

EDITORS' NOTE

Unlike their counterparts in the United Kingdom, or other European countries, for a long number of years, speech and language therapists in Ireland have been challenged relatively little by the issue of bilingualism or multiculturalism. This situation pertained, despite the presence of indigenous cultural and linguistic minority groups, such as those for whom Irish was a first language, and members of the Travelling Community. Meeting the needs of the latter groups has largely been the responsibility of individual, creative and dedicated professionals, with little support and few resources. However, economic and socio-political changes over the last decade have led to population and demographic shifts, forcing attention on the issue of cultural and linguistic diversity at all levels of society. This volume of the *Journal of Clinical Speech and Language Studies* is based on papers originally presented at a Symposium on Bilingualism and Multiculturalism in May, 2000 in Trinity College Dublin. The papers address many different themes.

Lilly Cheng focuses on the global changes attendant on technological advances and increased mobility at the start of the new Millennium. Barbara Dodd and Alison Holm consider the theoretical insights to be gained by exploring the development of children acquiring two or more languages. Luke Wilkinson describes an intervention approach that sought to creatively capitalise on skills across two or more languages. Dawn Duffin outlines the challenges faced by individuals who may have little access to any language – those who have significant hearing impairments. She proposes a model of education which aims in the first instance to ensure language is accessible through the most effective modality, so that a foundation for written language development can be laid and subsequently exploited. Finally two papers address a long-standing issue, which to date has received remarkably little attention. Helen O Murchú considers the situation of Irish speakers, in their many different guises, and sets an agenda for action, while Ann Cramer outlines a service delivery initiative aimed at meeting the needs of individuals within the Connemara Gaeltacht.

Despite the range of topics covered, all papers share a focus on what is in global terms the 'normal state of being', that is diversity of language and cultural opportunities. We are grateful for the contributors for agreeing so willingly to share their expertise, and for guiding us another small step along the road to understanding and addressing the needs of bilingual individuals who have communication impairments.

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Editors