

Introduction

Hello, welcome to my presentation on bilingualism. My name is Elena Pearson, student number 2219700. The module number is ECEY4004. I will be discussing bilingualism in depth looking at benefits and impact bilingualism has in the early years.

To begin, what is bilingualism? According to Baker and Wright, (2021) There is not one definition for bilingualism, in fact there are multiple different interpretations. Bilingualism can be interpreted differently depending on how an individual looks at language ability. Similarly Chen and Padilla, (2019) support this by stating that there are different degrees of bilingualism that could take different aspects of life into consideration such as the age of language acquisition. Grosjean, (2012) states that people who are bilingual use two languages fluently everyday in their lives. However Valdes, (2015) suggests bilingualism is when individuals have the ability to function in more than one language even if it is only a small amount of one language. Grosjean, (2014) futhers the the idea of different interpretations by discussing simultaneous bilingualism and sequential bilingualism. De Houwer, (2017) states that simultaneous bilingualism is a child who has learnt two languages at the same time since birth however Baker and Wright, (2021) says sequential bilingualism is a child who learns one language at home and starts the second language at a school.

Benefits of bilingualism

Firstly I am going to discuss the benefits of bilingualism. Callahan and Rebecca, (2014) state bilingual children have many holistic benefits in comparison to monolinguals. Monolinguals are individuals who function in one language (Gramling, 2016). GPR Dewi *et al* develops on this listing the holistic benefits of bilingualism. He suggests social-emotional advantages such as promoting confidence, empathy and friendliness through developing the communication skills. Also states academic benefits such as bilingual individuals are more likely to be hired in a specific job and achieve higher in school. Bialystek, (2001) supports this stating bilingualism improves reading skills. Also, Conboy and Thal, (2006) state bilingual children develop grammatical competence. Callahan and Rebecca, (2014) and GPR Dewi *et al* both state that bilingualism respects their own cultures or provides a new learning opportunity in another culture. Chumbow, (2018) suggests that bilingualists have greater self confidence as they enhance their communicative ability enabling a stronger willingness to communicate with others. Also he believes children become multi-competence.

There is an opposing view on bilingualism that it can affect children negatively. Lightbrow and Spada, (2013) and De Houwer, (2009) both state that individuals believe there can be a language delay learning two languages at the same time however De Houwer, (2009) states there is no actual evidence to support this. Thomas, (2018) reveals individuals think that children struggle to 'juggle' two languages at the same time as it works their brain too much at a young age. Baker,

(2011) states that research from 1920s and 1960 showed that bilingual individuals were seen as less intelligent and therefore would have a lower IQ. However, research since 1960 shows bilinguals having a higher cognitive function than monolinguals. Overall the benefits massively outweigh the negatives.

Welsh as an Additional Language

Now to discuss Welsh as an additional language. The Welsh Government, (2014) states that Welsh as an additional language is when a child is learning Welsh in addition to their original language through education. The child will require support to get through the Welsh curriculum. Each child learning an additional language should be treated individually because each child has their own separate experience with their additional language (Thomas, 2018).

Friedmann and Rusoy, (2015) state Lenneberg's theory of learning a language during the 'critical period'. Lenneberg's theory is that if children do not learn languages between age two and puberty they will find languages more difficult. This highlights the importance of children learning Welsh as an additional language in early years education. My activity was aimed at 3-4 year olds which is in the critical period.

In addition to this, Schmid, (2016) suggests the importance of learning Welsh as an additional language to prevent language attrition. He says this is when the less people know the language meaning it is used less. Using it less can result in individuals struggling to remember it themselves. This can prevent the language being active at all in an individual's life creating a loss of belonging (Schmid, 2016).

Children learning an additional language can use dual language immersion (Martinez Negrette, 2022). This is when children seek connection with individuals similar to them so children will use a different language at different times depending on who they are communicating with. This is a way children develop to interact using their languages called bilingual ways with words (Martinez and Negrette, 2022). Baker, (2014) suggests a barrier for dual language is that there can be an imbalance between using both languages which can result in excluding one language altogether and also if the family is not learning that language they might struggle to communicate with their families.

A dual language programme in Israel is successful in breaking down any barriers of mistrust they might have and instead building peace (Baker, 2014).

Unicef, (no date) states the rights of the child. Article 30 states that if a child comes from a minority group they have the right to enjoy their own culture, practise their own religion and use their own language. This needs to be considered and celebrated in a child's setting. In my activity I read a book all about Elfed who is

different from his friends. Although I did not point out directly it was clear he was colourful and stood out amongst his friends demonstrating empowerment.

Welsh Government, (2014) states there are barriers for children learning Welsh as an additional language for example local authorities might have very little experience with welsh. In addition to this, teaching staff might limit the child's potential having little knowledge of the language. Doherty and Hughes, (2009) state that only a small percentage of schools were aware of the improvement that is necessary to advance bilingual learning in writing. In addition to this, only half the schools have the correct specialist staff.

Overall although it can be challenging learning Welsh as an additional language but again the benefits are worth it.

Brain Development

Now I will discuss brain development. Baker, (1988) states on the one hand Vygotsky believed that children's language was in control of cognitive development however on the other hand Piaget found that cognitive development was determined by their language development. Both theories suggest that there is a strong relationship with language and the brain.

Kulpers and Theirry, (2015) connects bilingualism to the auditory cortex. Maturation of the auditory cortex is linked to language learning revealing that bilingual children have an increased phonological awareness allowing them to hear and recognise different sounds. Kulpers and Theirry, (2015) also say it processes the different auditory information and sends the messages to Wernicke's area. This is where language production takes place and processing information. Bilingual individuals have a greater connectivity in this area (Hofman, 2020). Information from Wernicke's area will then travel to the Broca's area. This is the muscles for speech where speech production is controlled. Hofman, (2020) reveals that bilingualism has larger amounts of grey matter here in comparison to monolinguals. When the Broca's area has created a plan for speaking it passes this to the motor cortex. Treutler and Soros, (2021) state the motor cortex is involved in the speech production and perception. A second language corresponds with higher activity in the motor cortex. This shows how linked brain development is with bilingualism and the positive effects bilingualism has on a healthier brain.

To elaborate on this further, Colbow, (2018) states that bilingualism delays ageing disorders such as dementia. To support this, Baker and Wright (2021) state bilingualism helps the decline of cognitive functions later on in an individual's life and delays ageing and disease.

Doherty and Hughes (2009) state that the plasticity of the children's brains are more flexible therefore learning a new language at a young age can be seen as easier.

Baker (2014) suggests that young children pick up language easier and naturally as they are less critical about getting right. Simultaneous bilingual refinement in both languages comes from the brain wiring. This allows the child to hear the language and respond in the correct language. Doherty and Hughes (2009) reveal this is called code switching.

Gascoyne, (2016) states children are intrinsically motivated to play. Learning in the brain stems through sensory play stimulation. Creating opportunities for this is significant. Sensory play is evident in my activity by using water play and balls. This creates a fun way the children can incorporate their learning with play. They get to feel and learn in a new way. Conteh, (2006) also supports this by stating the benefits of themed trays as they develop language through play.

Murphy and McSweeney, (2014) state the theories that Skinner and Pavlov has around operant condition. They believed children learn best through repetition, reward and punishment. Conteh, (2006) states that repeating single-worded sentences to the children will provide them with confidence in that area helping them remember the word. In my activity I considered this theory and used lots of repetition throughout in order to familiarise the words. I sandwiched the words using welsh english welsh, for example melyn yellow melyn. I also used praise as a way of rewarding the children when they were right.

Divergent thinking

Moving on to divergent thinking. Baker, (1988) describes divergent thinking as a procedure and production of being imaginative, open-ended, creative and free thinking. Guilford, (1967) demonstrates the 4 characteristics of divergent thinking. These consist of fluency, flexibility, elaboration and originality.

Read, (2006) demonstrates Bruner's theory of scaffolding. This means individuals are building on existing knowledge and are able to then incorporate new ideas into existing ones. Smidt, (2006) states Bruner's theory on scaffolding language is that children will create new understandings that are possible through interaction with students and teachers. Vygotsky's theory supports this stating children have more attention and memory when they learn through interactions with people. During my activity, I asked the children's questions to interact with them. Also at the end I left the activities out for the children to try themselves interacting with their friends.

Baker, (1988) states that bilinguals are more superior divergent thinkers in comparison to monolinguals. Kharkhurin, (2008) found that bilingualism performed higher in fluency, flexibility and elaboration which are all key characteristics of divergent thinking. Overall his results concluded that bilingualism performs higher than monolingualists on a generative capacity. Overall Baker, (1988) and Kharkhurin, (2008) both demonstrate that bilingualism is more likely to become better divergent thinkers.

Links with early years' frameworks and programmes

A well-known programme in Wales is Cymraeg 2050: A Million Welsh Speakers. Welsh Government, (2017) state that in order for this to be achieved welsh-medium education needs to have better planning that incorporates the language making easier opportunities for people to speak welsh. This has the aim that 1 million people will be able to speak welsh naturally and involve welsh into every aspect of their life by 2050. Welsh Government, (2017) suggest that other people might want to learn it if the majority are and this will ensure people treasure Wales and the culture. Early years education is centralised around this.

Vacca, (2015) discusses the Welsh Language measures (2011). This act allows Welsh to continue development in the 21st century. This will strengthen the welsh language but in order to do this non-welsh speakers will need to be on board as well as welsh speakers. This act will help create rights for welsh speakers and establish the welsh language commissioner.

Welsh Government, (2022) states that the New Curriculum for non-maintained settings in Wales values the Welsh language as an essential part of Welsh culture and suggests that it should be taught in all settings. It reflects and values bilingualism and diversity of culture and language in Wales. The Welsh language could be taught through stories, poems, songs and rhymes. I incorporated this into my activity for example I sang the colours of the rainbow in Welsh to provide exciting purposeful learning for the children.

Welsh Government, (2021) says the curriculum for Wales is a continuum for learning and teaching welsh. It states children need to communicate effectively in different forms of welsh and english in the setting. It respects the needs and rights of others as a member of a diverse society. The Welsh Government, (2021) states children should be knowledgeable about their culture, community, society and world at the present and in the past. However in order to do this, further investment into teaching staff is required.

Canteh, (2006) states that children work hard on their play because it provides them with motivation and triggers language development in children creating language opportunities which are crucial. Conteh, (2006) states that circle time is very effective and beneficial to young children because adults are able to model the language. In my activity during circle time I used a story and props to engage the children in their learning. The story had repetition of the words they needed to learn.

Smidt, (2008) says practitioners and parents will need to work together in order to help the child whilst learning two languages. The main priority of learning should always be the child's well-being. Rinalaldi, (2006) states that Reggio Emilia prioritises working with parents in order to maintain the child's well-being. If parents

are aware of what the child is learning they are more likely to respect and encourage this at home. Smidt, (2008) suggests this could be through including the parents' views and having meetings with the parents regarding the curriculum.

Overall a child learning an additional language is not only beneficial to them now but also in their future providing them with a sense of well-being, confidence and likely to achieve higher in life.

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