lifelong learner. She has taught across the year groups in the UK and abroad, but found her passion in Early Years. She lectures at the University of East Anglia on the PGCE Early Years pathway, leads the Joyce Morris Early Years Literacies Forum and coordinates the Reception Class Teacher Network. Within TACTYC, Eleanor supports the work of the social media team.</p>
	<p>Stella Smith Stella holds EYTS and QTS and has managed busy private nurseries in Birmingham. She is now a lecturer and placement co-ordinator for Childhood and Early Childhood degrees at Nottingham Trent University. She also supports Early Years apprenticeships and HND programmes. Stella draws on both her professional and personal experiences in her research, which focuses on children looked after.</p>
	<p>Joelle Feudjo Maneze Joelle has an educational background that includes an MSc in Social Research Methods and a BA (Hons) in Childhood and Youth Studies. With more than 20 years of experience working in daycare settings, she focuses on leveraging her expertise to address challenges in practice and propose practical solutions, all while staying deeply committed to advocating for inclusive and supportive policies and practices</p>
	<p>Hannah Foster Hannah is a full-time teacher in Early Years at a private school in Twickenham where she is also Head of Phonics and Reading Leader for the school. She is passionate about contesting the norms and ensuring our voice as educational leaders is clearly heard. She has a keen interest in Autism/SEN and working with children in various capacities which she achieves via her own tutoring, childcare and entertainment companies.</p>
	<p>Sue Allingham Sue is a former Nursery and Reception teacher, Senior Leader and Local Authority Adviser. Having been an independent consultant now for eight years means that keeping up to date with the current debate in ECEC is vital. Becoming a Trustee of TACTYC has been an important addition to my skills and knowledge as I have become increasingly involved.</p>

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