

Module: ECEY4010

Name: Rachael Baugh

Component 1 – Video

Component 2 – Written Paper

AI Statement

I acknowledge the use of Google Scholar (Available at: <https://scholar.google.co.uk/>) for the purpose of my work in relation to Module 6 – Multilingual Practice in the Early Years (ECEY4010).

1. What is/ define bilingualism?
2. What is/define multilingualism?
3. Benefits/ disadvantages of being bilingual
4. Welsh as additional language
5. Welsh language legislation
6. Welsh Language Strategy
7. Are there problems for the Welsh Language Strategy?
8. Bilingual brains
9. Bilingual support strategies in the early years
10. What is divergent thinking?

Component 1.

Video Links –

<https://onedrive.live.com/?cid=7066E5C2A7E22198&id=7066E5C2A7E22198%21se9499ba7fd69448bb2ba89655789dc0e&parId=root&o=OneUp>

https://eur01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2F1drv.ms%2Fv%2Fc%2F7066e5c2a7e22198%2FEaebSelp_YtEsrqJZVeJ3A4BPhNQCmE3IJHCWFmm4ugyUw%3Fe%3D4%253aWKyv70%26sharingv2%3Dtrue%26fromShare%3Dt rue%26at%3D9&data=05%7C02%7C2413982%40student.uwtsd.ac.uk%7C89ebe7c8bced4b99dd4608dd6fb3cb1b%7C4e0f11f9046e45059cb8db2152311e21%7C0%7C0%7C638789541804860443%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJFbXB0eU1hcGkiOnRydWUsIlYiOiIwLjAuMDAwMCIsIlAiOiJXaW4zMilslkFOljoiTWFpbCIsIlIdUljoyfQ%3D%3D%7C80000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=EDw%2BJbeUYKuNEj1QIVvCldx68TE3tbj%2FgGQINsSfLYo%3D&reserved=0

Component 2

This assignment will discuss several topics relating to bilingualism and multilingualism with an emphasize on bilingualism. It will define bilingualism and multilingualism, explore the benefits of bilingualism, Welsh as an additional language, and the impact of bilingualism on brain development and divergent thinking, with links to theory, policy and frameworks throughout.

Firstly, bilingualism and multilingualism refer to the ability to use different languages, but they differ in terms of how many languages spoken. According to Jayanth (2021) bilingualism refers to a person being able to speak and understand two languages whereas multilingualism refers to a person being able to speak and understand more than two languages. However, Bialystok, E (2001) emphasizes the challenges in defining proficiency in a language and how to categorise bilingual individuals as either fluent in two languages or capable of functioning in both. Additionally, she highlights the importance of bilingual children that have perhaps have only one spoken language but have learnt sign language to support deaf parents. This is because the process of acquiring sign language alongside spoken language is the same as learning two spoken languages. This reinforces the complex nature of how to define what a bilingual individual is and what counts as fluent.

Bilingualism has been associated with a range of benefits for individuals including better brain health, enhanced diversity in thinking and access to a wider range of people and resources. Craik *et al* (2010) suggest there is strong evidence to support that lifelong bilingualism contributes to prevention of cognitive decline in the form of diseases such as dementia and Alzheimer's. This is because of improved connections within the brain impacting is overall health and function (Alzheimer's Society, 2017). Similarly, Marian and Shook (2012) also highlight the improved cognitive and neurological impacts of bilingualism on the brain. Supporting the idea that bilingualism enhances memory and cognitive control that acts as a preventative to cognitive decline in the form of Alzheimer's. Bilingualism has also been associated with many other benefits such as maintaining connections with heritage and extended families. Therefore, forming richer cultural experiences through access to more people and resources in the form of traditional stories, fostering more flexible and diverse thinking (Baker, 2010). Additionally, to this Raising Children Network

(2023) recognises the improved social and cultural advantages that speaking more than one language has for children such as, higher self-worth, a sense of identify and belonging, nurturing a more diverse way of understanding culture and creating better communication links that lead to better opportunities later in life due to more accessible to the world. However, Costa (2020) suggests that the bilingual experiences affect brain processes and interferes with a person's dominant language making them slower and access to words to the right words difficult.

This section will explore Welsh as an additional language (WAL) and the policies and frameworks that promote WAL and a bilingual Wales and the challenges this presents. WAL is defined as those learning to speak Welsh in addition to an already acquired language (Carmarthenshire County Council, 2024). In 1993 the Welsh Language Act established Welsh as the official language in Wales and gave it equal status to spoken English as well as giving the right to access public resources through the medium of Welsh (UK Government, 1993). This demonstrates the importance of preserving and promoting Welsh language for Wales bringing a sense of identify and belonging. More recently the Welsh Government (WG) has outlined a Welsh Language Strategy that aims to create bilingual citizens of Wales and envisions that by 2050 Wales will have one million Welsh speakers (WG, 2017). In educational terms and taking into consideration the Welsh Language Strategy, the curriculum for Wales reinforces the importance of languages across every area of learning to foster curiosity and lifelong interest in the Welsh language. Highlighting that some of the key skills involved in learning a new language enhances creativity and perseverance in children (WG, 2019). Emphasis on language development is also reflected within the early years and supported by the curriculum for funded non-maintained settings. It places importance on the holistic development of languages and communication through play opportunities and the role of an enabling adult to immerse children in language and give them the tools to build proficient language skills (WG, 2021). However, it could be suggested that this goal is unrealistic due to lack of Welsh speaking staff within these settings and insufficient resources and funding to achieve it. Williams (2017) says that the Welsh Language Strategy implementation is poor due to challenges in co-ordinating all the participating bodies, as well as concerns over how targets can be measured due to unclear areas around defining a Welsh speaker. In particular, if they need to reside in Wales to be included

as there are Welsh speakers who live in other parts of the world. He also highlights challenges for the education system and the level of investment needed into education to successfully meet WG targets. Williams (2017) also attributes limited available Welsh medium and bilingual schools and lack of Welsh speaking teachers as a barrier to the WG target. This emphasizes a gap in Welsh spoken skills and ability to teach through the medium of Welsh within teaching. Similar views are shared by Senedd Cymru (2023) that recognises that WG targets relating to the Welsh Language Strategy are at risk due to lack of Welsh speaking staff and urges the WG to invest in more initiatives for teaching staff to improve Welsh language proficiency. Records from the 2021 census shows a reduction in teachers speaking Welsh language from 562,000 to 538,000 since 2011 as well as a decrease in children and young people speaking Welsh between the ages of three to fifteen. (BBC News, 2023). This emphasizes the importance of developing training and opportunities to upskill teaching staff to implement Welsh in daily practice to successfully achieve the WG target set for 2050.

This next section will explore bilingualism in terms of brain development, language acquisition and the impact on practice. Chomsky was a linguistic philosopher that believed language acquisition for humans was biologically based process and happens naturally and this can be seen in the way children learn language so quickly (Main,2023). The idea that children have a biological process to learning language is similarly viewed by Ramirez (2017) a doctor and researcher whose studies on language processes on babies' brains emphasized differences within the brain when comparing bilingual babies to monolingual babies of the same age. She suggests early exposure to two languages at the same time open the potential to be able to speak two languages fluently at the same time. This is because the brain is stronger and more responsive as it has more exercise making connections through switching between two languages. According to Siahaan (2022) Eric Lenneberg also believed in a critical period for children in second language acquisition emphasizing between aged two and puberty as this key window for language. This supports Chomsky's belief of there being a biological factor to language acquisition. However, according to McLeod (2025) Lev Vygotsky's placed the importance of social interaction and culture on language development, in particular the role of the more knowledge other in scaffolding and supporting children to acquire language and suggesting that

language rich and immersive language techniques will aid language acquisition. All these theories and ideas impact and feed into the way in which practitioners' approach and teach children languages today. Wales has been recognised for its successful immersive language approach and WG (2024) comments on Cabinet member Lynne Neagle appreciation of Wales being leaders in Welsh Language immersion provision and commends the drive and commitment to developing its Welsh language. The immersive practice approach is reflected in my video delivering to nursery aged children this supports Eric Lenneberg's critical period where children are being exposed to more than one language as early as aged three. It also supports Lev Vygotsky's theory of using social interaction with a more knowledgeable other. Estyn (2022) states that by using a sandwich method through Welsh, English, Welsh children will be successfully immersed in the target language. This is also demonstrated in the video through sandwiching of colours and questions. Welsh in nursey is being implemented in all areas of learning to supporting WG funded non-maintained setting curriculum to immerse children in rich, authentic, language experiences and activities to promote the language. As a predominantly English-speaking setting practitioners are supporting WAL through a programme called Twts that has been developed to support the WG vision and target of one million Welsh speakers. Twts uses Welsh speaking patterns, songs and activities to support settings to becoming bilingual and supports both practitioners and children in their development of Welsh language skills. Baker (2021) highlights the use of two languages within the same activity or classroom and embrace bilingual capabilities and this is seen in the video.

Finally, this section will explore the impact of bilingualism on divergent thinking. According to Palmiero *et al* (2020) divergent thinking is a cognitive process that enables the ability to be able to be creative finding multiple different ways to respond and solve problems. Fritz (2016) says that people that are bilingual or multilingual have a higher accessibility to people and resources impacting a wider view of the world, resulting in greater employment opportunities. Ken Robinson (2016) attributes divergent thinkers to those who work in collaboration and explore more than one answer to a problem, this suggests that bilingualism offers collaboration with a range of people and therefore will open access to multiple answers through culture and heritage of different groups of people.

In conclusion bilingualism is multifactored in that it has benefits to enhancing brain health and function and allows people to explore the world in a more interconnected way promoting culture and heritage.

References.

Baker, C. (2010) *The advantages of bilingualism in Welsh and English. Rapporteur Group on Bilingualism*. Available at:

https://senedd.wales/media/cgdmktvv/paper_3_-_prof-_colin_baker-english.pdf

(Accessed 26th March 2025).

Baker, C. and Wright, E.O. (2021) *Foundations of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*. 7th edn. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.

BBC News. (2023) *Welsh language: Lack of teachers threatens one million target*.

Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-politics-65639738> (Accessed 27th March 2025).

Bialystok, E. (2001) *Bilingualism in development: Language, literacy, and cognition*.

Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511605963>

Carmarthenshire County Council (2024) *English/Welsh as an Additional Language*.

Available at: [https://www.carmarthenshire.gov.wales/home/council-](https://www.carmarthenshire.gov.wales/home/council-services/education-schools/additional-learning-needs/englishwelsh-as-an-additional-language/#:~:text=Some%20children%20speak%20a%20language%20other%20than%20English,or%20Welsh%20as%20a%20second%20%28or%20third%29%20language.)

[services/education-schools/additional-learning-needs/englishwelsh-as-an-additional-language/#:~:text=Some%20children%20speak%20a%20language%20other%20than%20English,or%20Welsh%20as%20a%20second%20%28or%20third%29%20language.](https://www.carmarthenshire.gov.wales/home/council-services/education-schools/additional-learning-needs/englishwelsh-as-an-additional-language/#:~:text=Some%20children%20speak%20a%20language%20other%20than%20English,or%20Welsh%20as%20a%20second%20%28or%20third%29%20language.) (Accessed: 26th March 2025).

Costa, A. (2020) *The Bilingual Brain and What It Tells Us About the Science of Language*. Penguin

Craik, FI. Bialystok, E and Freedman. M. (2010) "Delaying the onset of Alzheimer disease: bilingualism as a form of cognitive reserve", *Neurology*, 75(19), pp. 1726-1729. doi:10.1212/WNL.0b013e3181fc2a1c

Estyn (2022) *Welsh Immersion Education Strategies and approaches to support 3 to 11-year-old learners*. Available at:

https://estyn.gov.wales/system/files/book_pdf/20964-welsh-immersion-education-strategies-and-approaches-support-3-11-year-old-learners.pdf (Accessed: 29th March 2025).

Fritz, G.K. (2016) "The benefits of being bilingual", *Brown University Child and Adolescent Behavior Letter*, 32(5), p.8. doi:10.1002/cbl.30126.

Janyanath, T. (2021) "A Comparative Study on Bilingualism and Multilingualism", *KnowEx Social Sciences*, 1(02), pp.79-91. doi: 10.17501/27059901.2020.1207.

Main, P. (2023) *Chomsky's Theory*. Available at: <https://www.structural-learning.com/post/chomskys-theory> (Accessed:28th March 2025).

Marian, V. and Shook, A. (2012) "The Cognitive Benefits of Being Bilingual", *Cerebrum*. 13. Available at: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/23447799/>

McLeod, S. (2025) *Vygotsky's Theory of Cognitive Development*. Available at: <https://www.simplypsychology.org/vygotsky.html> (Accessed: 29th March 2025).

Palmiero, M. Nori, R. Piccardi, R. and D'Amico, S. (2020) "Divergent Thinking: The Role of Decision-Making Styles", *Creativity Research Journal*, 32(4), pp. 323–332. doi: 10.1080/10400419.2020.1817700.

Raising Children Network (2023) *Multilingual and bilingual children: questions and answers*. Available at: <https://raisingchildren.net.au/babies/connecting-communicating/bilingualism-multilingualism/bilingualism> (Accessed:25th March 2025).

Ramirez, N.F. (2017) *Creating bilingual minds*. Available at: <https://www.bing.com/videos/riverview/relatedvideo?q=you+tube++bilingual+TED+talk&mid=6D7075AF3C1745CEEF666D7075AF3C1745CEEF66&FORM=VIRE> (Accessed:28th March2025).

Robinson, K. (2016) *Divergent Thinking*. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BHMUXFdBzik> (Accessed: 30th March 2025).

Siahaan, F. (2022) "The Critical Period Hypothesis of SLA Eric Lenneberg's", *Journal of Applied Linguistics*. 2(2), pp.40-45. DOI:10.52622/joal.v2i2.77

Senedd Cymru (2023) *One million Welsh speakers target at risk due to lack of teachers*. Available at: <https://senedd.wales/senedd-now/news/one-million-welsh-speakers-target-at-risk-due-to-lack-of-teachers/#:~:text=The%20Welsh%20Government%20will%20not%20hit%20its%20target,speaking%20teachers%2C%20according%20to%20a%20Senedd%20Committee%20report.> (Accessed: 27th March 2025).

United Kingdom Government (1993) *Welsh Language Act 1993*. Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1993/38/contents?lang=en> (Accessed: 27th March 2025).

Welsh Government (2017) *Cymraeg 2050: A million Welsh Speakers*. Available at: <https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-12/cymraeg-2050-welsh-language-strategy.pdf> (Accessed: 27th March 2025)

Welsh Government (2019) *Curriculum for Wales: Languages, Literacy and Communication*. Available at: <https://hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales/languages-literacy-and-communication/> (Accessed: 29th March 2025).

Welsh Government (2021) *A curriculum for funded non-maintained nursery settings*. Available at: <https://hwb.gov.wales/api/storage/1f581142-6b91-41e4-845d-3d6c7765df20/a-curriculum-for-funded-non-maintained-nursery-settings.pdf> (Accessed: 29th March 2025).

Welsh Government (2024) *How we immerse children in the Welsh language is unique to us in Wales*. Available at: (Accessed: 29th March 2025).

Williams, C. H. (2017) Policy review: Wake me up in 2050! Formulating Language Policy in Wales. *Languages, Society and Policy*. doi.org/10.17863/CAM.9802