

AI Statement – I have not used AI in my work.

[10 minutes video.MOV](#)

Bilingual and multilingual practice in the early years

Being able to communicate in two languages in daily situations is known as bilingualism. Bilingualism is rather widespread, with nearly one in three persons on the earth being bilingual or multilingual. It is proven by many studies that raising Bilingual children give many benefits and advantages. (Pransiska, 2016) Since multilingual children usually show enhanced talents, such as higher critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving skills, this seems to entail cognitive benefits. This is because learning two or more languages may improve their mental flexibility and executive function. Promoting bilingualism or multilingualism in the early years is beneficial in increasing cultural awareness, and learning a second language early on fosters an appreciation for many cultures. Speaking two languages increases a child's likelihood of being open-minded and understanding of other points of view. It can also help children to navigate ethnic contexts. (Touckly, 2018) Additionally, bilingualism can enhance social connections by allowing children to interact with a wider range of adults and peers, which promotes the formation of bonds and friendships. Early encouragement of bilingualism in children ultimately will be beneficial later in life. Using techniques like music and songs is one of many great ways to promote other languages in early years settings. (D'Amico, Giancola and Pino, 2023)

Early exposure to a second language is important, according to experts, the sooner a child is exposed to a language, the better. Welsh is a second language for many English-speaking households in Wales. Welsh is used in many early childhood, childcare, and play settings; this can be included by counting, dinner time, circle time

and many more scenarios. (Cwlwm, 017) The majority of students in bilingual and Welsh-medium schools come from non-Welsh-speaking families. When these students initially arrive at school, they usually don't speak Welsh. Many children communicate with all their teachers and peers in English. Children will learn both Welsh and English languages if they attend a bilingual or Welsh-medium school. Studies have shown that Wales is losing their language, as a great population of people are currently English speaking or know very basic Welsh language. As Through songs, storytelling, and the regular use of simple phrases, children can be successfully immersed in Welsh. Children find it simpler to relate the language to joyful, satisfying experiences as a result. Children can practise Welsh in context through interactive activities like role-playing or games, but they can also recognise the language with the use of visual aids like bilingual labels positioned throughout the classroom. Children should be able to play with the language in a supportive, nonjudgmental environment, regardless of their level of proficiency. Incorporating families and encouraging them to use Welsh at home or share Welsh cultural rituals can further enhance the language-learning process. By employing these inclusive and engaging strategies, children can develop self-assurance and a genuine interest in Welsh. (Jones, 2012)

It is also important that settings support EAL. EAL stands for English as an Additional Language. This word refers to students who are learning English in addition to their first language. Schools usually provide EAL programmes or support services to help non-native English speakers become more proficient in the language and succeed academically. The primary objective of these programs is to enhance English speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills, as well as helping to foster a lifelong connection with the language. (Department for Education, 2021)

Children's brain development is positively impacted by encouraging the use of various languages since it enhances their cognitive flexibility, problem-solving skills, and multitasking abilities. (Trautner, 2019) Learning a variety of languages strengthens the brain's executive abilities, such as focus, memory retention, and

switching between tasks. Children who speak more than one language usually demonstrate heightened metalinguistic awareness, which aids in learning the mechanics of language and enhances their capacity to acquire more languages. Furthermore, being bilingual or multilingual has long-lasting benefits for mental health by delaying the onset of cognitive decline in later life. In conclusion, encouraging multilingualism promotes mental flexibility, creativity, and effective communication, all of which contribute to brain growth. (Byers-Heinlein and Lew-Williams, 2018)

Noam Chomsky's concept of the Language Acquisition Device (LAD) along with Jerome Bruner's idea of the Language Acquisition Support System (LASS) both underscore the significance of language in early developmental stages, albeit through differing perspectives. Chomsky argued that humans possess an inherent capability to learn languages, positing that the LAD is a theoretical mental construct that enables children to naturally pick up language when they encounter verbal stimuli. In contrast, Bruner brought attention to the significance of social engagement and environmental assistance in learning language, contending that parents and peers furnish essential support through LASS, which encompasses gestures, motivation, and collective experiences. (Language Acquisition Theory, 2004) Both frameworks positively influence growth by enhancing the relationship between language proficiency and cognitive advancement. While Chomsky's LAD centres on the internal, biological mechanism for language acquisition, Bruner's LASS stresses the external, social environment that fosters language skills. Together, they demonstrate how both innate mechanisms and social interactions are instrumental in developing communication abilities, consequently facilitating broader cognitive, emotional, and social development in children. (McLeod, 2024) (Lemetyinen, 2023)

Divergent thinking is a mental process that makes it easier to come up with a variety of possible responses or ideas for problems or questions that have more than one possible answer. By encouraging creativity and adaptability in children's language acquisition, it greatly improves the development of bilingual and multilingual skills in

early childhood education. (Wikipedia Contributors, 2019) Adults in caregiving roles can create an environment that encourages children to explore and play with many languages, rather than focusing solely on rote memorisation of vocabulary or adherence to grammar rules. These carers could, for example, involve children in multilingual role-playing and storytelling, or they could encourage them to come up with diverse ways to convey the same idea in other languages. This approach supports the idea that there are many different ways to communicate and solve problems, helping children develop language skills and the mental flexibility required to transition between languages. Early school settings may make language learning an exciting, dynamic experience that piques children's interest and inspires them to value the variety of multilingual communication by encouraging divergent thinking. Children are empowered to take risks, learn from their mistakes, and experiment with new words and expressions without worrying about making mistakes when learning a new language is fun. Games, songs, and interactive activities are examples of enjoyable experiences that create a positive emotional connection with the language, making the learning process both natural and enjoyable. (Mukhija J and Rajan G ,2025)

By creating inclusive, encouraging, and language-rich environments for children's language development, a variety of frameworks and strategies support bilingualism and multilingualism in childcare settings. The "One Person, One Language" (OPOL) approach encourages carers to speak a single language with the child on a regular basis, which helps with language differentiation and more efficient development. The "Minority Language at Home" approach encourages parents to speak in their native language at home while children learn the majority language through community interactions, maintaining the home language. (Koelewijn, Hoevenaars and Verhagen, 2023) Dual-language immersion initiatives engage children in learning through two languages, enhancing their proficiency and literacy in each while also supporting their overall cognitive, social, and emotional growth. An environment rich in language is essential, offering resources such as books, songs, and activities in different

languages, tagging items, and encouraging discussions to enrich language experiences.

Frameworks promoting cultural inclusion advocate for the incorporation of cultural understanding into educational programs by honouring diversity and representing a variety of linguistic backgrounds, underscoring the importance of multilingualism.(Gibson, 2023) Moreover, scaffolding strategies, informed by Vygotsky's principles, aid bilingual students by progressively increasing the complexity of tasks and utilizing visual aids, repetition, and simplified language to enhance comprehension. So by implementing these strategies, childcare providers can successfully create an engaging and educational environment for bilingual and multilingual development, allowing children to feel motivated and at ease learning multiple languages. Play-based learning provides a natural setting for language exploration through role-playing, games, storytelling, and imaginative play, facilitating spontaneous interaction in different languages. (The bell foundation, 2024)

Cognitive advantages of bilingualism and multilingualism include increased cognitive flexibility, better problem-solving abilities, and improved executive function. Children can strengthen their language abilities in a fun and encouraging setting at daycare centres by participating in activities like role-playing or interactive games, singing songs in multiple languages, and reading multilingual books. Further reinforcing language learning and cultivating an awareness for linguistic diversity are group activities that promote social contact in several languages and art and craft projects that integrate multiple languages.

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